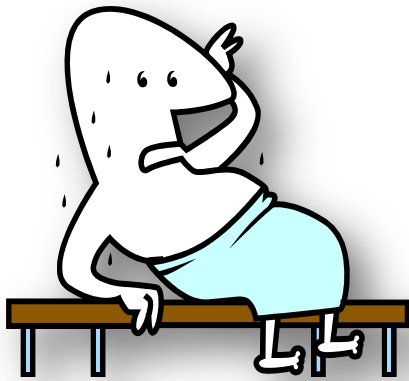


## April 2012

### Sauna and Fauna

If you would ask people who do not speak Finnish at all or have never been to Finland about a Finnish word, most probably **Sauna** is the only one which has become known and famous



worldwide in this language. As per statistics almost two Million Finns have a Sauna, and therefore about every third Finn can call one his own. For ages already and by nature, the human being has been sweating for the purpose of heat regulation of the body and stabilization of the immune system. But also, through the here in Finland implemented various and hundreds of years old rituals for some deep relaxation, cleaning of your pores, your soul, your spirit and for a soft skin. Evenly, in Finland you hit each other with branches of birch trees, so called *Vihta*, for a better blood circulation. Contrary to the

steam saunas, the room will be heated dry to about 85 to 100 degree Celsius, which makes you sweat pretty fast. After that there will some be rehashes (Löyly) of different kinds, and even in the ice-cold winters you jump into some holes drilled into the frozen lakes in order to toughen yourself and your body. Saunas had already been some „hygienic“ rooms in the much, much earlier times for meeting each other and were used for ill people, as a birthplace and the laying out of the dead. The heat of the fire has a certain anti-bacterial effect and alleviates the bites of the notorious billions of mosquitos which you will only encounter in the deeper forests though. For over 10 years the town of Heinola (Southern Finland) had been hosting a Sauna World Championship, in which the finalists have almost always been Finns or Russians. A participation in this contest was only recommended to well-experienced and tough sauna visitors. Because the closed rooms were heated up to some 110 degrees Celsius, burns have caused some seriously injured people and, even one deadly victim from Russla. You will also find a lot of saunas with the many cottages at the lakes and in the endless forests in which many Finns will spend their free time, holidays or their vacation.



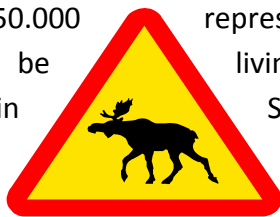


If these cottages are located in the deep forests of the North or in the East of the country, it could happen that you perhaps come across one of the representatives of the Finnish National animals. But no! It is not one of the lovely moomins! One of them is the brown bear (*Ursus Arctos*), who can weigh up to 400 kilos, avoids humans and there are an estimated 800 to 1000 of them in Finland. The “King of the Forests” plays a big role in ancient Finnish fairytales, was once considered to be “holy”, and has been feared and highly respected. Other inhabitants of the forest, but in smaller numbers are wolves,

wolverines and the lynxes which live more in the area close to the Russian border, but can rarely be seen. Besides many different Nordic types of birds, the cranes, wild geese and the singing-swan, which is the other National animal, are finding their homes here. In the Finnish mythology the swan has a big meaning as well. In the deep forests you may also discover three types of snakes, but only one of them, the cross-viper, is a poisonous one.



More than 150.000 representatives of the “Nordic National animal”, the elks, are supposed to be living in the forests, and every year again on last Saturday in September the hunting time begins, in which now thousands of these huge animals with a shoulder height of almost up to 7 feet and a weight of up to 700 kilos are being killed. Statistically about 3000 elks are even involved in collisions with vehicles in Scandinavia and, the signs at the roads in Finland are meant seriously.



In addition to a big number of other various smaller animals, birds and fishes, we must not forget the world famous, and repeatedly at the Christmas holidays appearing, Rudolph with his thousands of colleagues who almost all live in big herds in the province of Lapland, about 900 kilometers North of Tampere. Nowadays there are almost no more free living reindeers, because meanwhile all „Rudolphins“ ,even without a red nose, belong to some herder and a big strictly regulated association of reindeer herders. Although, one may think that reindeer- or elk meat should be cheap here, but to the opposite, this meat has a high purchase price even in Finland.

