

October 22, 2012 (Helsinki, Finland)

Either airplane seats are getting smaller or my butt is getting bigger. It's difficult sleeping on the plane. I do get some sleep, but probably in 20 or 30 minute increments.

About an hour before landing, breakfast is served, a banana and an English muffin with some sort of egg product inside. Airplane meals keep getting worse.

Around 5:30 AM, we land in Amsterdam. After deplaning, I must go through customs then airport security to enter the part of the terminal that handles flights to the rest of Europe. The European security is much more stringent than in the U.S. I must remove all electronics out of my bag, including all cords and batteries. Of course my brain isn't working and I forget to take out my camera. So it takes me a little longer to go through security as my bag ends up being inspected by hand.

Once through security, I now have over 3 hours to wait until my plane departs for Helsinki. I first find an electrical outlet and recharge my iPhone. I then walk around the airport to find a good place to take another picture of Flat Stanley.

I return to my gate around 8:30 AM for my 9:40 AM departure. Almost every plane is being delayed due to the heavy fog and my plane is no exception. We don't have pilots as their flight from Manchester, England hasn't arrived yet and is late due to the fog. Finally they arrive and around 11 AM we depart. The plane is full.

Around 2 PM the plane lands in Helsinki. I get my bag, take another Flat Stanley photo and figure out which bus will take me to downtown Helsinki that is near my hostel.

My guidebook says the €4.50 (\$6) bus will take 45 minutes to get to the train station in central Helsinki, but it only takes about 25 minutes. The traffic is light and even though the bus makes a lot of stops, each one is quick.

I have my GPS and from the train station, it's only 0.45 miles to the hostel where I have a reservation. Walking through the streets of Helsinki, it looks very much like Stockholm or Oslo. The public transportation, besides the buses, seems to be trams that run on rails in the roads. Overhead are many wires that are used to power the trams.

Before reaching the hostel, I come across a small park. The leaves are changing colors here and all the trees in the park are a bright yellow. I stop and take a few pictures before continuing to the hostel.

I easily find the hostel and check in. I'm in an 8-person dorm room with bunk beds with 2 other guys and a girl. There's a sink in the room and down the hall toilets and a shower.





I leave my things in the room and head outside to walk around with the last remnants of sunlight today. Nearby the hostel is a small park with a bronze statue of a nude woman with a spear. I don't know the significance of it as it's not in my guidebook.

I walk back to the park where I was earlier. It's actually the grounds for Vanha Kirkko, a white church. The church doesn't look very old, but the grounds with a few gravestones

are very nice. I take a photo of Flat Stanley for my niece.

Across the street is a nice bronze statue that is a memorial to Elian Lönrot, a Finnish writer 'm not familiar with. I take another picture of Flat Stanley.



It's starting to get dark and I'm hungry. I stop



at a McDonalds (yes, I'm lazy) for a Big Mac, fries and Coke for €6.50 (\$8). Across the street I buy some cookies and water for later.

I return to the hostel to go to bed early. By around 6:30 PM, I'm in bed trying to sleep. Although I'm very tired, falling asleep is difficult.