



WIMA 2008 Rally, Historic Saimaa in Finland, Ristiina August 4th – 9th 2008

The group of about 40 volunteer people started the job already on Saturday 2.8. by getting the road and info signs on place, checking the place for the campers and by decorating the area. We had a detailed working hour schedule for the activities, over 8 000 "man hours"! There were some people who stayed only for couple of days and some who had paid 50% of the rally fee, and working for half a week and then of course some of us stayed in Heimari area for full 10 days.

There had been already some people trying to get to the rally area before Monday morning but we instructed them to go to Mikkeli and stay in a hotel. When morning of Monday dawned it was grey and rainy. Many of the volunteers were thinking that this weather is like a prophecy for the week to come. Fortunately it stopped raining before midday and the sun even started showing, even though it wasn't very warm.

Almost all the rally participants arrived already during Monday, in good time before the welcome dinner. There were problems already to start with, the morning rain had wetted the bigger tents through the chimney-hole (one of them was not covered properly), there was one small trash can in fire and the toilets were overflowing. The tent was fixed, the fire was put out and a tank truck came and fixed the toilets. The day was full of action even when we didn't have anything official organized. People were setting up their camps and meeting old friend and getting to know new ones.

The theme for the Monday evening was medieval times. The food was served from wooden splints. The kitchen was not prepared to have so many and so hungry people at the feast so food ran out and they had to warm up some left-over soup. It was quite embarrassing but when later in the evening people got extra sandwiches, everybody was pleased.

The main event of the evening was the WIMA baptism. People were guided to a hut in the middle of the forest and there we had two shamans talking gibberish (actually Finnish but for most people it sounded like gibberish). They marked everybody with a spot of coal smut and gave them rune stones. There were explanations of the runes at the hotel and many people said it was exactly like what they think about themselves! At the hut we also had three of our motorcycle sisters showing some amazing talent of fire-eating and -blowing!

Tuesday was the day for the rock paintings. The boat was fully packed, 100 people decided to leave mc's and enjoy the sunny weather onboard. Some people wanted to ride to the scene; we had organized supervision at the parking lot so that everybody could leave their gear and not carry them through the woods. Everybody was amazed about the paintings, imagine, they were painted some 3000 years B.C.E.!!!

Tuesday we also had a beach party even though the weather was not warm anymore. Girls wore bikinis over their normal clothes to get into the mood, they got comments like "Finnish are grazy", quite right ☺. There were games and plays which I think the "hell-on-wheels" was the most popular activity. After shivering outside it was heavenly to go and relax at the smoke sauna.

Even the lake didn't feel so cold when you ran to the water straight from the warmth of a pitch black sauna. Evening was reserved for karaoke and dancing.

Wednesday was for MC ORIENTEERING, meaning 5 places to drive to. Each pit stop was open only for 2 hours so there was no time to waste. Once you got to the spot, there was either a question to answer or a task to perform. The funniest thoughts came when people tried to guess what were ice picks used for!

In the evening we had the Fantasy Party. There were a hairdresser and a make-up artist to get all guests ready. We had shamans again, a scary troll, a punk geisha, couple of cats, witches and of course the true-blondes (wigs) among the party people. The team from Sweden won the contest of the best act with their musical presentation of old TV-characters. WIMA Japan resented their rally invitation for 2010 and they got a lot of interest. After the shows there was a Finnish singer, Saija Varjus, singing and later also a DJ giving the beat for the party.

Thursday was the main day, the parade! It was quite a majestically sight when about 200 bikes drove from Heimari to Ristiina. We had a polar bear on one bike and a Santa on the other. The parade was lead by the priest who then gave the gospel at the church of Ristiina. There was a market after the gospel, food and warm drinks and lots of things to buy. In the evening the party was not in Heimari but in Metsälinna, a dancing place in Ristiina. They had two bands, one playing dancing music, and the other one a bit heavier stuff. In the middle there were dance instructors showing people to dance square dance. Everybody was dancing their feet off!

Friday started out wet. It was literally pouring and we had to make room at the office building to get people inside with their sleeping bags. The room was full in no time but girls were happy to get inside to warm and dry place. They also got their tents to be dried at the hotels basement. Basically everybody just waited to rain to stop but there was at least one girl who was determined to get as much points from MC SPIN as possible. I believe she drove 500 km that day when searching for the places around Ristiina and the neighboring villages. MC SPIN had 17 places to visit, it was intentionally made so that it would be quite impossible to go through all of them. I think Erica at least tried, and she did get the first prize at the evenings farewell party. Then we gave presents to the people who did something at MC ORIENTEERING, "hell-on-wheels", darts, soda-basket-walk and so on. We had so much presents that finally we had to just get people to pick their favorite prize by lottery! There were over 100 people who got something. Finally we gave the WIMA flag to USA, it's their turn to get WIMA family together again on 2009.

Thank You girls and all the WIMA family!

It was really a great fun to have you in Finland and we're looking forward to the next gathering!
See you soon,
Ninnair