

# FIM Rally 2014, Tampere, Finland

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The notification of 2014 FIM Rally at Tampere Finland 1<sup>st</sup>- 3rd July with optional coach trip to either Helsinki or Hameenlinna on 30th June arrived early in 2014. I like Scandinavia and had only passed through a part of Finland on the way back from the FIM Rally in Norway in 1995, so I sent off the fee in late February and booked ferries from Harwich to Esbjerg on 22nd June for the outward and Helsinki to Tallin on 5th July for the return giving me a fortnight to complete the run.

The first complication was the Ulysses club having their AGM in Worcester on 20-21st June, so I booked two nights at the Premier Inn. Worcester to Harwich on Sunday morning was no problem, just an earlier bedtime after the AGM.

The 2nd complication, an Uganda Polio Project email in early June " we are going to load a 40ft container with donated equipment on 21st June all hands needed please" So the journey to the FIM started on Friday afternoon, East Farndon to Worcester, to Nottingham and back to Worcester on Saturday. Worcester to Harwich on Sunday morning to catch the overnight ferry to Esbjerg, so 450 miles done and now a relaxing cruise to Denmark. I am not a good sailor so I missed out on the complimentary breakfast and rode 40 miles near Kolding for a snack lunch.

About sixty miles on across Denmark to the Nyborg Great Belt Bridge, a two part affair the first a low level bridge on piers to Sprogø Island then a suspension section 1624 meters long to Korsør, over five miles altogether.

"Weather is good, bike is running well, should be able to make Sweden before stopping for the night". Oresund tunnel and bridge are the last link in the road journey to Malmö in Sweden 25 euros toll but worth it for the experience. Another forty miles and after a short search at 7.00 pm I found the youth hostel/hotel in Helsingborg, 235 miles from Esbjerg, this turned out to be an expensive stop but came with a self service buffet breakfast so I stoked up for the day.

Tuesday's route north east across Sweden to the Baltic coast via Jönköping, Örebro, Ävesta to Gävle and find a campsite on the coast. Stopping for coffee at a cafe in the woods I coasted to a stop and heard a peculiar tapping/flapping noise from the back wheel area, on investigating found a flap of tread about 1½" across almost completely out of the center of the tread. The only solution seemed to be gently ride on and hope, about 11 miles on I spotted a sign for Verona Motor agents for Quads, Jet skis, Motor boats and Motorcycles a mile off the main road and they had a tyre of the right size. 2900 SEK later (362 euro-£302) ouch. Lunch at Ostgotaporten at 2.45 and continue to Gävle, no campsites on the tourist information sign so I filled up and carried on to Ljusnefors Camping just short of Sundsvall, 490 miles and a new tyre pretty eventful day.

Wednesday a ride along the spectacular Baltic coast of Sweden on E4 a main road through forests with occasional views of the sea 320 miles to a campsite I used my return from the Norway FIM in 1995 at Skellefteå. A site with Caravans, Camper Vans and several tents a games room and a cafe with a singing guitarist, altogether a pleasant evening.

About 350 miles should see Finnish boarder at Tornio then turn south and find a campsite on the east side of the Baltic.

Across the border and a refuel for the bike and me plus add 1 hour to the watch before continuing down the coast to a campsite at Kokkola at 5.30 in the evening, pitched on smooth grass down by the waterside for 13 euro, good shower/toilet block and friendly staff. A 436 mile day.

The FIM wasn't due to start until Monday so Fridays ride was to Helsinki via Jyvaskyla in the middle of the Finnish lake district and then south through the first rain of the trip but not enough to need over trousers, about 350 miles to Helsinki's campsite at Ratsila for two nights @ 15 euro/night for a days site seeing in the city on the Saturday. There is a free motorbike parking area just along from the waterside market from the tourist info office a good base for a wander around looking at the dockside market a couple of cathedrals and the city museum, a design museum and a photo session in the harbour where there were several multi-masted sailing ships. Woke up to steady rain on Sunday for the ride to the FIM at Tampere, signed in at the Sports-hall then a short ride to the campsite and pitched with most of the rest of the brit' contingent on a regular campsite with good facilities including a cafe/bar, 2433 miles since leaving home on Friday 20th June.

After pitching and unpacking I had a walk to a small supermarket for fruit and a few cans of dark beer, when I went to the camp cafe/bar with a couple of cans I came across an odd Finnish ruling about alcohol! you are not allowed to take your own into a premises that sells alcohol and if you buy a bottle of wine in a bar the top has to be kept by the staff so you have to drink it all or risk spilling it on the way home! this was strictly enforced even in the Sports-hall where the rally evening festivities were held, apparently the police can close a venue down if they see anyone breaking the rule.

While checking in at the sports-hall I saw some vintage bikes being set up on display and down at the end of the hall what looked, from a distance, like an old Mercedes car? closer inspection revealed a couple of guys bolting together a "sidecar" outfit which was 2/3 of a car, it had been begun by the father of one of the men but he had died before finishing it and it had never been completed.

On Monday there were optional coach trips to either Helsinki or the one I chose Hameenlinna where the famous! Iittal glass is made, on the way we stopped for a tour round a museum of wartime tanks collected and owned by a former general in the Finnish army, shades of Bovington.

After lunch at Iittal we had time to visit a chocolate factory, a ceramic store and other outlets. On the return trip we stopped at a small farm run by a Lapp couple where they breed reindeer which we hand fed, then into a super-sized Lapp teepee for a traditional cup of tea with butter or cheese floating in it, a talk about Lappish customs and a serenade of Lapp "yoiking" sort of a shouty-yodel!!

The first day proper of the FIM is a ride in national groups to the Parc-Ferme, for the organisers to collect each entrants signing tag for computing points for awards, in the center of Tampere, each group being led by a local with a flag of the following group and a halt for the national anthem before parking and a walk to lunch at Cafe

Nostalgia in the Finlayson Labour Museum Werstas. After lunch there was free time to explore the city and find your way back to the campsite. After changing for the evening's party we were collected by a shuttle bus service to the Sports-hall and after a buffet dinner and official welcome the evenings entertainment began with a local pop group and disco. Shuttle buses back to camp and a nightcap in the cafe/bar.

Wednesday we had a boat ride on the lake adjacent to the campsite to a restaurant on Vikinsara Island followed by music and dancing, a walk in the woods, a demonstration of log rolling on the lake then back to camp ready to go the Sports-hall again for the evening.

The last official day of the rally is a Parade of Nations again in national groups (alphabetically, some years we are GB sometimes Royume Uni or UK) starting late morning and going into the city and around the suburbs with escorts from the national organising club members traffic lights turned off and police manning junctions and rallyists dressed for the occasion, flags flying, lights and hooter going, the city folk waving, cheering and taking photos a proper carnival atmosphere.

Back at camp getting ready for the last nights meal and awards ceremony there was a thunderstorm but it only lasted an hour or so and the tents were dry by morning. The awards ceremony was followed by the handing over of the rally flags to representatives from Vorden in Holland who are organising the 2015 FIM rally.

Saturday striking camp and goodbyes to both old and new friends then down to Helsinki again as I had booked a ferry to Tallin in Estonia, after paying 11euro to bring the sailing forward by a day I joined several other rallyists on board, some going home to eastern Europe and a few brits going on to other rallies down that way. I rode through Estonia and into Latvia with views of cornfields on the flat land and pine forests in the distance but little evidence of industry, but the roads were good most of the time. 500 miles from Tampere late in the afternoon south of Riga I found a campsite at a farm near Bauska for 5 euro with clean toilet/shower block, apart from me there were three caravans two campervans and one tent belonging to a Swedish girl cycling down towards Greece!

On Sunday I left Latvia and crossed Lithuania and trying to avoid drifting west into the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad I managed to get a bit lost in the back roads so I did my usual "steer by the sun" midday keep it ahead of you and your going roughly south until I crossed the border into Poland.

Son-in-law Alan and I had crossed the middle of Poland to and from the FIM in Bydgoszcz in 2012 so this time I wanted to try the coastal route so I followed the signs for Gdansk then Gdynia and eventually after another 500 mile day I found at Stajnia Palac Ruono a "campsite" according to the sign but it turned out to be a youth adventure site but after finding a lady who understood enough english that I only wanted to stay overnight I was allowed to pitch.

Riding through the distinctly unimpressive city and unable to find an information office I continued into Germany around the north of Berlin and onto the motorway to Hannover and a motel Alan and I used in 2012, it used to be a F1 but is now a Motel24 only the name and the price, up by 10euro, has changed. A 460 mile day but

a soft bed under a roof.

Woke up at 7.00 showered packed and down to breakfast for 10 to 8 and odd looks from the waiter, no one else about then I spotted the clock I was still on Finland time it was only 10 to 7 and breakfast didn't start until 7.30 so I got an early start for home via Dunkerque-Dover ferry.

Almost home on the A 14 I noticed that the odometer was coming up to 55555 miles so I had to stop and take a photo of it (sad bu...t), 600 mile day. Home at 10.30 pm, 4487 miles in total and 13 nights under canvas and despite several invitations I avoided taking a sauna in Finland.

2015 FIM Vorden

Calais to Vorden 413 km 4h 23m Harwich to Amsterdam overnight then

Amsterdam to Vorden 125 Km 1h 29m

Program

25 July campsite opens

26th VAMC-HMV Road Racing Championships for pre 1970 bikes (500 meter walk from campsite, entrance free.

27th Motorcycle tours with optional excursions

28th Excursion to Amsterdam

29th Official opening of 70th FIM rally

30th Excursion to Rotterdam visiting the harbour and windmills

31th parade of Nations towards the old city of Zutphen evening Prize Giving and closing ceremony

Aug 1st campsite closes 12 pm.

From 2015 FIM Rally website









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