

Cross-cultural journal

A. What have you learned about Finnish lifestyle, culture, history, society, communication etc.

In Finnish history are not many signs of ancient tribes, because of the big amount of ice during the ice age. Furthermore, the younger Finnish history (since 1500) is characterized by other countries trying to conquer or influence Finland. Sweden was pressuring from the northwest and the Soviet Union from the east. The influence reached its peak with annexation of some parts of Finland and declaring Helsinki as capital by the Soviet Union. The Finnish Declaration of Independence was, compared with the other European States, relative late, around 1910.

Another interesting part of the Finnish culture is the way of communication. In Finland applies the saying "speaking is silver, silence is golden". The Finns are more reserved and introverted. Listening to others quietly isn't seen as disinterest, au contraire, it is understood as politeness. The Finnish conversation culture is characterized by hearing out the opposite out until one starts talking. Fins are very proud of their country and the achievements of the Finnish society. In former days one of the biggest identifier was Nokia, since its fall and the success of Angry Birds Rovio filled the gap.

A potential reason for this is that Finland is always forgotten or underestimated in other countries. To be honest this counts for me as well, before I came to Finland, the only things I knew about Finland were Nokia and Angry Birds. This behavior is also seen regarding the Finnish Language. On the one hand most of the fins are able to speak English with you very well, but on the other hand they regard highly, when foreigners try to learn and use their language. Speaking about the good English skills, Finland has a one of the best education systems in Europe. The PISA Test for example shows this fact. In these tests is Finland always one of the highest ranked European countries.

You observation /description and opinion / analysis on some event you saw

One of the first habits, which I mentioned in Finland, is the "principal of trust". It appears to me that fins are very honest and honorable.

You can see this mannerism in some little points of the all day life, for example the fact that everybody leaves his jacket unobserved at the entrance of the university.

Another example is that you can pay your coffee together with your meal at the cafeteria and they tell you, that you can grab it, after you finished your lunch. At the time you take the coffee, nobody is asking you, if you have paid it, even if the person, to whom you gave your money isn't available anymore. It seems to be normal, that nobody tries to betray.

I found an interesting article¹ about this behavior on the Internet and feeling vindicated in my opinion. The editorial team of the Reader's Digest has done the

¹ <http://www.rd.com/slideshows/most-honest-cities-lost-wallet-test>, visited on April, 17th 2015

Cross-cultural journal, Philipp Sperber

"Lost Wallet" Test in 16 cities in different countries. During the test they dropped or lost 12 wallets anywhere every selected city and checked if they got returned. As expected, Helsinki was distinguished as the most honorable city with 11 returned wallets.

For me, as a German, this situation feels very good. In Germany the typical behavior is suspicion.