

VISIT TO ESTONIA

Between the 11th and 17th of March we could spend an incredible week in Estonia. Before that I knew nearly nothing about the country and its history. For me it was just one of the Baltic states. From the first minute in Tallinn airport I realised that something is different, not like I had expected. I heard Estonian and found it similar to the familiar Hungarian melody. I knew that Finnish is similar to Hungarian but I was surprised to learn that Estonian is part of the Finno-Ugric language family too.

Our final destination was Tartu, which is the second biggest city of the country. It's small and provincial with the tranquil Emajogi River flowing through it. Estonia has an outstanding tradition of folk dancing. On our first day we were invited to the Tartu Folk Dance Gala Concert that lasted 3 hours. It was amazing to see how folk dance can bring a nation closer together. During the week we had two sightseeing tours too. We could visit the old town, the St. John's Church, Toome Hill, the Town Hall Square, the Sculpture of Kissing Students and the University of Tartu as well. Tartu is Estonia's premier university town, with students making up nearly the 7% of the population. This injects vitality into the historic settlement. We also had the opportunity to visit the AHHA Science Centre and the Estonian National Museum. We could learn about e-Estonia and student companies. My favourite programme was the excursion to the Meeninkunno bog. We spent the whole day walking along the nature trail. The picturesque landscape captivated everyone. Estonia's sparsely populated countryside and wide range of forests provide activities for nature-lovers. Actually 50% of the country surface is a forest area.

Estonians have many things that make them unique. The Estonian ID card includes not only personal and medical information but it's also connected to your bank account. You can even turn it into a key for your apartment. Internet connection is just like a dream. It's reliable everywhere even in the forest. All Estonians are proud of being able to manage everything in connection with the government services online. They pay their taxes online too. Last but not least, sauna is not just a sauna here, it's a cultural phenomenon. Most of the people have sauna at home.

Spending a week in Estonia was an authentic experience. I'm glad for the opportunity to visit this country with a rich history, diverse culture and many experiences waiting for the travellers.