

July 4th – 7th, 2014: Traditional Village European Project Mobility to Tallinn, Estonia

Arriving in Tallinn on Air Baltic via Riga, Latvia, Mark Konick and Betty Abugheida were met by our host and project colleague, Eero Elenurm, at the airport.

After checking in at our apartment hotel and walking a couple of hours on the cobblestoned streets of the old town, we chose a garlic restaurant for dinner. Garlic stuffed, prunes and olives followed by roasted garlic and garlic laced potatoes and meats we had garlic ice cream and garlic vodka.

Everything was delicious. We discussed project requirements and website possibilities over a long and relaxed dinner. Estonians have used garlic extensively for centuries along with other root vegetables and cabbage.

Driving us around in an electric Fiat which he markets and sells, Eero showed us the port, the Baltic Sea and several streets with interesting old wood houses. The houses were lovely pastel-colored or oiled and stained.

The second day we were dropped off at the open air museum, a large wooded park where historic buildings and windmills from almost all regions of Estonia are reconstructed: 15th-century farmsteads, fishermen's lodgings, a tavern where serfs and the gentry had separate eating arrangements, etc.

We joined the local population to view the last two and a half hours of the six hour opening festival parade on Saturday. Striped red and blue hand-woven traditional skirts, head dresses with flowers and ribbons, embroidered blouses, crochet decorated aprons, soft leather laced slippers, and some elaborately pleated ensembles were worn by women and girls. There was often a section of women wearing navy linen long simple dresses with long orange scarves representing the women's movement. Men and boys wore blue or brown jackets and mid calf length pants with stockings and leather slippers and sometimes long black embroidered coats and top hats. There was lots of music and some dance with spontaneous cheering throughout. Delegations of Estonian groups from Canada, Australia, the United States, and some European countries brought up the end of the parade of about 40,000 participants from 6 to 90 plus years old.

Exploring the sector of Tallinn at the top of a high cliff separating the city, we found classically European foreign embassy and government buildings and an extraordinary Russian Orthodox cathedral and three exceptional viewing platforms overlooking the old town and the port.

Driving through the modern sector and eating in the partially renovated industrial section, we walked around until dark (about midnight) as lots of other people were doing. Dawn comes at three something so not much real night.

On Sunday, we went to the last three hours of the choral and orchestral event which also lasted six hours. The once-every-five-year Song & Dance Festival closed with 23,000 musicians participating. The crowd was very respectful, well behaved and enthusiastic with lots of arm waving in unison and outbursts of cheering. I got the feeling that song and dance held this country of about one and a half million inhabitants together through centuries of invasions by Denmark, Sweden, Poland, Germany but mostly Russia. A total of 33,000 singers and 10,000 dancers participated in the festival which was attended by 153,000 people. The final concert, itself, was seen by 63,000.

We were most fortunate to have a local partner willing to show us his city and tell us about its history and geography. The Baltic Sea is beautiful and has no tide and apparently the land mass is slowly rising so there is no threat of global warming destroying the coastline. The economy continues to grow especially in IT technology but many people take the one hour forty five minute ferry to Finland to work. Stockholm is an overnight trip.

The short summer is bright, the light is special and its pleasantly warm so a great time for a festival. We are very thankful that Eero suggested we come for this once every five years event.

Betty Abugheida, E-Juniors Association, Paris (FR)

Photo-album link:

<https://plus.google.com/photos/106892727578398620636/albums/6033655477414831713?banner=pwa>