

## Erasmus+ Estonia in Belgium

Johannes Sarapuu

Day 1: From kohuke to frikandels

29th of September, 2018

Our trip began in the early hours of a cold Estonian Saturday. At 8:30, we set off towards Tallinn to board our first flight to Helsinki. In order to keep energy until the arrival in Helsinki, a very Estonian kohuke and a not so Estonian panini was had by Johannes and Liisa.



The great paninis at the Tallinn airport

2 o'clock in Helsinki. Where can we find food? Everywhere. Food that isn't expensive? Nowhere. So we settle for the 20€ burgers and salads. At least they taste great.



A fantastic burger with blue cheese!

Finally, our flight to Brussels came. Some of us slept, some tried to, and some didn't even do that. Upon arrival, we were greeted by an airport of unbelievably gigantic proportions, which we had to walk a long way through in order to retrieve our luggage and exit the airport.

Then we met our lovely Belgian students who would take us into their homes for the upcoming week. Running between trains, we had a nice chance to get some first impressions and talk a little bit about ourselves and our countries.

Arrival in Waregem. We were tired. And hungry. Our local friends took us to a frituur – a little diner where you can get Belgian fries. A true Belgian staple, they said. The fries were amazing and even the strange sausage, frikandel, tasted very good. Then it was time to go home and rest.



Day 2: To each their own

30th of September, 2018

Today, our Belgian families organized our day. Me and Wout's family visited Ieper (Ypres) where I had a taste of some really good duck. We walked around the city walls and I managed to capture a few nice shots too.





After that, we drove around a bit, visiting different memorials and graveyards of the soldiers who fought in World War I. I got to know so much about the history of Belgium and its place in that war, which was very impressive for me. Now I know that mustard gas was first used in Ieper and the old buildings there were actually rebuilt after the bombings using the paintings and drawings of artists.

Day 3: Burgers in Brugge

1st of October, 2018

Monday was our chance to get more sleep as we were due to leave for Brugge at 1PM. In the train, we were split into two groups and given a map with tasks we had to do. Our mission seemed easy enough: Find certain places in the city based on the clues given, take a picture with the whole group and try to beat the other group.



As it turned out, it was not so easy after all. Some of the clues were terribly difficult to figure out as we ended up circling and sitting around an area with lots of swans. It also turned out that some of the places we had found and which we were sure of were not right at all. To relieve our brains and rather tired legs, we got some waffles and some of us got rather....chocolatey.



As evening approached, we were supposed to gather at a burger restaurant to find out who had won. To our surprise, it was the team I was in: Wout, Matisse, Juudit Elisabeth and me. For that, we received a 50-euro brochure for the restaurant.



A nice meal was the perfect end to a rather tiresome, but thrilling day. The week was still ahead.

Day 4: Waregem walkaround

2nd of October, 2018

On Tuesday, the Estonians and the Belgians gave a presentation and a quick introduction of their schools to each other. Our Belgian friends gave us a little tour of their hometown, Waregem. A truly cute and cozy town it is! We saw the park, the hippodrome and the very modern library Waregem has.



Later, we got our first taste of the school food in Belgium. Our honest opinion was that it was a just bit more delicious than ours.

After lunch, we started working on our project. We had to create a simple guidebook with tips that anyone can use to make their everyday life just a bit more eco-friendly and sustainable. The completed project can be found here: <https://erasmusplanetb.wordpress.com/>

In the evening, both delegations had to introduce the cuisine of their countries. The Belgians offered a huge variety of foods from little snackbreads and cheeses to different types of biscuits and chocolate pudding. But most importantly, french fries! Or as we agreed to call them: Belgian fries. The Estonians prepared a few simple Estonian classics: black bread with butter and pickles, kama, kali, and various Estonian candies. Parents were also invited to the food court and everyone got a taste of the weird and perhaps somewhat intimidating Estonian food. Fortunately, it was mostly praised by the Belgians. And no less tasty is Belgian food, especially the fries!





Day 5: Towels from old trousers?

3rd of October, 2018

On Wednesday, we had lots of time to finish our projects as Thursday morning was our deadline and presentation day for each pair and the topic they worked on in the project. Between project work and lunch (which was followed by more project work), we visited Jules Clarysse, a small company which produces bath towels and kitchen linens from recycled clothes such as jeans. The towels are very nice and soft and we were told that they will eventually be available for the general public to purchase as well. You can find their website right here: <http://www.julesclarysse.com/en/pure-products.htm>



After the visit and some additional project work, we were free to go. We hung out together afterwards and the day was over.

Day 6: Ghent and cuberdons

4th of October, 2018

On Thursday morning, we finished up our project work and gave presentations on what we had done to each other and the teachers. We were rather satisfied with what we had created and hope that people will find it useful.



After lunch, we headed to the train station again, this time taking a ride to Ghent, another magnificently beautiful Belgian city. Upon arrival, we had a similar mission with our groups from the previous “city game” in Brugge. This time, however, we also took some time to look around the city and enjoy our surroundings. Ghent and Brugge are truly remarkable and beautiful cities – the combination of old and modern in the architecture and the overall layout of the city really make these cities a sight one must see!





As the game ended, we gathered at the Gravensteen castle to take an audio guide tour of the castle. To be fair, I was rather doubtful about how good the guide was going to be, but the audio guide at that castle was unbelievably entertaining and funny. I suggest every reader to pay a visit to that castle just for the audio-guided experience. We were told many interesting historical facts, but everything was retold in an amusing manner.





We had dinner at a funky and modern pizza restaurant, where the winners of the second game were announced too. And oh glory, it was us once again! We sat down to eat and share our fun. The pizzas were delicious, but quite extraordinary – the dough was made using beer and the toppings on some pizzas were highly creative to say the least. Nobody will forget Wout’s sausage pizza. Go to Ghent, eat pizza at Otomat!

We returned to Waregem quite late as we missed one train and the one we managed to get on later was delayed for a while. This gave us a chance to demonstrate some popular Estonian songs and show the Belgians what Estonian folk dancing looks like.

Day 7: Goodbyes and tears

5th of October, 2018

Early Friday morning, we got on the train one last time. Our destination: Brussels Airport. It was a sad goodbye. We truly had had fun during that week and made great friends, but now it was time to go back. Tears weren’t held back by some of us.

Goodbyes said and hugs....hugged, we began our trip back to Estonia. Our conversations were mostly about how great of a week it had been and remembering all the fun we had. Fortunately, we are going to meet them again in May, when they come to Estonia.

Thank you, Belgians, it was a great experience!

