

Indoor O in Tallinn, Estonia

In early October I had a weekend in Tallinn, Estonia with a non-orienteering friend. Because I was largely in charge of planning, the weekend turned out to be one with an indoor orienteering event available, and a performance of Anna Karenina by Estonia National Ballet also taking place that weekend. What happy coincidences 😊

This turned out to be a great time of year to visit Tallinn. There were few crowds compared to the summer, and with trees changing colour, everything had an additional layer of lovely.



A view of Tallinn from close to the start

Seeing as there was an orienteering event on, it seemed rude to skip it, and I duly entered. The event was put on by Tallinn Orienteering Club (TON Orienteerumisklubi) and was one of a series of six indoor events that they will put on this year. Event information was all in Estonian, but some cut'n'paste and Google Translate, and I had the information that I needed. Entry was on-line, with the option to pay on the day, which I've found to be quite common for European events. Entry was €12 and there were 439 finishers.

Late Friday afternoon I arrived at the old Swedbank building on Liivalaia, in central Tallinn. As I got close, I could see other orienteers and a banner outside the building. Finding assembly? Tick.



The venue and assembly

Inside, first step was to find what my number was for the event and pick it up. Finding my number got a bit lost in translation as they were in two different places depending on if competitors had prepaid or not. But the ladies in assembly were really friendly and we got things sorted out.

There were a couple of big rooms inside the building to leave kit, also loos. Very civilised and organised. The building (actually two adjacent buildings) used to be offices for Swedbank, recently moved to a futuristic new building not that far away. What I thought was a nice touch was that the club had scheduled intro sessions to anyone not familiar with indoor O, and ran those every hour. An idea for Keyne-O perhaps?

After getting myself ready with number, dibber, magnifying glass and headtorch, I headed to the start. On entry we chose 30 minute start blocks and I had chosen an early block. The start was up on the 9th floor, but I didn't need to climb up 9 floors. Oh no, I could take the lift up. The first time I've ever had to take a lift to the start, and this is how I would like to get to all starts in the future, please. And actually, lifts were allowed to be used during the event. I suppose the risk would be how long you waited for one...



Route to the start, and the start

Getting to the start area, it was all very casual, just clear, then start whenever. No one minute start intervals, just punch and pick up a map. The map was a bit of a surprise: it was the longest map I have ever seen at 70cm in length. I felt like I should have a town crier un-scrolling the map for me to read. I could also see the potential for a mistake never before made: tripping over the map. Just no, get a grip.



The Map, and next to two S6Ds maps for scale

I had looked at some old maps on the club's website before going, and they didn't seem to be technically difficult, which was also the case with this event. As the W55's ran the same course as the M55's and M/W18's, it was long but it wasn't as difficult as a Stockholm Indoor Cup. So these events would be great for anyone wanting to try indoor O but not wanting to be overwhelmed by something that was too technical. There were one-way sections and uncrossable boundaries, but no one-way or split stairs.

The event itself was really fun, possibly because of the low levels of frustration. It was a little surreal at times in the vacant office building. Some rooms were completely empty, but others still had furniture in them. So I went through old boardrooms, an old cafeteria, past old reception desks, and one room strangely filled with bean bags. That was also the only place that I needed the headtorch as the motion activated lights in the room were clearly freaked out by all the orienteers entering and leaving, and decided to switch off completely.

I had a decent run, only one "mistake" where I took a slightly longer route and lost about a minute. At one other point I did forget what I was doing and had to stop to replan, but that was only a few seconds.

At the finish, maps and numbers were collected. The numbers are reused at subsequent events, and maps can be reclaimed at the next event. As I wasn't local I went back and the nice lady on download let me take a map after I promised not to show it to anyone. I folded it up and put it straight in my bag to smuggle out of the building.

Summary: Tallinn makes a great weekend getaway, with direct flights from London Luton, and TON's indoor O events are well worth a go.



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