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Cross-cultural journal

1. **A**

Before I came to Finland for my exchange studies I had been here a few times. I arrived to Lappeenranta for shopping and these visits were very brief. My home city is Saint Petersburg and we have very similar nature, landscape, weather, but Finn's attitude to the environment attracts attention. Unfortunately, in Russia we have a problem with that: piles of garbage left on vacation spots cause really depressing. The Finnish cleanliness is the first that I note crossing the border.

Here in Otaniemi, the first thing that surprised me is the wild animals on the streets – squirrels and hares, it is absolutely impossible in cities and towns of Russia. Some time later I noticed randomly growing trees and watched as construction workers tried not to hurt the old pine tree, this is really great. The story about the construction of Dipoli even more convinced me that the nature for the Finns has a value far greater than for most people of my country. The idea of recycling waste by means of high cost of drinking production and the return of the money for the delivery of bottles or cans into the special machines is also cool.

During my stay here I have not managed to get a big experience in communication with Finns. The fact that one of my flatmates is a Finn did not prevent that because I see him only a couple of times a week and he has never talked to me a lot, well I don’t even know his name. Apparently Finns are really shy. Once I and my friend came to our first sauna party, none of the Finns have not approached us to get acquainted first, despite that there were not so many people and we were kind of like guests. We were confused in those few minutes of silence, until we took the initiative. Then it became clear for us that we are quite different.

Speaking of Finnish history, I learned not many new things from this course because we, Finns and Russians, are neighbors and for me it was not possible to ignore our general history. The surprise for me was the large number of German-speaking students here. Well, with them Finns also had a lot in common in the past. One of my interests is the World War II submarine warfare, especially U-boats, so the next place for my visit is definite: Vesikko, the prototype of German submarines type II.

1. **B**

**Observation/ Description**

There are many cyclists in Finland, even in the city, even in winter. Every campus building inundated with bikes. Bike paths are everywhere here. There are specialized bicycles for workers of some professions in wide use.

**Opinion / Analysis**

Bicycling is a very healthy form of transport, besides it is very eco-friendly. I love cycling very much, but unfortunately, in St. Petersburg I can enjoy this activity only in the parks. Getting from point A to point B on the bike is very impractical in my city: we don’t have bike paths, we don’t have traffic signals, we don’t even have the sensible rules of cycling. The excellent example of this is the adventure of British TV show Top Gear presenters in St. Petersburg this summer. They decided to hold the race in the city among the different types of transport. Jeremy Clarkson used a hovercraft on the rivers of the city, James May drove in a small electric car and Richard Hammond rode a bicycle. As a result, Hammond came to the finish line last because he had broken his bike costing 13,500 dollars collided with a tram rail. St. Petersburg is the world champion in the number of tram tracks. However, there are no such problems here, so this spring I finally will buy a bike and will discover the European favorite mode of transport.