Mom and Josh are such good little travellers: Mom is like a curious little kid with lots of questions and a desire to see everything, while Josh is mellow-yellow, i.e. very pliable and go-with-the-flow. So I, being the "cruise director" as Mom is calling me, am having a delightful time hosting them and showing them Helsinki.

They have been with us for 9 days (it’s May 14 as I write). So far, we have visited a number of churches and islands, two fortresses, two world-heritage sites, crazy art exhibits, the Zoo, and have been on several boat rides on the Baltic Sea. I am trying to provide them with a good mix of activities, without keeping them too busy. One thing that the Euros don't do is run around with coffee to go. They sit with their coffee (or beer) and watch people walk by, with the sun (if they are lucky) on their cheeks. So, I am trying to get them to do some of this as well. Unsurprisingly, they are quite good at it. However, I think that Mom would go all day if I let her.

Food has been a fun experience as well. We have had a number of traditional Finnish dishes: on the first night I fed them reindeer with linion berries; today we had a picnic of salmon cured with salt and sugar (not cooked); and last night we ate baked salmon with rainbow trout caviar. The kids tried the caviar for money, with Alex nearly barfing twice. Both Mom and Josh have been quite adventurous with food.

We went to Estonia the day before yesterday, which is 2 hours south by boat, across the Baltic Sea. Tallinn is the capital of Estonia and contains a wonderful medieval era fortress and old town full of 11th century buildings and churches. It is well preserved.
due partly to the fact that during the Soviet Union’s 50+ year occupation, there was no money for urban renewal projects. In the rich areas of Europe, similar places were destroyed in the name of progress.
Zoo Day: (left) on the ferry at the end of the day; (right) Elli, Alex, Karen, Josh and Jen stroll;

And again, on the ferry trip away from the zoo (in the background).