

Informal report

The Summer School “Russian Culture in Baltic Nature” is indeed a good example of the learning by doing method. While travelling across the three countries once belonging to the Russian Empire we had the opportunity to experience something similar to those students and master lads who were on the bum before acquiring their academic or vocational qualifications in days of old. The theme of wandering was a leitmotiv of our summer school anyway.

By seeing much of the emblematic Russian heritage surrounding the Gulf of Finland we could visit those places which were familiar to many of us from our secondary school or university studies already. But to see and learn about these gems live gave an enormous surplus to all of us. The sailors of Kronstadt (1917) or the battle of Narva (1700) may be well known to many people from history textbooks, but to physically reside in these venues while learning about their historical significance and future perspectives from local experts is a unique chance to have.

Another positive aspect of this field trip was its emphasis on visuality. In order to deliver our final group presentations we had to take photographs at a high-standard both artistically and technically. This was especially refreshing after our reading based formal studies in the past academic year. The importance of visual culture was demonstrated by the presence of a semi-professional photographer from Glasgow, Shamil Khairov, who shared some of the tricks of the trade with us.

Although the title of the summer school only mentions Russian culture, in fact we got acquainted with some of the German heritage as well. Palmse manor and Kuressaare castle in Estonia are good examples of this multicultural presence in the Baltic nature. Finally I could warmly recommend this summer school to those who are less competent in natural sciences as well, since the study of cultural heritage clearly had priority above the study of natural environment.

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