

Monday: The family I stayed with lived in the countryside, so the father drove us the 40 minutes to school each day. We started the day by each country doing their presentations. Here we learnt about the role of nature in each of the student's everyday life, as well as getting to know everybody involved in the project. Afterwards, we got divided into 5 groups, with one student from each country in every group. We answered questions about ourselves to get to know each other and soon we started talking about our shared interests such as movies and books, which I never expected to be discussing in Finland but enjoyed it nevertheless. Next we went to lunch, which was a very different experience to Penair because here it was calmer and it was nice to see everyone sitting together in the canteen. In the afternoon I went to an English lesson, which I found fairly interesting. The class seemed much more engaged with work than in Penair and I was surprised at how advanced the work was that they were analysing (e.g Shakespeare) instead of just doing basic language learning. Back at the house, I had my first sauna which the mother prepared at a fairly low temperature so that it wouldn't be a shock to me.



Tuesday: Instead of going to the school, we got a 20 minute bus journey to the woods. We walked for a while - I especially enjoyed this walk because I thought the snow covered trees looked very beautiful - until we reached a clearing with wood cabins.

Someone made a fire in one of the cabins so we could cook sausages and marshmallows whilst we warmed up from the -7 degrees weather, and I had a chance to make friends with another one of the hosts. Afterwards, we all played a game of tag, which was very difficult considering the snow went up to my waist in some areas. In the afternoon, we went to a civil war museum, where we got a guided tour about the Finnish civil war. Before the trip I didn't even know there was a war, so I found that interesting and made me realise how many areas of history we'll never learn about just because it doesn't involve Britain. Later that evening we went to a public sauna and it was nearly too hot for me, though I enjoyed the experience. Many people also went swimming in a hole in the lake after a certain time in the sauna, but I only walked through the water, however that was enough for me. For dinner at



the house the mother cooked pasta and meatballs in cheese sauce, which was my favourite meal of the trip.

Wednesday: We took a two hour bus journey to the old capital city - Turku - which was located on the coast. We started the morning by looking around a maritime museum. Though I find many aspects of Finland's landscape very beautiful, such as the forests and lakes, I have to admit I much prefer our Cornish coastline, with the cliffs and beaches, and it is clear the coast doesn't have as much of an impact on their hobbies and activities as it does for people in

Cornwall. This is why I hope the Finnish students will appreciate our coastline as much as I do and it also made me more grateful for the beaches we have, because I couldn't imagine not living near them. We then went for lunch with the Croatians and Germans, before going to an art gallery and archaeology museum.

Thursday: The 3rd graders were going on a study leave so the 2nd graders had a celebration for becoming the oldest in the school. They did this by dressing up in random costumes and had an assembly in the hall to do quizzes and games with the teachers. Though I couldn't understand what most of them were saying, it was still funny to watch and the students seemed to really enjoy it. After that they boarded lorries and drove around the town



throwing sweets at people. Many people in the city, including us, stopped to watch. Later we sat in the tallest tower in the city, so we could look over all the buildings and the lakes beyond it. The city was much larger than Truro, but also had fairly low buildings. Many people also lived in apartments in the town centre, which is different to Truro, as most people who live in the town own terraced houses. The architecture was also more modern compared to England in general, where you can find far older and traditional buildings such as the library or the cathedral in Truro. In the afternoon we went to an ice sculpture exhibition, which was a very unique art form that I've never seen in England. When we arrived back at school, we made our own snow sculptures to prepare for the 3rd graders' dance on Friday.

Friday: In the morning, we went sledging which I found really fun, although having

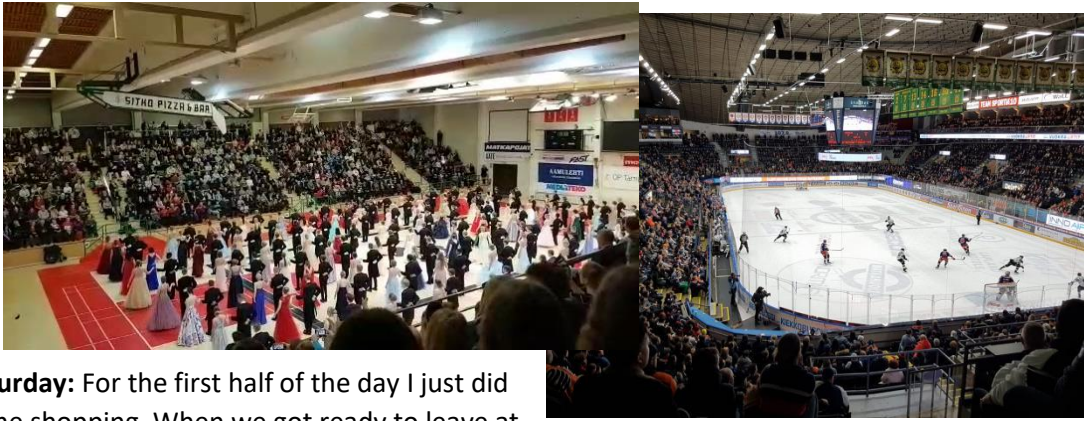


three people on one sled wasn't the best



idea. We also took photos on the nearby frozen lake, which was when I slipped over for the first time all week. Back in the town, we went to watch the 3rd graders' leavers ball. I thought everyone dressed up looked amazing and the dances looked great. It was really nice to see everyone dancing together, as prom in England isn't such a big deal. Afterwards we finished our snow sculptures. I made a snowman with some of the other students, and although it looked awful, I had

such a great time making it and chatting with them. In the evening, we went to an ice-hockey game, which was by far the highlight of my trip. It was so exciting to watch due to the fights and fast pace, and I've never seen a live game before. I could now say it's my favourite sport.



Saturday: For the first half of the day I just did some shopping. When we got ready to leave at the train station, I was really upset about leaving, because everyone was so welcoming (and I would definitely miss the snow). This was especially true for the parents, who were so nice to me throughout the whole visit and invited me back to stay in the summer to see the difference in climate, which I would love to do. I will also really miss my exchange partner because she was so kind and we had some great chats throughout the week.

Finns seemed to have adapted to their snowy winters very well. Cars and buses seem well equipped and many of the the people's favourite activities revolve around the cold climate, such as ice dipping after sauna and going ice-skating. I did find it strange how my exchange partner said she enjoys rain, because they get so little. People also make the most of the warm summers, as many own summer cabins for the holidays.

Unfortunately, due to climate change, I believe their snow seasons will be cut short due to the seas warming, so more precipitation occurs and they will get rain instead. Summers will also become colder, so they may not receive the warmth they look forward to.

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