

## Pikes Peak River Runners

### 2007 Swedish Sojourn

*By Christina King*

*Photos by Ed Tucker and Christina King*



*Hint: If any of the links in this journal appear in Swedish, hunt for a British flag icon on the page and click on it for the English translation. Most pages have an English version.*

#### **July 21/22, 2007 (Sat/Sun) – Woodland Park/Colorado Springs (COS), Chicago (CHI), Stockholm (ARN):**

My Swedish sojourn began with an all-American BBQ the night before I left - at our Woodland Park home with the Ward family. Christina Ward spent the night in order to drive me to the Colorado Springs (COS) airport early the next morning. I was surprised to see a co-worker on the same flight, unfortunately headed for a funeral in Chicago. Our United flight was overbooked by four people but Tim Benedict and I were not volunteering our seats for any enticements (United offered 4 round-trip tickets to anywhere in the US). United had to offer a bit more but finally got the last person off our overbooked flight and we pushed away from the gate.

I arrived in Chicago and worked my way over to the international terminal to begin my five hour layover. I endured a horrible lunch at the international terminal and flipped through my traveling magazines until my mind was a complete blank. I was thrilled when they began boarding.

My cousin Caroline Ehrby (works for [Scandinavian Airlines - SAS](#)) was able to arrange for a business class "first class" seat for me which made this the best flight I have ever flown. I was treated to hot towels, wonderful Swedish food/chocolate, a roomy seat that turned into a completely flat bed and even allowed me to sleep on my side comfortably for the overnight flight. After a great dinner of halibut polished off with Swedish marzipan petit-fours I turned in for a sound five hour sleep. [Sweden is 8 hours](#)

Page 1 of 23



[ahead](#) of Colorado Mountain Standard Time. The flight was about ~ 9 hours but utterly pleasant compared to our 2006 Africa Adventures flying experiences. I arrived at Arlanda airport in Stockholm right on time but without my luggage (along with ~25 other passengers). Once again, business class status bumped me to the front of the lost luggage line and I filed my report to have my bag delivered at "our" borrowed Stockholm apartment. I noticed some grumbling from the coach passengers (when my business class number was called very quickly) but I avoided any eye contact – better than waiting another hour in line. No guilt here.



My parents (Ed and Astrid Tucker) were relieved to see me finally come out of customs after the long delay (due to lost baggage). The SAS representative told me that lost luggage is becoming more common on many flights because of increased security delays caused by baggage searches. My parents had pre-purchased a weekly public transport pass for me and we hopped quickly on a bus, train and finally to a subway to the front door of our family friend's beautiful "borrowed" apartment.

I took a two hour nap and then we enjoyed a nice walk to the water, past the impressive City Hall building and basked in the glow of a sunny day. I also picked up Swedish Kronor (Crowns) today at an ATM.

*Currency: Swedish currency is the crown (at the moment 6.6 crowns = one US dollar). ATM's are the cheapest and easiest way to get cash and it pulls directly from our checking account at home. ATM's charge a much smaller conversion fee than credit cards.*



Today is my parents 46<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary and my dad forgot! My dad did manage to arrange to get my luggage delivered via internet and is hanging all good deeds on this one achievement for today. My mother fixed a hearty spaghetti dinner, I did the dishes and Dad set the table. Notice the trend here?! I think he has the next four years to come up with a more robust 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration plan so he better start working on it now. I fall asleep early (before 7 pm) and never hear the baggage delivery man arrive at 10:30 pm. Yes, security did search my bag and left me a note in my bag saying so. I sleep hard all night and wake up about 7:30 am with tired eyes.

## July 23, 2007 (Mon) – First real day in Stockholm, Mom’s personal history day:

We started the day with a leisurely breakfast of lätt fil (buttermilk) and cereal. Today is the day we concentrate on my mother’s (Astrid Birgitta Kristina Fogelberg) historical past. We took the subway to the old apartment buildings where my mother lived as a child from 1943-1949. The first apartment was very grand and in an exclusive part of Stockholm (Östermalm). The apartments were located on Östermalmsgatan 27, Sveavägen 109 (I remember visiting this apartment when I was young) and Linnegatan 35. Schools she attended included; Whitlocks Samskola (Eriksbergsgatan), Sveaplan (end of Sveavägen) and Norrmalms Kommuna Flickskola (Johannesgatan). We stopped by the Vanadis bad (swimming pool) where my father spent many hours courting my mother. They have the “Bad Policy” posted – not what you think. The weather today brings umbrellas and raincoats out in full force. It is not a hard rain but persistent.



On the way home, we stopped in for a surprise visit (very out of character for Swedes) to my mother’s close childhood friend, Gunnel Floderus, to say hello and camp out in her sitting room (and out of the rain) to have our picnic lunch.





Gunnel visited us in the US (most recently in 1998) which included a float trip in [Ruby/Horsethief canyons](#) on the Colorado River (as distant in geography that can be conceived by most Swedes). Gunnel loved it and still talks about our overnight western desert river trip.



Gunnel accompanied us to the exclusive [Östermalm food market](#) where we oogled the foreign and local delicacies on display. The market had everything from reindeer, rabbit, pig, rare fish, salmon, zebra, ostrich, cheeses from the world, bakery breads and pastries/chocolates galore. A must-see if you visit Stockholm and a fun place to have lunch.

#### July 24, 2007 (Tues) – My Name Day (Christina):

Today is my [Swedish Name Day](#). In fact, this week is actually called the Fruntimmers vecka (old “broad’s” week) because all the names this week are women. Hmmm, I do not particularly like this part of my Name Day history. We started off with a cloudy morning and decided to focus on inside activities in case it rained as long as yesterday. So...our first stop was the (Kungsträdgården stop) Sweden House store to look at Swedish

tourist information and crafts while we waited for the [Kulturhuset](#) to open at 11 am. Kulturhuset is a wonderful place to see free exhibits, cafes, theater (stage plays), filled with lots of children and a library. We went all the way to the top of Kulturhuset to see a special exhibit of [Astrid Lindgren](#) (Pippi Longstocking author) who died at the age of 94 about five years ago. I really enjoyed her books as a young girl and found the exhibit fascinating – filled with great photos and archived film. Kulturhuset is packed with very young (mothers/fathers/baby carriages) and very old (retired) folk. It seems like I see numerous pregnant women and babies. Stockholm is an international city with many transplants from diverse nations along with tourists from all over the world. Very cosmopolitan but most Swedes' speak English. Other peculiarities; all Swedes have cell phones and laptops and seem incapable of being out of touch (electronically) with others. In other words, their cell phones are either constantly attached to their ears (talking on the phone) or eyes (text messaging). However, they are not very outgoing with strangers (kind of a contradiction I think).

[Maternity leave](#): Both mothers/fathers get 480 months of maternity leave and can ride the public transportations (trains, subways and buses) for free during that time. Many parents decide to have children in the first 4 years to stay at home during their formative years. Many Swedes believe that it is barbaric to return to work before a child is two years old.

We enjoyed a kebab (gyro) lunch at [Hötorget market](#) (next to the concert hall downtown). This exotic food market is filled with many varieties of meats/cheeses and fruits. A good bargain for lunch and a visual feast as well. We strolled through just a few of the many stores downtown - stopping at a store called Design Torget – a fun gadget store. My mom eyed the women's portable potty canister but did not break down and buy it.

*Note on costs in Sweden: According to my dad, everything is double or triple (+) what it costs in the US, but then again his perspective on costs are a bit different than my mother and I. He firmly believes that motel rooms should cost no more than \$49, lunches \$5 and dinners \$17. I've noticed that everything costs more BUT my spending comfort zone is a bit higher than my father's. However, I am my father's daughter so my "spending comfort zone" is not too far above his comfort zone. I did buy a \$2.50 pastry yesterday and enjoyed every bite! Gasoline is \$6.20/gallon, ouch. I am surprised I do not see more really small cars, I even spotted a big Suburban the other day – that would take \$192 to fill that up!*

After our lunch the weather appeared to be clearing a bit so we took a bus to the farthest point of the Djurgården island (past Skansen) and had a delightful walk back along the shoreline. I savored my Name Day Princess cake [(one can never have too much Princess cake (marzipan cake))] and then we strolled back while watching the ships and boats (large and small) cruise into the main Stockholm downtown docks.



It seems inconceivable that some of the really big ships do not tip over as they appear so top-heavy. The beautiful wooden sailboats and pleasure boats are my favorites. We shooed away Gray Lag geese, ducks and White Swans along the path on our long walk back.



*A note about public toilets: My father has all the free toilets noted in his valuable pocket list including hotel access codes. Many public toilets in Sweden (if you can find them) charge ~5 crowns (75 cents) and he just can't deal with paying to pee, especially on a frequent basis. In fact, I am sure he could publish his free toilet list and could make a bundle in royalties but he wouldn't dare as it might mess up his "free" toilet system.*

We hopped on an old electric trolley (# 7 – only one left in Stockholm) for a short ride back into downtown to get onto the bus back to our apartment. The bus transfer (#69) in Norrmalmstorg presented me with my first Pantertanter (Panther lady) encounter. These are usually old ladies (70+, sometimes widows) that muscle their way onto train, subways and buses with a huge entitlement attitude. It's funny to watch everyone give way to these pushy old ladies.

*Public Transportation: Trains, subways and buses are the only reasonable way to travel in Stockholm. You can purchase a 4 month pass (senior rate KR 1070 crowns or ~\$162) or buy a weekly pass (KR 230 crowns or ~\$35). They also have monthly passes for reasonable prices. This allows you hop on public transport for "free" at any moment during your stay. Dealing with a rental car in Stockholm is a nightmare from both a parking standpoint and driving through confusing and sometimes gridlocked traffic downtown. There is NO free parking downtown and pay parking is hard to find. I think the longest you would have to wait for public transport is ~ 10 minutes- most buses and subways are 6-8 minutes apart. All train and bus stops are covered (protected from rain/snow) and subways are of course underground. All are relatively safe. Pickpockets have become more of a nuisance; I recommend wearing a backpack and keep valuable items in your front pockets (cash, ATM, cameras). Do not allow yourself to be distracted by strangers – especially the gypsies – pretending to ask you a question, playing street games or spill a drink on you which can result in you letting down your guard. Get a free Stockholm map (includes a subway map) and bus/train map quickly and you will be set. It also helps to have a friend or relative pre-purchase a weekly pass set to start when you arrive at the airport and you can begin using your transport card as soon as you leave the airport- like we did. They have a transport card sale kiosk at the airport but it is not at the international Terminal #5. I think it takes about an hour to get to downtown Stockholm from the Arlanda airport. Faster if you buy the direct bus (flygbuss) or train pass, but that would be extra money as your regular transport pass does not include those special direct-to-airport buses and trains. Guess what method we used?... The free one*





We shopped for dinner groceries at a small grocery store a block from our apartment and enjoyed a Salmon/dill, new potato dinner topped off with creamy white ice cream with perfectly fresh tiny Swedish strawberries for dessert. It was a perfect end to a fun day.

*My favorite Swedish foods; Princesstårter, salmon, Grov Limpa (rye bread), Swedish meatballs and cream gravy, any dairy products, most cheeses, blood pudding, kanelbullar (cinnamon rolls with cardamom), the many types of fresh breads and rolls, raspberries, strawberries, any pastry, mjukglass, Lussekatter (Saffron buns), knäckebröd (rye crackers), Plättar (Swedish thin pancakes), boiled new potatoes with fresh dill, rice pudding, chocolate (dajm, marabou), candy (hallonbatar, swedish fish), semla (marzipan filled sweet bun) and lingonberries.*

*Favorite recipes links below:*

- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuisine\\_of\\_Sweden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuisine_of_Sweden)
- <http://www.gretchencooks.com/cuisines/Swedish>

*Swedish foods that I don't like; herring, cow's tongue, shrimp sandwich, capers and eel.*

**July 25, 2007 (Wed) – Södermalm (South Island) and [Gamla Stan](#) (Old Town):**

We started the day with a bus ride (#3) to Södermalm formerly known as a very poor community during the 1700-1940's. Today, Södermalm retains some restored and lived in homes from that period that show this distinctive architecture. The streets were so old (and poor) that they were made of rounded cobblestones pushed into gravel. The Södermalm residents had no money for chiseled street stones or much else. Currently, Södermalm is an "in" location to live. We stopped at Katarina Kyrka (church) and then enjoyed several high overlooks to the Saltsjön (Saltsea) harbor. Local Viking lore says that these steep cliffs were where they pushed their "old" people off – kind of like the Eskimo tale of putting "old" folks off on ice floes.

After a picnic lunch at one of the overlooks within the Mäster Mikealsgatan area (where the town executioner lived), we traveled to Gamla Stan to meander through the narrow streets looking at the old buildings and tourist shops. Gamla Stan has a fair amount of Danish influence in its history and the building tops reflect that distinctive style. The stores are filled with Swedish goods and crafts.



My mother showed me the famous Swedish Poet Evert Taube statue, cannon balls stuck in the outer building wall, buggy (stone) bumpers and told me an interesting historical story about a blood bath battle in the Gamla Stan square. I took a picture of one of the Gamla Stan intersections that I have a painting of the same scene at home. The weather threatened all day but did not rain and we actually ended up with blue skies and sunshine around 9:30 pm. Gunnel Floderus joined us for dinner bringing a prized Princesstårta (cake) for dessert.



After dinner, we enjoyed looking at personal (1940-1957) Swedish photos of family and friends. We walked Gunnel to the bus and then strolled down the waterway to view the active waterfront dining activity. As I finish my entry into today's journal it is about 10:30 pm. It is twilight outside but not dark. The longest days of summer were in June and it is not light all night but looks like dusk all night to me. I woke up around 4 am and the sun was up (not sure when it came up).

*Dining out: Lunch is typically the best bargain, dinners are very expensive (\$50/person is typical) and according to my father, Swedes spend money like "it's going out of style". Stockholm appears to be in the midst of an economic boom and residents seem to be spending money quite easily. I assume that salaries are generous and jobs are easy to obtain. Benefits are certainly generous and most Swedes do not worry (as much as Americans do) about saving much money for retirement. Many retirement incomes are approximately equal to current working incomes. [Income tax rates](#) are about 31-56 %.*



## July 26, 2007 (Thurs) – Momma (*muma*), my Great-Grandmothers estate (Täljö):

Today we awoke to a sunny and warm morning. Forecast looks great to make it a 100% outdoor travel day. So... we embarked on a subway ride (one transfer) to an old fashioned narrow gauge train to Täljö. I remember making this visit both in winter (to go cross country skiing) and in summer for weekend visits to my great grandmother (Momma). Momma lived to be 94 years old (she died in 1980). I remember Momma as hard of hearing but always with a smile on her face. We loved visiting Momma's country estate and picking fruits in her garden and playing in the playhouse that my mother and her aunt (Faster) had also played in as children. The countryside looks just the way my mother, father and I remember it. The original house that Momma lived in accidentally burned down in 1984 and was replaced with a new home (by the new owners) but the playhouse remains the same. We spent several hours at a nearby lake picnicking and lounging around on a swimming dock by ourselves. Across the lake we saw several families enjoying their private swimming docks. We traveled back to town tired and happy.



*Note: Täljö means “the place with rolling logs”. A theory and local lore says that Vikings lived in the area a thousand years ago and used logs rollers to transport their long boats between lakes. There are many summer homes in the area with lots of horses, many lakes, pastures and farms (growing hay, wheat, millet and oats).*

*Täljö is a rural paradise about an hour by public transport from downtown Stockholm. Täljö has no stores, no cafes and few people. Bring a bathing suit and picnic lunch to spend the day.*

### **July 27, 2007 (Fri) –Tall Ships Race:**

The [Tall Ships race](#) comes to Stockholm about ~10 years or so. I am lucky because they are here in Stockholm this weekend and we spent the afternoon touring many of these old sailing ships from many countries (Poland, Norway, Russia, Mexico, etc...). The Mexican ship was on the news last night sailing into port with all 213 crew standing on the numerous horizontal spars. Quite a sight. As I was climbing down the Mexican ships deck stairs, on my way to the exit gangway, the captain whistled a signal. The entire crew snapped to attention as the Mexican President and ambassador disembarked down the gangway of the ship (that's what the person behind me said). I did not recognize either.

Boats, boats and more boats....







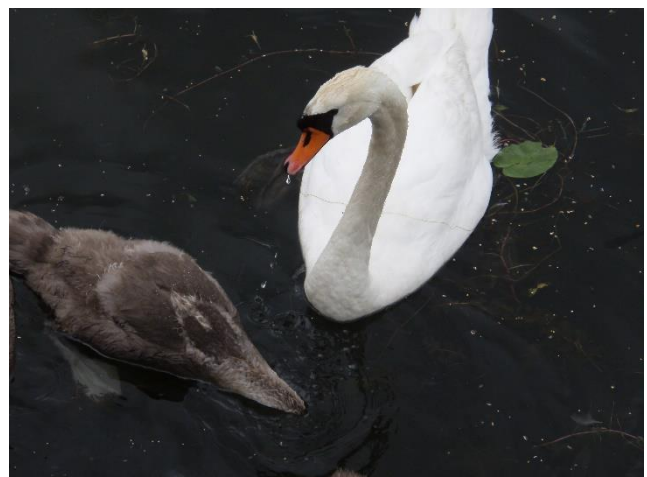
Our next plan was to visit the [Vasa Museum](#) but the entry line was too long so I decided to delay that activity for a rainier day (and earlier in the morning). Just after we decided to stroll down the walkway to Skansen, the weather began deteriorating quickly so we stepped into a small, partly hidden b  thall and we were nicely surprised to find a free boat museum. The small boats were on display as restored or “as is” from previous owners. We marveled at the glittering gold-decked boat that carried the King/Queen of Sweden on their wedding day (1976). Afterwards, we took the ferry to the tall ships docks and stared at each ship in awe. After a few more hours of gawking at the tall sailing ships we

grabbed a bus for home with a stop by the grocery store to pickup up one of my favorite Swedish meals (blood pudding with lingonberries).

Tourism has been going gangbusters this summer in Stockholm. Many Swedes have left for warmer sunnier climates since the weather experts said this has been the rainiest July ever. I notice many small stores closed until August and many apartments around us are empty. It appears that the occupants are on holiday trying to escape the rain.

### **July 28, 2007 (Sat) –Sea Kayaking:**

The morning began with blue skies so I decided to stick with my plan to go sea kayaking. I rented a sea kayak at the Djurg  rden island bridge and paddled around the island (north end) to the place where we had coffee and Princess Cake one of my first days here.



On the way, I saw many boats; sail, motor, sea kayaks, row and sculling boats; chased a family of swans into the reeds and followed a prancing family of minks along the rocky shoreline. The minks were so quick that I had trouble catching them still enough to be in a photo. The wind picked up so I decided to stick to the quieter sea channel. I am surprised that I do not see a lot of sea life (other than birds). I saw a man fishing off of a bridge downtown but no catch in his basket. I do not see any seals or sea-going birds such as albatross or



pelicans, etc...either. In fact, the water appears relatively clean but devoid of sea debris, such as seaweed, shells, etc... Beaches are usually polished dark granite stone with minimal wave action, very calm archipelago waters. I do not detect any typical salt sea air scent either.

After sea kayaking, we had lunch and enjoyed a mjukglass (soft vanilla ice cream cone) in the Kungsträdgården Square listening to a local accordion player. We walked down to the “smaller” Tall Ships docks which contained a massive and milling crowd (and pickpocket heaven). I keep thinking the ships cannot get anymore elaborate but even the smaller sailing vessels were amazing. Afterwards, we split up and walked around Gamla Stan looking for yarn, postcards, people, etc...



At the end of the afternoon as we were waiting for a bus, my mother managed to get tangled up with a smelly drunk homeless man. He sat on her coat (snagging her coat cord) and snatched her transport card out of her hand. My Dad wrestled his empty greasy hand, while my mother grabbed back her transport card from his other hand, and at the same time I reached between his legs and unhooked her coat cord. It looked like quite a gymnastics event at that bus stop with my mother telling the homeless man that it was her card (not “his” as he was mumbling that she stole it from him) and all three of us swarming him. I think I will dub this the Swedish Bus Tussle event. He swore at her the remaining six LONG minutes, grumbling that he could not get on the bus because my mother had “his” transport card while eating the half-eaten sandwich he had dug out of the trash. Life in a big city...unfortunately we were too busy swarming the homeless man to capture this event with any photos.

### **July 29, 2007 (Sun) –Dinner at Cousin Ulrika’s home:**

This morning started out rainy and continues our variable weather pattern of sunny and cloudy/rainy throughout the day. I walked down to the nearby waterway to look at the old boats and read their historical information on tourist placards, then continued on to City Hall. After a rain squall, I ducked into the Kungsholms Kyrka (King’s Island church) where my parents were sitting in on Sunday service. This was not a particularly fancy church but I decided it was a good time to make a donation to a local Lutheran church in Tom Deniston’s memory.

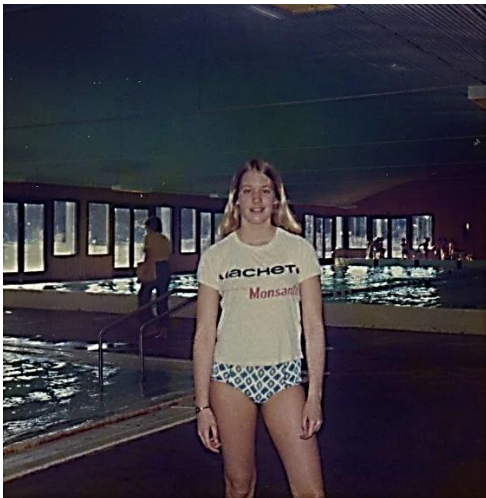
The soloist/organist were playing “Bridge over Troubled Waters” that seemed appropriate considering the tough last couple of years Tom had struggled through. Lutheran is the official Swedish religion and every citizen is considered Lutheran unless they declare otherwise. I notice only one other person (woman) approximately my age in the pews- all others were old or maybe grandparents with young children. Swedes tend to only attend church on the following events; baby baptism, confirmation, weddings and funerals.



After a light snack lunch, we began our trek to cousin Ulrika Ehrby's home in Tullinge (suburb of Stockholm ~ 20 min by train) which involved taking the subway and then a Pendeltåg (train) to her home. Ulrika met us at the train station and served as our personal family tour guide by taking us by my old Swedish school (Storvreten and swimming pool). I vaguely remember my old school and swim team practice pool but definitely remember the Ehrby's old family home in Tumba (even the roses on the side of the house). The only thing that I noticed which struck me as odd was that their front and backyards seemed much smaller than I remember. Ulrika and Leif's home is beautiful (and rebuilt after a home fire engulfed their home several years ago). Leif and Ulrika prepared a

delicious Swedish smorgasbord meal and I enjoyed catching up with the Ehrby clan; my Aunt Elizabeth and Uncle Bo Ehrby, cousin Maria (and her daughter Linda) and Ulrika's son Markus. As Ulrika walked us to the train station I recalled her love for horses (she was about ten when I lived in Sweden) and cuddling her favorite house-pets (long haired guinea pigs). I did not share with her the guinea pig eating story from our Peru trip. Ulrika and family traveled to Colorado on Thursday the next week to visit my sister in Breckenridge and pick up her daughter Jessica. Ulrika and Caroline's families travel quite a bit internationally and get great bargains by flying standby on SAS.

*School Pool photos from 1976 & 2007 (below)*

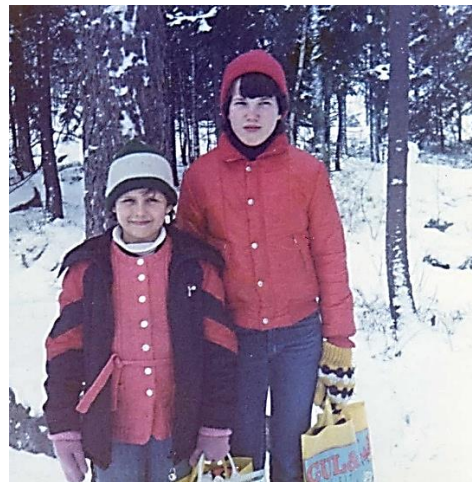






*My daily walk through the forest to school*

*Family Photos from 1976 (below)*





*and in 2007...*



I finally got through to one of my Swedish friends from the 1970's (Jill McCabe) on the phone and we caught up on news a bit. Jill lives in Lund (southern Sweden) and was my sports buddy and good friend (she was a runner, I was a swimmer) while I lived here. Jill is quite well known in Sweden for having made the [semi-final \(800 m track\) in the Olympics](#) years ago and I remember watching her on TV.

*Photos of Jill & Maria in 1976 below...*



**July 30, 2007 (Mon) –Goodbye to the Tall Ships and hello to [Skansen](#):**

Our last day with the Tall Ships. We went out to Djurgården Island to watch the Tall Ships unfurl their big sails and sail out to sea. We particularly enjoyed being treated to the Mexican ships “men on the spars” salute along with Mexican music.



After our picnic lunch we hopped onto the old fashioned electric trolley at Norrmalmstorg (#7) to spend the afternoon and evening at [Skansen](#) on the island of Djurgården, a royal park near the center of Stockholm. [Skansen](#) is the oldest open-air museum in the world and also includes a zoological park. Skansen is filled with historical homes and businesses, caretakers wearing old costumes and performing tasks from the olden days. I cannot resist visiting the bakery after walking by the open door and smelling the warm bread smell. I was fascinated by all the special tools they used in daily life; such as the crimped rolling pin (to make knackebröd), looms and spinning wheels. I enjoy watching the glass blowers at work and the children outside collecting “special colored” beads of broken glass outside of his shop. The potter smooths out her clay bowl with practiced hands.



Skansen also has the distinction of being the “special” place where my parents met and fell in love in June 1957 (50 years ago). I cajole my parents into posing under “their special” elm tree (which they says looks exactly the same). My father remembers lifting my mother up on the stone wall in front of the Skansen church but this time made my mother hop up on her own for another picture. If they had not married in the US, they would have married in this church. Just outside the entrance to the church was a large metal iron ring “collar” where churchgoers used to spit on the local sinners. Life was much tougher back in the “good old days”. I treated my parents to a nice dinner out and then joined them listening to a jazz concert with 1950’s swing dancing afterwards. Hot air balloons drifted by in the evening dusk as we listened to the jazz concert - I still do not comprehend where the big balloons can land in this city of tall buildings. I enjoyed watching the crowd swing dance despite being the ONLY person under 50 in this crowd of Q-tips. [Leif Kronlund](#) (the swing dance band director) is the SAME director from 1957. He looks very old, but turns out he was born in 1931, only one year older than my father! It is very interesting to be the only “young” person in a crowd of 200-300. I think that the people attending are quite nostalgic for the good old days. I remember visiting Skansen many years ago and watching the glass blowers and carpenters but not much else. My parents said that this was “the place” where young people met and danced on weekends until midnight in the 1950’s.







#### July 31, 2007 (Tue) – Drottningholm Island:



Today has been perfect weather, warm and sunny. We took a one hour ferry ride to [Drottningholm Royal Palace where the King and Queen of Sweden live](#). The architecture and grounds are said to be similar to Versailles in France. I would not know and it seemed to be very monochromatic and stark to me (green grass with green hedges and sharp edge shaped features). I typically associate the Swedish landscape with multicolored flower and herb gardens, pine forests, groves of birch trees (like Colorado aspens) and fruit trees/bushes. This palace has none of that. However, along a short path towards the bus stop I spot the largest rhubarb plants I have ever seen. They look like huge elephant ears.



*Sideline story....My father delights in the following habit. He leans over to me as we approach a Swede walking in the opposite direction and says, "watch this". Then he proceeds to say very politely "God dag" (good day greeting) to the Swede walking by and they always ignore him. After we pass by, with no return response from the Swedish stroller, they whip their heads around to try to figure out if we might be someone they know. They appear very confused. I do not know if this is a Swedish or a big city habit (to ignore strangers) but it tickles my dad to watch their reaction. Swede's are usually very reserved towards strangers*



*(see my joke at the end of this journal). My father and I are very outgoing, the very opposite of this culture and this drives my mother crazy. As a good Swede, my mother pretends to not know us. This story proves it does not take much to entertain my father and I.*

**Aug 1, 2007 (Wed) – [Vaxholm Island](#):**

Another perfect sunny day for a ferry ride to the island where the town of Vaxholm lies - referred to as the capital city of the Swedish archipelago. This is an old town with an immense stone-walled military fort that protected the strategic sea entry into Stockholm. The soldiers that manned the fort watched for “the enemy” and ensured proper tolls were paid before entering the kingdom of Sweden. We ate lunch and enjoyed mjukglass (delicious soft ice cream cone) with my cousin Caroline Ehrby, her children (Johanna and Anders – who has grown a foot in height since I last saw him about a year ago). We walked around Vaxholm and then rode the ferry home for a quiet evening.



A walk around the neighborhood after dinner completed the end of another fun day.

**Aug 2, 2007 (Thurs) – Uncle Birger Fogelberg’s summer home:**

Uncle Bo and Aunt Elizabeth Ehrby picked us up mid-morning and we drove two hours north to the island of Väddö. I spied moose crossing signs on the highway but no actual live moose. We enjoyed a nice lunch at my Uncle Birger and his wife Bibi’s summer home in the forest. Birger treated us to creamy white ice cream with plump blueberries that he had picked fresh at the edge of their woods. We took a short walk to the nearby Baltic Sea and looked beyond the fishing nets towards Finland. I squinted really hard but was unable to see Finland. However, I did notice the nearby old World War II bunkers pointing towards Finland/Russia. Bibi explained that this area was known for shipping. I looked up Finland on the map and noticed it was about 150 miles away – a bit too far for my eyes. The sea was extremely calm and not very cold – the rivers I run are much colder. I have two full days left on my trip and we generate a list of possible activities that we can do during my remaining days. My parents are getting a bit testy tonight (probably because of the long list) and they plan on resting up when I leave. We have done a lot in our short two weeks.



**Aug 3, 2007 (Fri) – [Vasa Museum](#) & Changing of the Guard:**



Drizzle off and on all day made for a perfect opportunity to visit the Vasa museum. I remember visiting this famous ship on a school field trip years ago at a different museum. The Vasa sunk in 1628 and was recovered/restored in 1961. The new museum is fantastic and a must see for visitors to Stockholm. It was so interesting to see the common shipboard artifacts and the history behind them. The Vasa ship is truly immense, I recommend budgeting at least two hours at this museum. It was very difficult taking photos in this museum because the lights were kept low so I only took a few closeups of the intricate wood carved stern. After lunch at the Kulturhuset, I met my parents and walked to the [Royal Palace Changing of the Guard](#). Wow, I expected a short 15 minute military type exercise but 45 minutes later the military cavalry parade of horses, band and men finished up a spectacular show. What is really amazing is that they do this every day ~noon and it's free. Arrive early (~45 minutes before the scheduled start time) to get a spot close in to see the event. Prepare for a tight crowd/close quarters and know that you will stand for the entire time.



*Changing of the Guard in 1976...*



*and in 2007... not much has changed*



Our next stop was to walk around the former Swedish naval base called Skeppsholmen. This small island now holds a few hostels, cafes, stores and boat docks. We walked around the small island and then shifted our attention to a long bus ride (#55 informally known as a sightseeing bus) out to Södermalm island for a personal sightseeing tour and to pick up a Princesstårta at Gunnarson's Konditori. Gunnarson's is reputed to be one of the best bakeries in Stockholm and is located at the Skanstull stop. We popped on the subway for a quick ride home with our prize possession and I can attest that they make a great Princess cake. It was delicious.



## Aug 4, 2007 (Sat) – Saltsjöbaden:

Perfect last day in Stockholm, started out cloudy so we went souvenir shopping on Drottninggatan. Our last train ride was to Saltsjöbaden, an island towards the Baltic. We watched boaters flow in and out of the Grand Hotel marina and listened to the waves wash across our hard granite outcropping viewpoint. The sun was warm and sky blue by the end of the day.



To my mother's exasperation, my father has a tendency to lose coins from his pockets when they stop and rest. My father is extremely proud of himself for rescuing two of his lost ten-crown coins from in-between wooden deck slats. He has used a piece of tape and a ruler twice now in his travels back to the locations where he has lost the coins, sometimes a week can pass between losing the coin and retrieving it, not to mention the bus miles to travel back and forth. Remember, one Swedish crown coin is about \$0.15 cents, ten crowns equals \$1.50. Time does not equal money in my father's world.



Mom fixed Swedish pannkakor and lingon (pancakes and lingonberries) for dinner and then we enjoyed my last short walk down to the water. Sadly but contentedly, I repacked my bag for my morning flight tomorrow. My parents daily activity tour guiding (Ed & Astrid Tucker) made this a perfect visit. I left on Aug 5 and with Caroline's help got a seat in Business class for the ride home. I enjoyed a delightful flight home with no baggage mishaps on the way. My bag was heavy (55 lbs) and did not technically make it under the 50 lb baggage limit with all my parents send home items (but Caroline helped smooth that over too). Flying home is much easier (gaining 8 hours) than flying to Sweden. I was not nearly as tired and ended up working on Monday after a regular night's sleep.

### Other stuff:



Items for your summer visit: Sunglasses, sunscreen (even though Swedes NEVER wear it), personal compact umbrella for rain, raincoat (notice the contradiction with first two items), ATM card, driver's license, passport (duh), power cord converter to charge your camera battery, backpack, camera, pants/skirts with front pockets, chapstick, light sweater, passport

necklace holder for airport traveling, collapsible canvas bag for grocery shopping and good walking shoes. Stockholm is fast becoming a city that uses credit cards exclusively, paying with cash is getting harder to do.

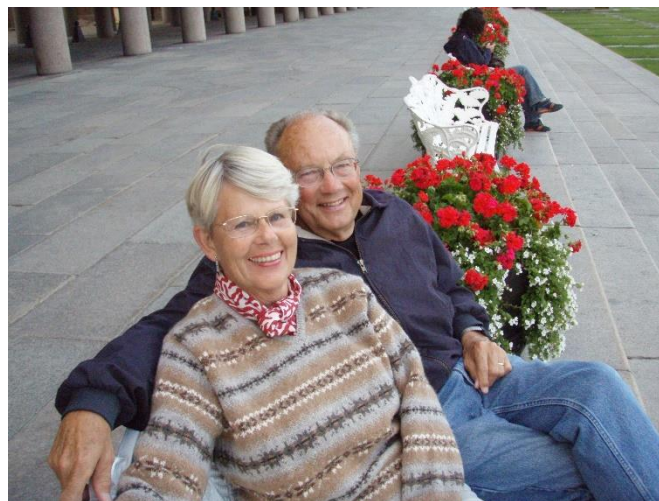
Optional nice to have items for your summer visit: ballcap to keep rain off your glasses, small change/cash wallet that can fit in your front pocket, travel journal, Chaco sandals and a laptop with internet connection.

Small grocery stores are everywhere in Sweden, most everything else you forget to bring with you is available for purchase in these stores but remember you have to bag and carry everything you buy - all the way home. We tend to buy food on a daily basis – two days at the most.

Most Swedes can speak English and will help you if you get lost. They like it when you try to use Swedish. I did notice a funny translation on a bottle of hand soap “Dreamron Hand Wash Cream Soap - 100% soap free” – maybe I will submit that to Consumer Reports magazine under their advertising labels joke section? All taxes and tip are included in any goods you purchase or meals eaten in a restaurant. If the price is labeled as 100 crowns, you pay exactly 100 crowns. It is convenient for calculating totals in your head.



More on Public Transportation- what can I say – excellent – on time, subways every 6 minutes or less, buses every 15 min or less, trains every 15-25 min or less. Subways and trains are easy to visualize (via maps). I found that buses are much harder to figure out because there are so many buses and you cannot see their detailed routes on maps. The subways are dark with cool air temperatures and some have artifacts from Roman or prehistoric times on display. The subway escalators are the longest I have ever seen and are everywhere in Stockholm. Download the apps on your phone. Maps.me is great to use without internet- download app and specific maps before you leave home and you are set.





### Swedish Jokes:

1. There were 9 people on a deserted island. Three Brits were forming a soccer team, three Americans were loudly talking to each other and telling jokes and the three Swedes were waiting to be introduced.
2. [How to tell if you are Swedish](#)

### Useful Links:

- [Visit Stockholm](#)
- [Swedish Live Webcams](#)
- [Swedish for Travelers](#)