Helsinki Journal, Entry 49, July 8, 2007

We write on the day following our return from a nine day road-trip across middle Finland. We began on the west coast and by the end of our trip had visited three cottages, one country school house, and one backcountry cabin.

We rented a car and left Helsinki on Thursday, June 28. Our first stop was our friends’ Pam and Pasi Kaskinen’s lake place. There, the kids (ours and theirs) played rambunctiously, swam, and took sauna. The adults stayed up late and enjoyed midnight sauna and a gorgeous boat ride. Light never left the sky.

John diving into the Kaskinen’s lake at midnight after sauna.

On the second day, John and Elli went to Moomiworld with Pam and her girls; John has been reading Elli the Moomi books throughout the year and they had planned on doing this before we returned for Missoula.

Elli with her patron saint Little My (Pikka Myy) and Moominpappa, and Alex at the lake.

On the third day, we met another American/Finn couple, Paula Rubino and Jussi Pöyhönen, in Uusikaupunki (I’ll bet you can’t pronounce that correctly on your first try!).
These guys have an absolutely amazing country place. It is an old school house that they have converted into a residence/studio; both are accomplished painters. Their local lake was just a short walk away, and we visited it several times. Also, they put on amazing spreads for us both nights, and their son Olavi really hit it off with Alex and Elli. It was another very nice stay.

From there, we made a long drive to the eastern lake country and a campground with small cabins, one of which we rented, at Karvio. We spent the following day lounging around, swimming, and taking sauna. The Finnish lake country is spectacular.
From Karvio, we went to an old Monastary and then to Heinävesi to visit the local museum and to load up on food and drink for the next summer cottage visit. Hillka and Velimatti were our hosts for the evening. We enjoyed excellent meals, and an old-fashioned smoke sauna (savusauna) and late evening singing.

Left: Ellie and Jen after savusauna. Right: Velimatti tying birch leaves together to use in sauna; these are used to slap the skin during sauna.

For our last night, we rented a boat with the Harrio family and set off for a rustic and remote cabin that is only accessible by boat. Along the way, we saw some rock paintings dating back 5,000 years. Also, the island we stayed on had millions of ripe wild blue berries! Again, our evening ended with sauna and sausages.

Here we are in our old boat.

Our friends and companions for several of our Finland adventures the Haarios.

A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR HOSTS; FINNISH HOSPITALITY IS INSPIRING!