

30.11.2009
Poznan

Hello everyone,

The second complete month in Poznan is almost over. The place is still as green as ever, and as the sun shines, many people here make jokes about every day being the first spring day of Poznan. I am not exactly sure how situation is like in Finland, but I do hope that when I return to my home country for christmas holidays, it will also look like christmas around.



the

As Finland, during the last month Poland has been quite concerned with the rapid spreading of the swine influenza. The virus that has been on the loose the neighbouring countries for most of this autumn has at long last made a breakthrough in Poland too. However, there have only been a few death cases reported so far. Contrary to Finland, mass vaccinations are not taking place in Poland. Apparently the Tamiflu vaccine is being sold in pharmacies, but the state is refusing to buy any more vaccines from producers before the side effects and risks of the vaccines are made clear and public. Right now the situation seems to be under control, which seems surprising considering how the flu has ravaged Ukraine, for example. I keep my fingers crossed that it won't get any worse - although my Polish teacher and her black sense of humour has convinced us all that we will get the virus sooner or later. Who knows.

in

Despite fears of illness, November in Poland has been quite the season for mass celebrations. November 11th was the Independence Day of Poland. Red-and-white Polish flags were everywhere to be seen that day, but in Poznan the main focus of the day was the name day of the main street of the city, *Święty Marcin*. On that wednesday all schools and shops were closed, and all the population of the city gathered to the centre of Poznan for a huge street celebration. And what a riot it was! There were stalls everywhere, selling foods, little knick-knacs and jewellery, there was music playing and herds of people in high spirits running about. Moving on amidst the people was pretty difficult, so after a while of browsing I decided to leave the scene before the concerts and the bonfire of the evening began. Instead, I got a couple of delicious local pastries called *rogale marcinskie's* from a stall and enjoyed the rest of the holiday at home.

The next week a demonstration for all kinds of tolerance was organized in Poznan. My roommate has visited the affair for the last six years, and that's how I got in the fun as well. Poland is a country that, in my opinion, definitely needs more activism and tolerance of diversity of people. The country is held by a fist of conservatism, that sometimes seems old-fashioned to the eye of an outsider. Therefore I felt like it was my honour to attend the demonstration alongside my roommates, school friends and some of the most famous drag queens in Poland. The loud and colourful demonstration did succeed in getting attention. There were a lot of people both participating in the demonstration as there were observers on the sides of the streets that we passed. Many seemed to enjoy the energy of the demonstration, although I could definitely see the odd few dirty glances from the audiences. In addition to it being the biggest demonstration so far, the event was peaceful this year as well, and the policemen watching over the demonstration were luckily left unemployed in the end.



This is how November passed in the depths of Poland. There is one more Polish party, the Andrzejki to attend to, and afterwards it is time to turn the calender onwards to December. It is the holiday month, so for me a good half of it will be spent in Finland.

Until next month,
Anna