

MEDIA RELEASE

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Turku - the medieval former capital of Finland, and the host of the “Hanseatic Days 2004” carnival, celebrates majestic 775th anniversary

Turku, the oldest city in Finland is hosting the “2004 Hanseatic Days of Modern Times” carnival in June. This is the first time the 24-year-old carnival will be hosted in Finland. Turku is the only city in Finland that belongs to the Hanseatic League of 200 medieval Hansa Cities, and will celebrate its 775th Anniversary in 2004.

Turku and over 200 other Hanseatic cities are linked by long historical ties. The Hansa cities around the Baltic Sea countries, e.g. St. Petersburg in Russia, Rostock in Germany, Stockholm in Sweden and Gdansk in Poland, are among over 200 other cities that formed “the league of trading cities” during the 13th-16th centuries. The Hansa organised convoys to cope with pirates and later built lighthouses to safeguard against navigational dangers. Their influence also went beyond just facilitating trade to securing special privileges and trading monopolies for the association.

The Hanseatic Days in June introduce the tradition, trade and science of different countries and cities. Over 80 Hansa cities from Germany, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Holland, Belgium, Poland, Sweden, Norway and Russia will present their cultures, display their culinary journeys and offer handicrafts at the Hanseatic Market on the banks of the Aura River in Turku. The Medieval Market takes visitors back to the year 1397 in the middle of the bloom of the Hanseatic League. There are also dancing groups, medieval music, circus, choirs, performances, concerts and exhibitions carrying visitors through the past to the present international atmosphere. One of the highlights will be a playful rowing competition among Hansa cities, which will take place on the River Aura using traditional church boats.

Although the Hanseatic co-operation began in the Middle Ages, in its day, it was oriented towards the future. Today the Annual Hanseatic Days celebrations signify the Hansa cities’ desire to further strengthen co-operation and promote close and active connections with regard to trade and industry, culture, science and support among youth.

Turku is located on the West Coast of Finland, 2h rail/drive and 35 min flight from the capital of Finland, Helsinki. For more information please visit www.turku.fi or www.visitfinland.com. There are daily flight connections from Australia to Helsinki and Turku with Finnair and Scandinavian Airlines.

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