

Anna Skuse Finland 2019

In the February of 2019, four Penair students visited Tampere, Finland as part of the Erasmus+ exchange project. Here we met many amazing new people from a wide range of different countries that all partake in the Erasmus project. These countries were: Germany, Croatia, Spain, Italy and of course England and Finland. Because of this wide and diverse range of people we were immersed in many different cultures, backgrounds and ways of life. Throughout the week, we got to know everyone much better and by the end were much less ignorant to the wonders of the world.

Because we arrived late on Sunday, we didn't encounter much of Finland until Monday, our first full day. We initially visited Rellu High School which was where our exchange students attended. To break the ice, we took to presenting our culture, climate and overall history/ make up to the group. To represent Cornwall we made a video entitled: ' My Favourite Thing About Cornwall Is..' which highlighted young peoples version of Cornwall. Other countries took to videos, power points and presentations to educate us on the environment, common misconceptions and unique parts if their country.

Next we went into some Finnish lessons and saw their way of learning- the style of teaching was similar in some ways but different in others. Although they had similar lessons and teaching methods, they operated in a much less strict way. They have an attitude of trust and believe that you get out as much as you put in and that it isn't a teachers role to force people to immerse themselves in lessons but that it's the pupils responsibility.

On Tuesday we fully saw natures role on Finnish culture and how influential it is. We walked through a quaint path down to a more open area that was surrounded by forest. Here we had a bonfire and took in the beautiful sights that surrounded us. After a snowball fight and look around, it was time to go back into town and visit a museum where we saw many historical aspects of Finland with special detail on the Finnish Civil War – a modern historical period of history. After going home for a bite to eat with the family, we then headed out to go ice dipping, and yes, it was as cold as it sounds! Luckily there were saunas on sight to make up for the freezing cold water that we had just jumped into and although it was freezing at the time, it was an amazing experience to look back on and worth it.

On Wednesday we went a little further afield and visited the old capital and maritime town of Turku, here we saw the Finnish coast, visited the national maritime museum and visited a picturesque cathedral. After having a lunch in the city, we finished the day by visiting an art museum and seeing some amazing view points of Finland and its artistic aspects.

The next day we went into school to see a leavers show that the final year at school had put on to commemorate their time at school before leaving on exam leave. They all dressed up and showed us videos of their time at the school giving us even more of an insight into their way of life. After seeing this we headed into Tampere and saw the local sights of the city. To get an even better feel for the city, we went up to the top floor of a skyscraper and saw 360 degree views of the city surrounding us. To top off this already eye-opening day, we went to a local ice rink and tried our hand at ice skating with varied success!

On our final full day, we saw two amazing spectacles. Firstly we watched an annual tradition at the school. To celebrate becoming the oldest in school, the 2nd years all dressed up and had their version of prom which was a massive rehearsed dance that many took part in- a really elegant ball. After that, we

went to a national league ice hockey game and saw the physical fast-pace game that is so beloved by most Fins in real life. We even saw a fight close up because of our front row seats.

It is safe to say that by the end I was very upset to leave, the family had been so friendly and welcoming to me with the many different siblings all working hard to talk in English which of course they were incredible at. It really was a home from home and an unforgettable trip. Thank you to everyone who put thought and effort into the trip and to the Erasmus+ Project for making this amazing dream a reality!