

# THE SKY is the **LIMIT**

 **BIOTEHNIŠKI**  
CENTER NAKLO  
SREDNJA ŠOLA



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# From a student backpacker to accompanying teenagers to Estonia

By Maša ŠKRLEP

I travelled a lot in secondary school and later in my student years. I backpacked through parts of South Asia, visited a few cities in the USA, even worked in the Canary Islands for a few weeks, spent a summer at a surf camp in the Basque Country and visited several countries on the old continent. However, I find it difficult to speak English wherever I go.

Since most of my trips were banned in the Covid season, my travel pause was a little longer than I expected. So, when the call to accompany Erasmus+ students to Estonia came up, I didn't hesitate for long – I wanted to travel and I knew I had to step out of my comfort zone with my English. The day of departure came quickly and I met the students in front of the school in Strahinj. Then everything went as it should and, after stops in Venice and Tallinn, we arrived in Pärnu, the summer haven of Estonians in the south of the country. The weather was rather

unkind, if fitting for the end of October: rainy, cold and dark.

The school that hosted us has an interesting organisational structure. Following the reorganisation of schools, all the vocational and technical schools in the region were brought together into one centre. Thus, the Pärnumaa Vocational Training Centre trains tailors, ICT security specialists, confectioners, hairdressers, beauticians, sales organisers, accountants, small business entrepreneurs, caregivers, activity coordinators and many others. The school has 140 employees, around 1,100 students and 2,000 adult learners attending various courses annually. A unique feature of PVEC is its compact campus, which comprises five buildings in a nature-friendly environment.

The students took part in workshops on food and nutrition (baking, pastry making, working in the study kitchen and the large school kitchen). The lessons

are divided into several school workshops: they start in the school study workshops and then the work continues in the larger ones. The school kitchen is organised in such a way that students prepare lunches for the whole centre and also for external users. The organisation is therefore quite different from ours – the school kitchen is staffed by a head cook, a mentor teacher who manages the work process, an assistant cook and a dishwasher. The school canteen is also part of the kitchen – here the students are served by a catering manager, also known as #canteenqueen, named by the students. The school canteen offers one lunch with two different side dishes (usually peeled boiled whole potatoes and rice or buckwheat porridge). Two healthy desserts, typical Estonian sourdough rye bread, soup and two types of salads are available every day. Water and, interestingly, milk are also always available – the latter is especially popular with male students.

The financing of school meals is similar to ours: ingredients are purchased through public procurement. As this has been my work responsibility lately, I naturally asked whether it was the same in Estonia. I found out that we have much stricter legislation, particularly on the procurement of organic foodstuffs, but otherwise we are very comparable.

When we were not at school, we explored the surrounding area – the beaches, the spa, the town and the town museum. We were a bit unlucky with the weather, but towards the end we enjoyed a long morning walk at sunrise on Pärnu beach. We spent a day in Tallinn, which was absolutely charming, and one at the Tolkuse marsh. We had a great time with the students – although 11 days is a long time :) – and we all gained new experiences that will encourage us to continue our good work.

I will definitely return to Estonia in spring or summer, as the waters are calling for kayaking and the flat roads and cycle paths are perfect for a bike trip.

