

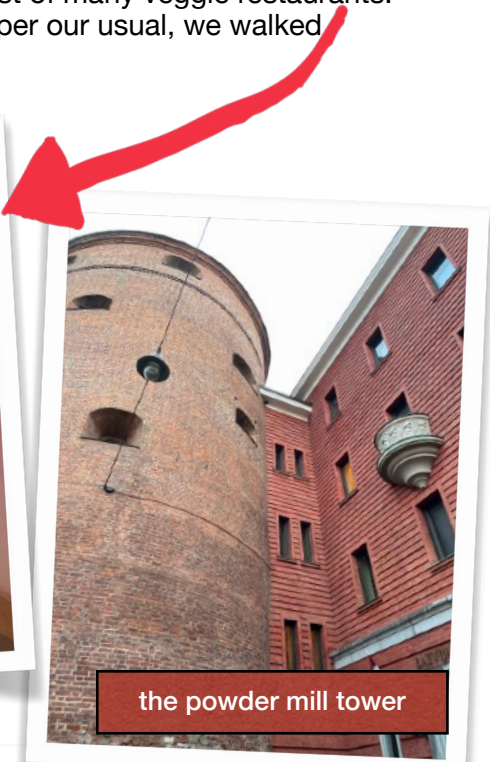
evie and satch actually make it somewhere they planned to go, for the amount of time they planned to be there!

feels like whirlwind now that we are home, and we did a whole lot in the past week. satch and i have so much fun traveling together, and really appreciate being able to do so.

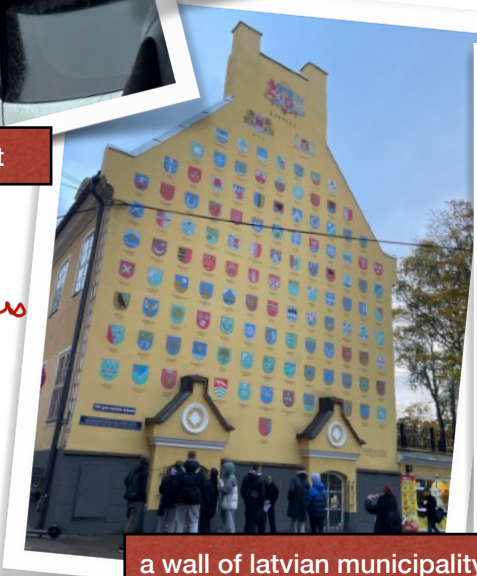
did a full out run through the humongous copenhagen airport to get from our e terminal to the b terminal for our transfer to air baltic. made it, sweat flying as we landed in our seats. then just an hour flight to riga. caught the 22 bus into the city, and walked through the rain (saw the sun for a total of 45 minutes throughout this whole trip (seriously -- i took out my sunglasses exactly twice and ended up quickly putting them away)) to our airbnb, which was conveniently located just above a pizza (pica) shop. yeasty baking smells every time we climbed the stairs to our apartment. nice enough apartment. got some lunch at the first of many veggie restaurants. then came back to the room and slept for an hour or so, and as per our usual, we walked around, checking out the sights. large green parks dot the city.



broken wall of the old fort



the powder mill tower



a wall of latvian municipality's coats of arms around the corner from our apartment



Latvia has had many invaders over the centuries, the most recent being, of course, Russia. Aside from Ukraine flags, we saw Latvian pride in its people, art, & achievements everywhere around the country.

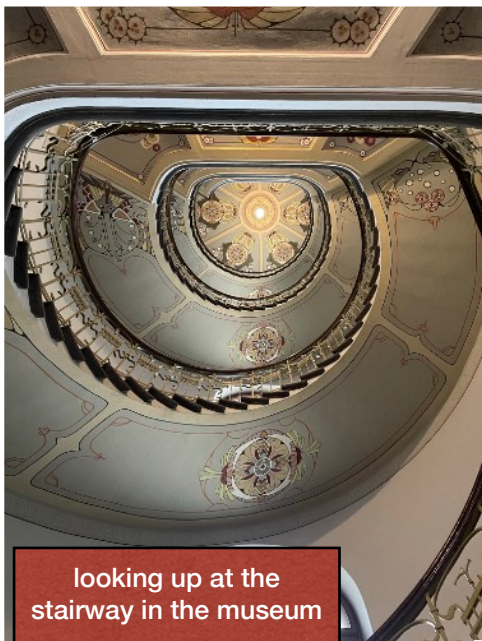


ate dinner at a cool cozy place around the corner called garaze, decorated in a car/garage motif. unplugged reggae pop on the tv, yummy cocktails, and a huge cheese plate, the remains of which stayed with us in a box for the next couple days. we slept really well.

25 october

i woke up before satch and found a yoga studio not far away. high ceilings, wooden beams, art nouveau exterior with interior touches. top floor of a walk-up five floor brownstone-type building. the teacher had candles and incense lit and i was ready for some stretching, but her style was movement movement, like birds taking off. definitely the odd person out in this class, but she sweetly gave much of the direction in english and i just did my own thing alot anyway.

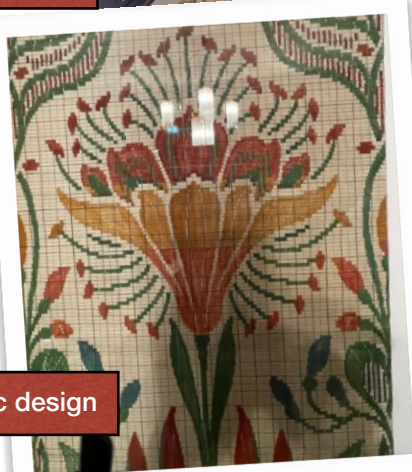
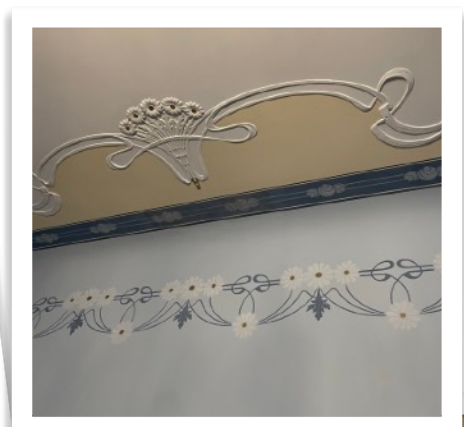
satch and i headed out before noon, grabbed her a breakfast and walked around the art nouveau district, in the center of which is the thoroughly enjoyable art nouveau museum. learned about famous latvian architects (men), designs, and evolution into a rococo-type style, eventually petering off into more minimalist touches. fortunately, many buildings made it through the wars and subsequent occupations.



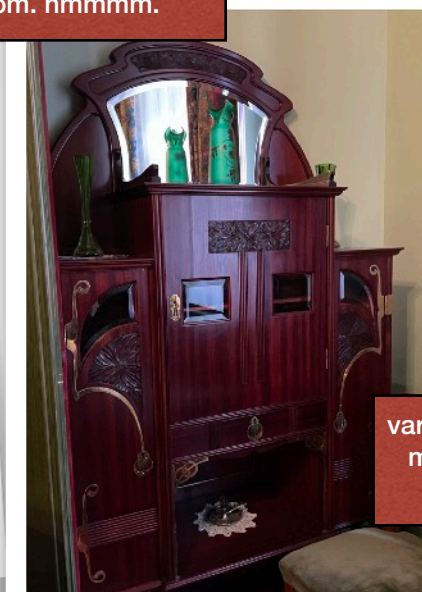
looking up at the stairway in the museum



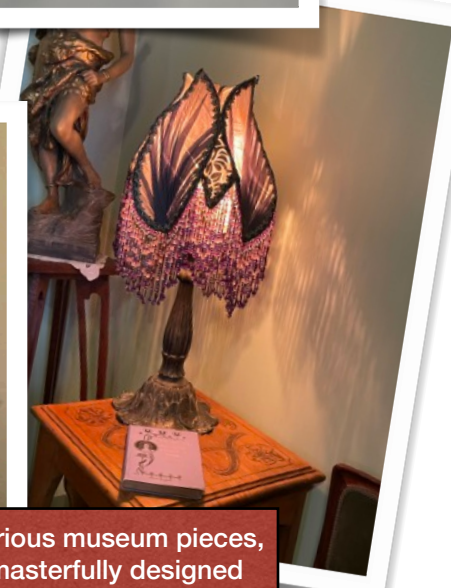
wooden doorway insert completely changed the room. hmmm.



layout for fabric design



various museum pieces, masterfully designed and constructed







dress-up art nouveau clothes (meant for kids?)



small shop across the street complimented the museum perfectly. and i found a book about historical women of riga (not much mention of them in the museum, except to talk about how once women started making money at fabric design, the men took it over).

ate a quick bite, then visited the riga cathedral, a beautiful building with neat stained glass windows, old crypts, and your typical catholic stuff. but the organ! yeow!

after the church, we walked around for a while and saw many more cool art nouveau buildings. tasted the pizza downstairs: ok, but didn't live up to the smells for me. eventually went back garage for tasty cocktails.



magnificent organ (recently reconstructed) in the riga cathedral. its sound in my imagination is rich and all-encompassing.

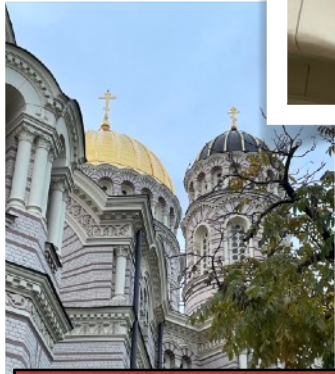
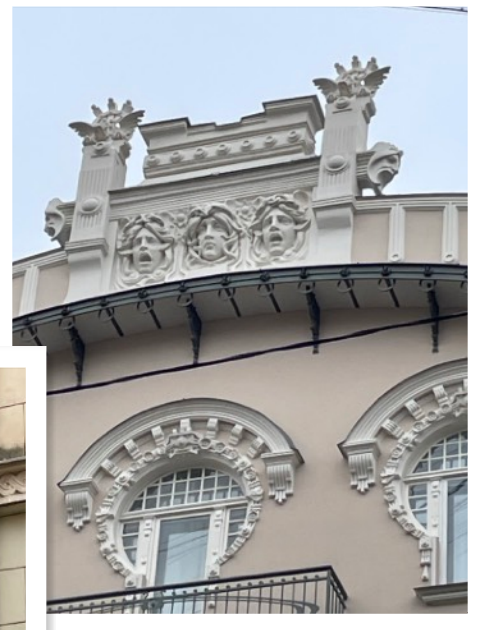
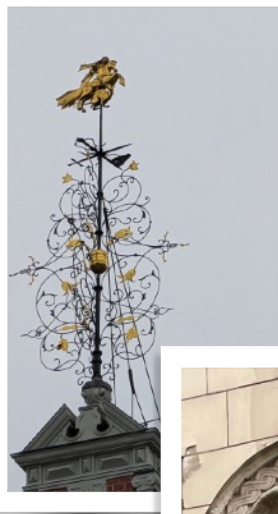


parks all over the city. big hooded crows, mushrooms, maple, birch, and black oak trees. no squirrels! and we saw only small dogs.



disco snail! outside the port authority building

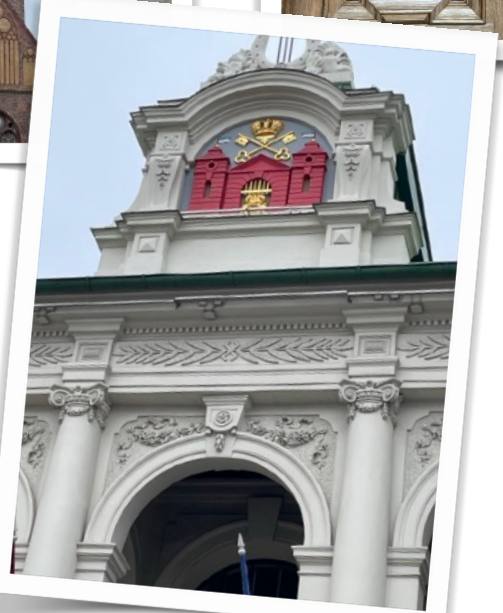
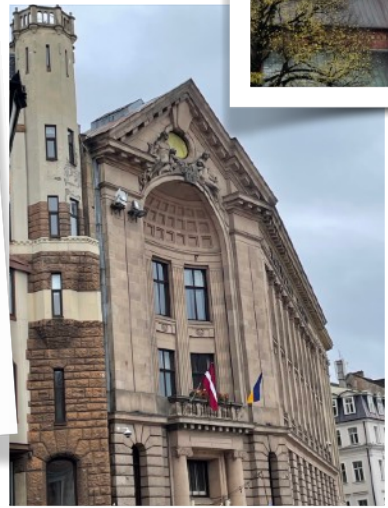




eastern orthodoxism  
still a force



no love for putin: this faces the  
russian embassy







ok, so this House of the Blackheads was originally built centuries ago, demolished in and after WW2, and rebuilt 1999. marvel of a clock. wonder why it's called blackheads? cause the brotherhood (all merchants, unmarried men) who created it had a major fetish for the heads of African people. seriously.



26 October

on my way to pick up the rental car, snow started. followed us to Cesis, a castle town a couple hours drive from Riga, that we loved. people drive SLOW in latvia (and estonia). top speed on the major roads (mostly two lane) was 90 kph. speed cameras all over the place, even in the middle of nowhere.

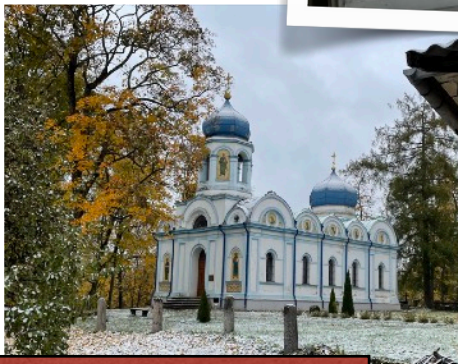
our airbnb here was a 19th century house that the owners have been rehabbing for the past couple years. super nice and right across from the castle park, but our stay corresponded with the heater dying. maia (the owner's mom) kept feeding wood into the stove for warmth: satch and i huddled under blankets drinking hot tea for a while after returning from the castle. but by the time we got back later from a walk in town and dinner, central heat was restored.



view from our apartment the morning after snow



school on the castle grounds

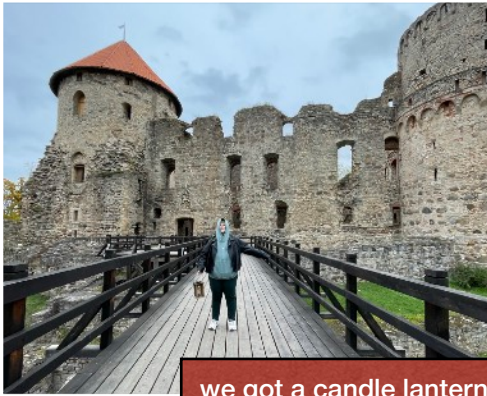


didn't go in, but pretty in the snow



very yummy vegetarian food (and drinks)



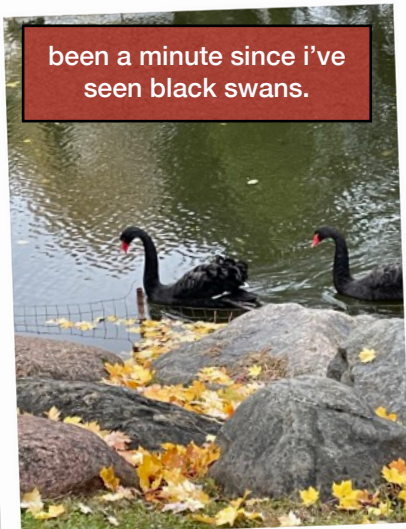


we got a candle lantern for exploring darker areas of the castle. necessary



Bat houses on trees around the grounds

bats hibernate in the castle basement and they set up bat houses for the summer! we were very excited to tell marxe.



been a minute since i've seen black swans.



one part of the "1941" sculpture installation around town, representing the entire cesis jewish population of 200 deported to siberia by the russians or killed by the nazis in the nearby forest.

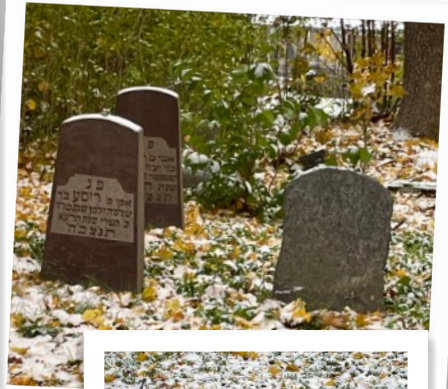
old house covered with a kind of house during rehab.



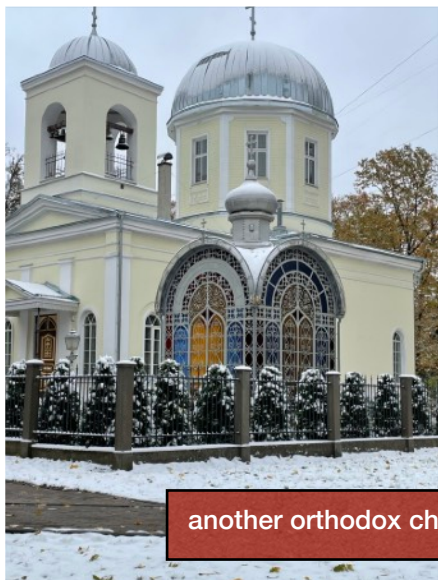


27 October

gotta get the boneyards in. this was a german/eastern orthodox/jewish cemetery a 20 minute walk from the apartment. the jewish section was very small.

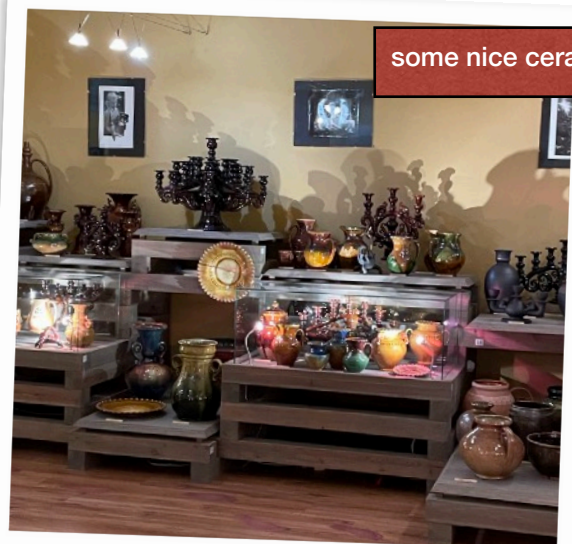


left cesis early enough that we could spend time in rezekne, less than an hour's drive from the russian border. coulda skipped it. the town was still heavily soviet-ized, our airbnb building derelict, and the cultural museum on the propaganda side. pretty orthodox church and some nice ceramics, though. satch loved the avocado burger (dripping with mayo) we had for dinner. meh.



another orthodox church

*Rezekne smells of diesel, except on apartment hallway, which was acrid, un-filtered tobacco smoke.*



some nice ceramics

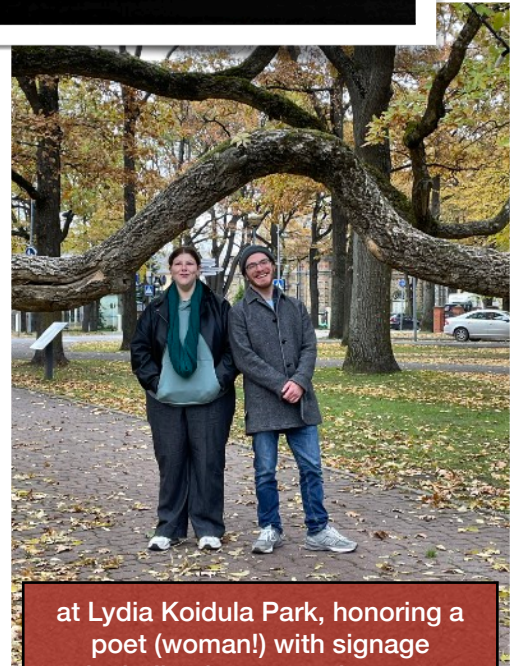
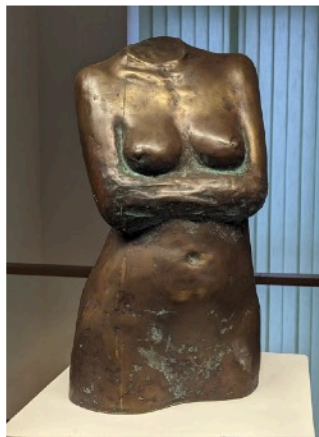


28 October

awoke super early so that we could be in parnu, estonia by 11am to meet our friend aubrey, who's spending a year in tallinn on a fulbright scholarship teaching english to ukrainian refugee kids. four hour drive for us, two hour bus ride for him. parnu's a summer beach town, but there was a decent art museum (with very cool postcards) and good food; a cold, windy promenade; and saunas! satch found a relatively inexpensive hotel (estonia was markedly more costly than latvia) with free spa access. i forgot to pack a bathing suit top, aubrey forgot a bathing suit all together, but we made it work. three different saunas — one wet, one super hot Finnish, and one medium hot dry. after we dropped aubrey back at the bus, satch and i returned to the saunas for a bit. and then just chilled,



underwhelming international border



at Lydia Koidula Park, honoring a poet (woman!) with signage including her poetry in many languages around the park



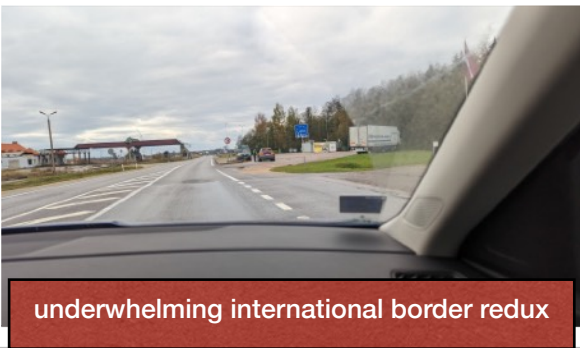




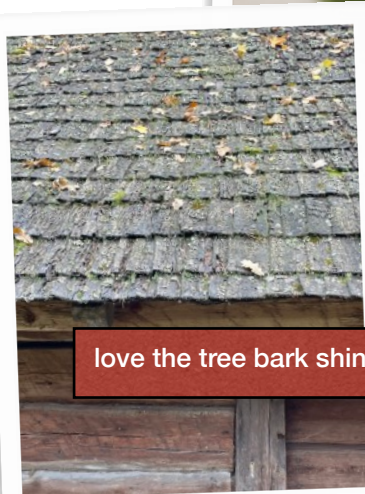
pulled over to gander at the gulf of riga. satch took a cool panoramic photo

29 October

drove from parnu, back across the latvian border, to the Ethnographic Open-Air Museum of Latvia, outside riga. this place is pretty cool. about 250 acres on a lake, with historical buildings from different Latvian region and different time periods. during the summer, artisans people the homesteads and villages, but this was cold and wet october, so no craftspeople. except one



underwhelming international border redux



love the tree bark shingles...



... and the moss roof



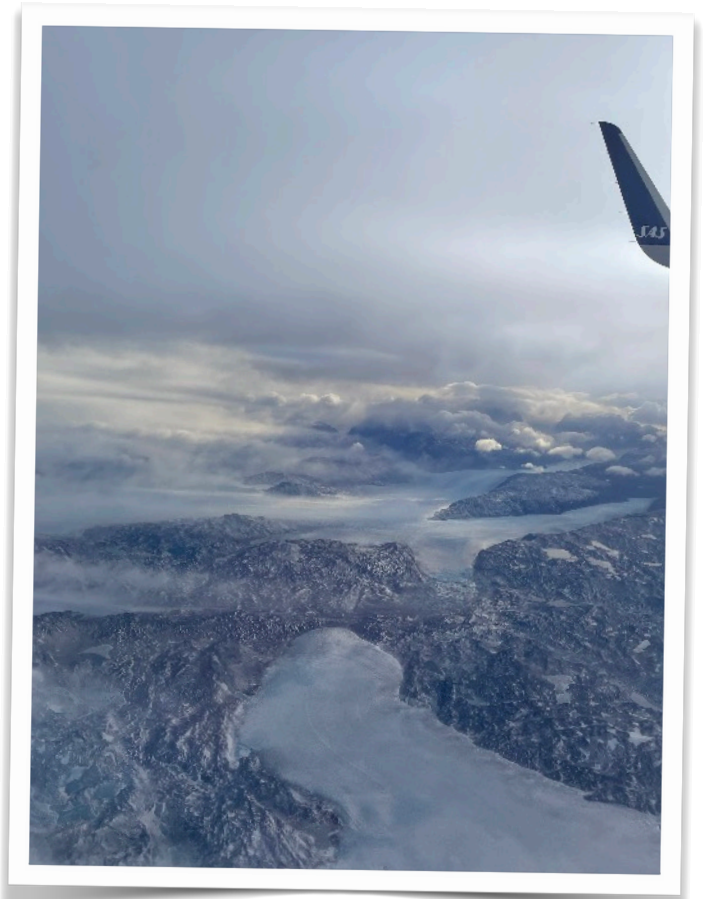
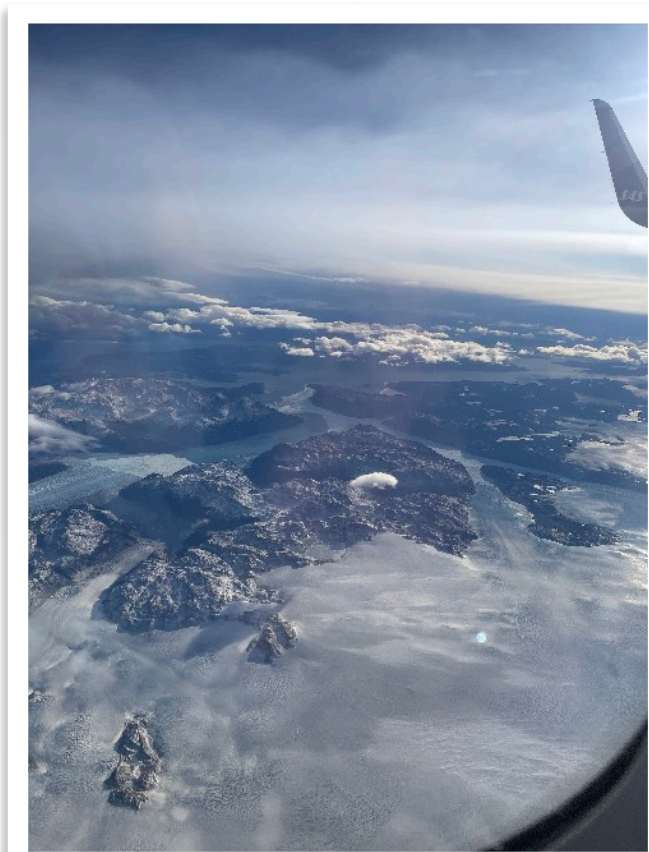
blacksmith who was doing cold work and told us this wasn't part of the park...still showed us the curtain rods he was forming.

found another great vegetarian restaurant in riga, with this delicious tomato soup that i could eat forever. we tried visiting another cemetery — the grand one in the city center filled with important national people, but it was too dark to really see anything.

got lost trying to get to the airport hotel, but once we arrived, the proprietor was very welcoming. drank the national liquor, riga black balsam. tasty.

29 October

left mega early and walked ten minutes in the cold rain from the car rental drop off to the airport (probably contributed to my homecoming sniffles/cough). spent some transfer time in the copenhagen airport, which did help us prepare for the major turbulence over greenland on the last flight home. satch and i held hands, tried to ignore all the people vomiting, and looked out at the beautiful glaciers below.



thanks to satch for the use of some of her pix.