

Thursday, 8th – Monday, 12th June

TOUR REPORT



Our day started off well with a flight in a Finnair A350-900, which I think we were all impressed with, certainly very quiet.

On arrival in Helsinki we were greeted by leaden skies and drizzle. Our excellent coach driver (Tomi) took us to the nearby Finnish Aviation Museum. There really are some rare aircraft in here, though unfortunately rather crammed in, so not too good for photos. Access to the restoration hangar was not possible due to all their staff working downtown in readiness for the airshow the following day,

which was actually being organised by the museum. It was then about a 40 minute drive to our hotel in Helsinki in torrential rain.

Friday morning was grey and gloomy but at least it was dry. The night before the weather forecast was checked, showing north-easterly wind so we planned to position ourselves for photos of aircraft on finals for runway 04L. The best laid plans! Wind forecast was almost 180 degrees out, so they were landing 22R, the worst possible option, as due to forests you cannot get into a decent position. So we made our way to the free open air viewing area on top of a building close to the terminal. A bit distant for shots, but not that bad.

In the afternoon the bus took us to the waterfront in the Kaivopuisto area for the evening show to celebrate 100 years of Finnish independence. By now the skies were clear and it was a lovely, sunny and even warm, evening!

The show lasted four hours, and even included seven light aircraft on floats landing and parking in front of where some of us had made our base. Several aircraft from the Finnish Armed Forces took part in the show, including a spirited performance from an NH-90 helicopter, including ejecting a number of flares, as did the Finnish F-18 who gave an impressive display.

The Border Guard took part with a Do-228 and Super Puma. Finnair provided flypasts by an A350, and a Nordic Regional Airlines ATR-72.



Foreign participation included a very good performance by the Red Arrows, who received applause from the large crowd. The Swedish Air Force provided JAS-39 Gripens, and the US Navy a pair of F-18E/F from the USS Abraham Lincoln. These were ferried to Helsinki with the support of an Omega Air DC-10 tanker.

The Hornets display was however, extremely disappointing, comprising only of a few straight and level passes. In their defence the aircraft were not flown by Navy pilots, but by Boeing pilots as the manufacturer is hoping the Finns will select the type for their air force. Other competitors are the Rafale, F-35, Gripen and Typhoon. All the manufacturers had stands giving away baseball caps, the Rafale people dispensed 10,000 of them that day! (Plus another 20,000 at Seinajoki airshow). The climax of the show was a display at 20:40 by the 'Midnight Hawks', the Finnish Air Force's 4-ship Hawk aerobatic team.

This event was watched by a crowd of 130,000 - the largest ever crowd at an aviation event in Finland.



Saturday was spent driving north to Seinajoki for a second airshow at this small airport. En-route we stopped to look at the famous "Hanssin-Jukka Douglas DC-2" in the Tuulonen shopping mall near Tuulos where it is now on public display. Also here, inside and suspended from the roof, was a Focke Wulf FW-44 and a floatplane. Outside was a MiG-21 and a Saab Draken.

your local Waitrose or Tesco!

Perhaps I should mention that this location was a shopping mall! Think of that the next time you are at

Sunday was a day at the Seinajoki Air Show, where most of the group had taken the option to purchase advance tickets for the area set aside for spotters: we also got a short ramp tour.



Although the day was grey and cloudy it did at least stay dry. Some of the participants at the Kaivopuisto event also took part here. Other notable flying displays were conducted by a Vliima and Yak-11.

That night we were all looking forward to relaxing in the hotel set in lovely surroundings. Then came the shock, the bar ran out of draught beer! Whether this was the fault of the hotel or our thirsty group the night before is debatable!

Monday morning was spent driving back to Helsinki in the incessant rain and our A321 flight back to Heathrow.

Thanks to all those who came on the trip – from the feedback we received everyone enjoyed themselves very much.

NOTE: Next year is the 100th Anniversary of the Finnish Air Force which will be celebrated with an international airshow in Jyväskylä on the 16th and 17th June. Arrangements are now being made for a week-long tour which will include both days at the airshow, 'arrivals' day and major aviation museums and collections.