

exdec Finland on a nostalgia trip in France

(November 2016 by Petteri Heng and Pia Valtonen)

Digital Equipment Corporation Oy (FNO), the subsidiary of DEC in Finland employed nearly 1000 people during its existence. After the Compaq buy-out in 1998 an informal association called *exdec Finland* was formed. The members of the association are all those once employed by FNO, and as an informal association it is rather active. Numerous gatherings, various events and occasional get-togethers are still arranged around the year.

During the years of DEC Finland business operations several employees had temporarily or permanently relocated also to French Riviera, Valbonne (VBO or VBE), known as the Digital Equipment Technical Centre in the Sophia Antipolis technology park, near Nice and Cannes. Even more DEC employees from all around Europe have spent a lot of time with our clients and partners either in VBO/VBE or in Cannes at the memorable great events like DECville and DECUS European symposiums.

Some years ago a few active *exdec Finland* members proposed to arrange a nostalgia trip to the VBO/VBE area - a trip which might create interest. And it did. In September 2016 a group of 21 exdecies and 8 avcs did meet on the French Riviera and surroundings for a long week-end.

The attendees met in Juan-les-Pins, but also a couple of interesting expedition trips were made: one to the Grand Canyon du Verdon, and another to Chateau Clarettes, a nice vineyard. Most of the visitors stayed in hotels in Juan-les-Pins, close to Cannes, the venue of several DECville and DECUS events.



Juan-les-Pins is a suburb of Antibes, close to Cannes

Arriving to France

Most of us took a flight planned in advance and arrived from Helsinki to Nice, some from other locations and a few of us were already on site welcoming the arrivals. A welcome lunch was arranged on a sunny day in Juan-les-Pins.



Arrivals at the Nice Côte d'Azur airport September 22nd 2016

Grand Canyon du Verdon

Next morning a majority of us took a charter bus for a full day trip to see the magnificent Grand Canyon du Verdon, the biggest canyon of Europe located a couple of hours drive towards the Alps following the historical highway called Route de Napoleon. The route name is based on the famous trip of Napoleon when returning from Elba in 1815 and taking over the power from Louis XVIII.





Grand Canyon du Verdon, Europe's biggest canyon.

The trip to Verdon was an experience no-one attending will ever forget. But energy well consumed took most of us early to bed, as the next expedition was to take place again the following morning.

Chateau Clarettes

Chateau Clarettes, another interesting acquaintance during the visit, is an old French chateau, a vineyard bought a few years ago by a group of investors from Finland and Sweden. The beautiful main building with the garden has been totally renovated to serve as a mansion to be rented out or to be enjoyed by the owners. The quality of the renovation is excellent – a good stimulation for the local craftsmen and their business. The production of wine has also evolved with a brand new wine factory.

We had a nice introduction to the chateau, had a chance to taste a few of the rosés and other wine brands produced at the chateau, had a delicious lunch and a relaxed return to Juan-les-Pins, with a passing through of the Sophia Antipolis technology park where we identified several buildings where DEC had offices during 'the good old times'.



Chateau Clarettes, the team in front of the main entrance of the mansion.

Farewell dinner

The evening of the day was a joint dinner with interesting speeches, ‘thank you’ and nostalgia notes from the attendees. A perfect flash back of the DEC times was the notion of many: the one who proposes is responsible for the implementation. This is what also made this unforgettable trip happen. Many of us expressed a wish that this is an event with option to become a tradition, a wish that made us as organisers feel very happy.



Farewell dinner in Juan-les-Pins

For shared moments among the colleagues, events like this makes you feel there would be no other company, no other business, no other industry like the one we had, to reach the same. May this not be the whole truth, it is still worth to keep up the image in our minds.

For us attendees DEC was the best technology company of it’s time – many of the inventions and developments created at DEC are still going strong: for example VMS as an operating system is a predecessor of Windows NT (now Windows 10), Ethernet was developed as a joint project with DEC and other companies, Altavista is the ‘mother’ of all Internet search engines, DEC was a

forerunner of system clustering and high-availability solutions etc. But not only the technology is in our mind, even more than that we remember the corporate culture, originated by Ken Olsen and nurtured by so many of us, the culture of empowerment, open doors policy, and 'do the right thing'. Thank you DIGITAL!

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Attendees of the nostalgia trip were:

Pekka Roine, Tapio Valli, Eija-Liisa Hiltunen-Nordström, Seppo Tapola, Jukka Silvennoinen + avec, Jari Paakkariinen, Erja Uosukainen, Timo Wesslin + avec, Tuula Bäckström, Petri Bäckström, Mikko Rauko + avec, Pirjo Laakso-Dickman + avec, Jorma Heinonen, Lauri Halminen + avec, Tiina Whiley, Tuija Karviala, Irmeli Sääksjärvi + avec, Seija Huhtakallio, Seppo Ahokas + avec, Pia Valtonen, Petteri Heng + avec

Photos: from the collection of photos taken by attendees