



Senior volunteering projects
24TH TO 11TH April 2014
FINAL EVALUATION WITH VOLUNTEERS

- 1: How did you find the host Organisation and the activities arranged by them?

The host organisation was supportive and provided all the assistance that was required to make the volunteering experience worthwhile and rewarding. The activities were varied, ranging from attendance at a free school, visits to Jaunmoko Castle, assisting with English Language lessons and working in the Tukums Art Museum.

- 2: Did you enjoy the Latvian culture and the food?

I have visited Latvia several times. I found this time that I learnt a great deal more about Latvian culture than on previous visits. The work at the Art Museum helped me understand Latvia's recent history. The Kurzeme Fortress Museum in Zante had many interesting exhibits from one of the last great battles of the Second World War.

We were in Latvia on Tuesday 25th March which was the anniversary of the mass deportation of 42,000 Latvians in 1949 by the soviet authorities. Flags were flown from many buildings in Tukums. What was surprising was the large proportion of women and children who constituted 73% of the deportees. Women were deported because of supposed offences committed by their husbands or relatives.

Latvian food was tasty and I had the opportunity to try several new dishes. I particularly liked rupjmaize, rye bread. The beer was very good too!

- 3: What was the accommodation like, did it meet your needs?

The accommodation was perfectly adequate for two people. However, it was fortunate that one volunteer dropped out because of illness, as it would have been difficult to cope with three people sharing a two bedroom flat.

- 4: What you have seen or learnt at LTS MC "Zinātne", do you think you will implement any of it in your respective country?

Work at the Zinātne centre was interesting and rewarding. The commitment of the English language students was impressive. It was also interesting to note the respect students had for their teachers. At the end of each course students lined up to thank their teacher and offer a small gift in recognition of the teacher's work. It is difficult to envisage this happening in the UK as respect for teachers does not seem as high as it is in Latvia.

5: In terms of your interpersonal skills how do you think this visit has helped you?

Towards the end of my stay, I became quite confident teaching English. The students were attentive and appreciative giving us small gifts of cakes and bottles of birch juice.

After a couple of weeks I was able to understand simple conversations in Latvian which was very satisfying. My father was Latvian but had not taught me the language so it was wonderful after sixty years to be able to understand some conversational Latvian.

6: Would you recommend the Volunteering Exchange opportunities to your colleagues?

Yes. I found the experience to be rewarding and worthwhile.

7: Any comments: which will help us to improve the future visits?

The visits to the Zante Family Crisis Centre could have been better structured since we found that our role was limited to playing with the children. Similarly the time spent at the Dziva Skola would have been improved with a more focussed approach.

The most satisfying part of being a volunteer was assisting with the teaching of English. I suggest that volunteers from the UK might find it useful to take a short course in Teaching English as a Foreign Language.