

Northern Hemisphere Adventure – Finland 2017

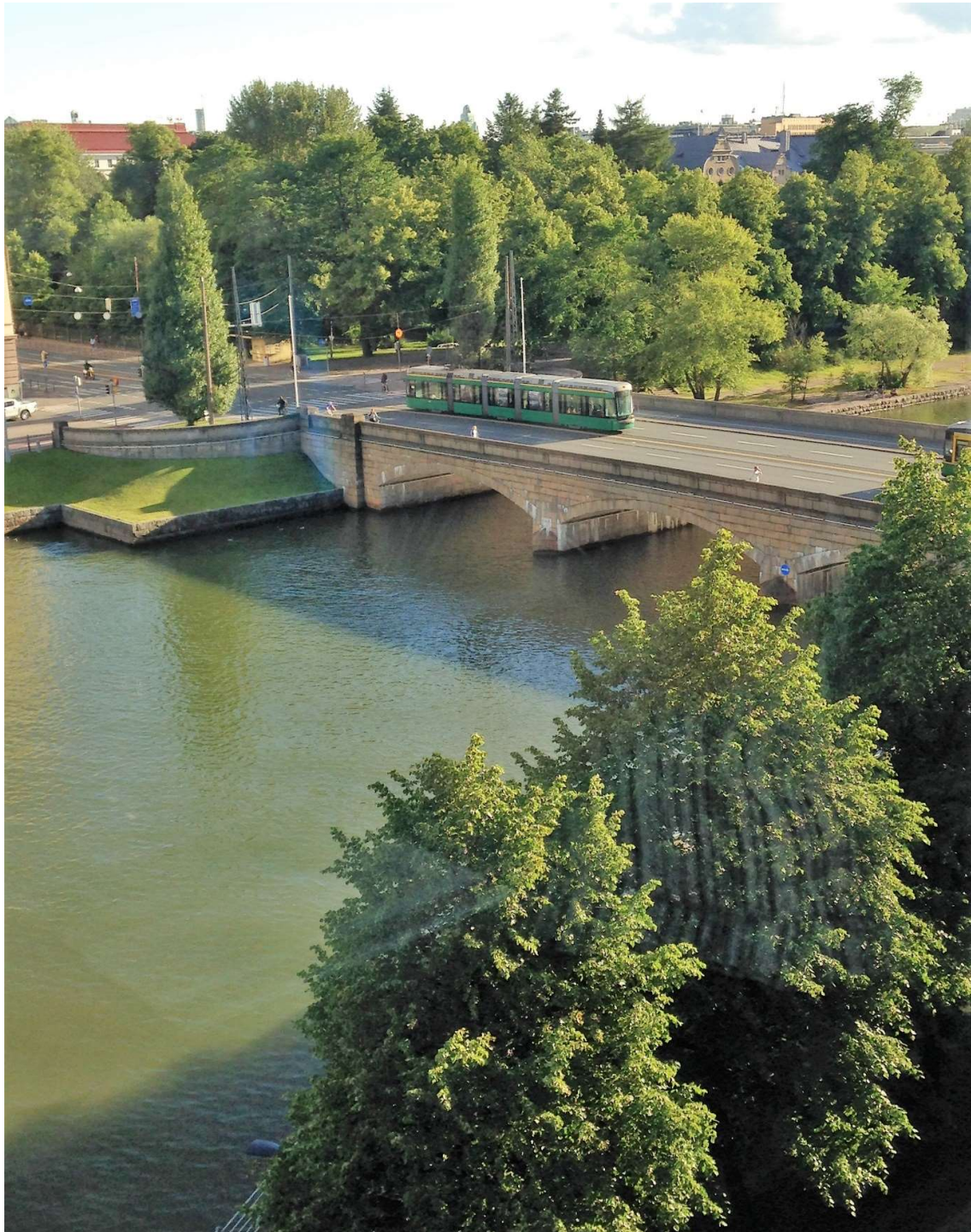
Day One – Thursday 20 July 2017

Today we travelled from London Heathrow to Helsinki. As usual not much is done or seen as you travel from one city to another. We left the hotel in Heathrow at 13:00 and boarded our flight at 16:10. The flight was late departing due to the late arrival of the inbound aircraft. After boarding we sat on the aircraft for ten minutes as the aircraft had missed its scheduled departure slot. After ten minutes the aircraft pushed back, and we were on our way. We had a pleasant flight and the meal served was excellent and up to the usual standards Finnair set. On this flight they were serving Australian wine from De Bortoli Wines so of course Maree and I took advantage of this.

On arrival we were met by Blacklane Cars – the company we use for airport pickups. – and they transferred us to the Hilton Strand Hotel. We have now settled into our room, and we have received our room service request of a bottle of wine so we can lay back and enjoy – as you can see Maree is already in relax mode.



Day Two – Friday 21 July 2017



View from our hotel

Today in Helsinki we went on the tourist trail and wandered around the town centre and visited the central market area on the wharf. We had lunch at a nice outdoor

trattoria. Maree really enjoys the people watching so it was an ideal location for lunch and coffee.

After lunch we continued our wander around the market area and then boarded a tram to travel to the ferry terminal to have a look. At the terminal the Norwegian shipping line had a ship in port, the "Norwegian Getaway". This ship at the time of its christening in January 2014 was the world's ninth largest vessel. The ship is huge but I would like to see it side by side with the world's largest vessel; the Oasis class "Harmony of the Seas".

As we walked the streets of Helsinki we came across a string quartet. They were play some great classical pieces and we stayed around to listen to them for a while. It was worth putting some euro into their case; and of course we did.



The string quartet playing some great classical pieces



People watching during lunch

We have also decided not to go to Tallinn, Estonia tomorrow. We were planning to go across just for the day, but the issue is the walking distance for Maree and the fact that the walking paths are all cobblestone. A flat surface would not have been such an issue but the cobblestones are a different matter. We have had a great holiday with the Greek island cruise and the 18 days in Iceland so we do not want to risk Maree injuring her knee walking in Tallinn for the day. So we will relax in Helsinki and do more touristy things tomorrow, perhaps a cruise on the harbour.



The Norwegian Line "Norwegian Getaway"

Day Three – Saturday 22 July 2017

Today we went back to the centre of Helsinki. We caught the wrong tram as I thought this tram also went to the central market area. We ended up back at the wharf for the ferry crossings to Tallinn and Stockholm. So, we stayed on the tram and went back on the same route until we found the area we wanted to be in. We got off the tram and after a short ten-minute walk we were back in the area we wanted to be.

First thing was to get Maree a coffee and have a bite of lunch. We chose the same trattoria we went to yesterday. We had a late start again today as we decided to take advantage of sleeping in for a change.

After lunch we went to the market and back to a stall that we looked at yesterday that had Maree's interest. The stall makes jewellery out of silver. All locally made and made by hand in Finland. As it is Maree's birthday next week it was a good opportunity to get myself into the good books and buy her some nice silver. As Maree was with me she could choose the pieces she particularly liked. She settled on a nice bracelet and a ring. You can see her wearing the items in the photo.



Maree with her silver jewellery – bracelet and ring – and of course champagne



People watching

From here we joined a cruise around the canals of Helsinki. It was a good opportunity to see the sights of Helsinki from the water. Following are views from the Helsinki canal cruise.







After the cruise we decided we would head for the hotel as the heavens looked as though they were about to open. They did shortly after we reached the tram stop to get back to the hotel. By the time we reached our stop it was pouring. Steve battled the elements to get Maree a bottle of wine for the evening while she stayed at the tram stop waiting for my return and hoping the rain would stop. Neither of us had our coats as it was sun and blue sky when we left the hotel at 11:30 this morning. I returned to collect Maree, wine in hand and soaking wet. So, we decided we wouldn't wait, and we started the trek to the hotel (only a five-minute walk). By the time we arrived we were soaked. About 30 minutes later the rain stopped, the clouds parted, and the blue skies appeared with sun shining.

Tomorrow evening, we start the journey home – Helsinki-Hong Kong-Sydney-Canberra. So, this will be the last entry to the blog for our Northern Hemisphere adventure unless something exciting happens tomorrow that requires me to write. Our flight departs Helsinki Sunday at 23:45 local time (06:45 Monday AEST). We arrive back in Canberra at 09:15 Tuesday morning. Hopefully Alex will remember to come to the airport to collect us.