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Finland, Cultural Lone Wolf



Synopsis

Finland, Cultural Lone Wolf is the story of an accomplished nation and her extraordinary people. By pursuing a 'Lone Wolf' policy, Finland raised itself from a struggling, war-battered state to one of the most developed countries in the world over the course of only fifty years. The exponential rise of Nokia from tires and timbers to leading the world's telecommunication industry is indicative of the Finns and their business style. These remarkable people speak a language unique in its origins and have kept their cultural identity intact despite the influences of powerful neighbors, Sweden and Russia. Uniquely qualified to write about Finland, best-selling author Richard Lewis traces the fascinating Finnish origins, as well as her history, geography, values and culture. His extensive experience with Finnish business provides him with keen insight on leadership style, negotiation strategies and the uniquely Finnish suomi-kuva, or Finland image. Lewis shines when describing Finnish humor, complete with laugh-out-loud jokes and stories. Finland, Cultural Lone Wolf shows both nation and writer at their best.

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Customer Reviews

Finland is truly a unique place in so many ways and Mr. Lewis captures the spirit of the place with insight and skill. By nature, Finns are very modest people so it takes an outsider to toot their horn. Lewis is well suited to the job as he speaks Finnish (that is quite a job!) and has spent many years consulting there. The author rightly observes that Finland outranks all other advanced democratic nations on practically any important measure of development - literacy, economic competitiveness, equality (economic, social and gender), transparency, lack of corruption, low levels of crime, and

high levels of technological innovation. He notes that while they do pay high taxes, they actually support these taxes because they ensure that everyone has high quality health care, education, and social support - no exceptions. But apart from their success in forging a wealthy and egalitarian nation, the Finns stand out in many other ways. For one, they are not really all that Scandinavian. Their origins are obscure, but it is clear that their language and culture has roots outside of the Indo-European group. In some ways, like the Basques perhaps, they are a small and unique nationality with a world view that we should all admire. Among their virtues, Finns are extraordinarily honest, so much so that some see them as blunt. They can also be very taciturn. Indeed, the uninformed traveler to Finland may mistake their parsimonious use of spoken language as a sign of coldness or obtuseness. As Lewis points out, to the contrary, Finns are very intellectually inclined, but are deeply suspicious of wordy or flamboyant people. Also of interest, the author delves into why Finnish women have been so successful and have attained full equality in all spheres of life. Even if you don't have the chance to visit Finland, this is a great book to read if you are interested in learning about a country that is getting it right!

As a native Finn I was actually embarrassed reading the "trumpet tooting" by Lewis in this book, but that seems to prove his experience of the Finnish people, modest, shy but despite this desperately in seeking of recognition from others. As a truly modest Finn I can not see why our nation would differ from any other, to better or worse. But Lewis makes several points I have to agree on, about the Finnish nature, especially common sense, separateness, etc. etc... and I've never thought of the Finnish language giving us an advance in way of thinking.. a very interesting point indeed. Overall, a very interesting read, if you're interested in the mindset of this small-yet-big nation up north..

The author has a business which provides training in languages and cross-cultural communication, primarily to business persons. I can imagine this book stemming from a series of Powerpoint slides, with bulleted lists, from a course on doing business in Finland. It has a narrow agenda, focusing on patterns of communication and leadership. There is very little on Finnish life and culture - on marriage, family, religion, work life... You will come away from it with a lot of generalizations about the Finnish people but no clue as to how they live their lives. The book begins with a brief introductory sketch of the history and geography of Finland and the Finnish language. This is followed by a more detailed discussion of communication, leadership, national character or identity, humor, and comparisons of Finns with other peoples. The author presents a very favorable image of Finns and Finland. In particular, he ceaselessly cites ways in which Finland leads the world. One

thing that annoyed me is an excessive reliance on stereotypes and cliches, which are confidently presented as facts, when in fact there are no citations or references to research to support them. Also annoying is the frequent reduction of complex patterns of behavior to simplistic diagrams and typologies (such as "linear-active," "multi-active," and "reactive cultures"). The book is easy to read but redundant and simplistic. I can't recommend it. Try Culture Smart Finland instead.

Brilliant work on the enigmatic nation of Finland. Full of facts, humor, history, Mr. Lewis has done his homework. Outstanding..

A good overview of the background to the social and technological development in Finland during the recent decades. Very precise in describing national characteristics, and how to handle them. Could maybe have stressed more the importance of the consensus mentality in politics and the unique education system, kindergarten to post-graduate.

This book is for anybody who has been to Finland or has dealt with Finns or plans to do either of the above. The author is an Englishman who has dealt with Finns for years in business ventures. He is also somewhat of a social historian and that makes his book very enjoyable. The book is a fast read filled with anecdotes and jokes and also covers how many other cultures do business in contrast to the Finns including Americans and Japanese. I have dealt with Finns in business and in teaching and this explained a lot of my observations and added some insights. If vacation or business brings you to Finland this is a must read. I immediately lent my copy to a friend who has been mystified by his occasional dealings with this interesting culture.

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