Hey,
Regards from Helsinki! I am visiting here my friend and colleague Aris (whom I know from the trek in India) for some research collaboration. I arrived here last week and will be back on Monday.

I restrict my blog writing activity to exotic places, and Europe and North America usually do not fall under that category. But I must admit that yesterday's experience was a "border-line" case.

It was the ultimate Finnish experience: Aris and I went to an authentic Finnish sauna, that you can see here. That sauna is among the oldest in Finland and the heat there is produced just by burning wood. The heat inside is incredible! But as it is produced by wood, the scents are wonderful. The routine is to get inside for 5 minutes and then rest outside for about 15 minutes, and repeat it 3 or 4 times. Inside, you can cool yourself by throwing cold water on yourself (it is still an inferno though, and each time the door opens and other men get in, they have the annoying habit of turning the knob of the oven that, as a result, releases a vent of hot steam).

In the second "cooling session" we sat outside. But I mean really outside, in the street, completely naked (with a towel around the waist) in a freezing 2 degrees night just like the people in the picture. We had beer (a local brand) to make the experience complete. I wish I could send you pictures of the men and women that come to that sauna. Lets say that they were representing a different strata of society from the one that we mingled with the night before when we went to see "La Nozzi di Figaro" at the Helsinki opera.

To finish that evening comme il faut, we went to a Finnish restaurant that was very amusing (the interior decor includes tractors...) and I even liked the food. As you can see in the menu, it is not exactly a sophisticated cuisine. I had meat balls with mashed potatoes in brown gravy and beetroot - something that easily falls also under the category of American southern "soul-food". It was filling and tasty and that night I slept very soundly.

Hei Nahdaan Taas, (please forgive me for omitting the 2 diacritic points above each of the "a"s in "nahdaan"),

Tamir

Friday April 21, 2006 - 02:51am (PDT)