On the 14th, two days after my return from Toulouse, we hosted a gathering at our place of several of the friends that we have made while in Finland. The guests consisted, primarily, of American-Finn couples and their children, though this was not the rule.

The Finnish way of getting together is different from what is typical in the States: folks gather early in the afternoon and stay as long as they want into the evening. Also, the hosts provide everything, more or less. This makes it nice for both host and guest, as it is a pleasure to be able to focus either on the giving or on the receiving of hospitality.

We had a very nice evening; it felt good to give back a little to those who had given to us over the course of the year. After everyone had left, it struck both Jen and I how good the friendships we have made here are. We have been blessed, and in this sense, it is too bad that we have to leave.

At the party: left, an adult action shot; and right, a kid action shot (Alex’s best friend Nicolas).

Jen, Pam, Shannon, Tina, Ron, and Heidi.
On the 16th, we made a trip to the beach, which has been one of the things that we’ve enjoyed (and will miss) most about Helsinki. It was a pleasant day, at around 70 degrees Fahrenheit and sunny. We are not looking forward to returning to the oppressive heat of August in Montana.