

NORWEGIAN SPLENDOR

With Copenhagen and Stockholm

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Mike and I had so much fun on our vacation in 2013 on our trip to Iceland and Greenland that we decided to check out Scandinavia which comprises the three kingdoms of Denmark, Norway and Sweden. We booked a tour with Odysseys Unlimited for a spring departure. There were just nine travelers on this tour which made the trip easy on the guide and the group.

DENMARK

Departing from Detroit we arrived in Copenhagen and met our fellow travelers and guide. After check in at the Palace Hotel Copenhagen our group was taken by our guide Ingrid Svensson to an amusement park called Tivoli Gardens built in the 1840s in the city center. The park was quite beautiful with gardens and fountains. Many restaurants and stores lined the streets within the park. In the distance was the area with the rides and arcade games. After a very good dinner at Groften 'The Ditch', one of Tivoli's oldest and most venerable establishments. Our dinner consisted of a large shrimp cocktail followed by baked chicken with a delightful sauce, vegetables and potatoes and a few glasses of wine we felt pretty good. Then the waiter brought out dishes of dense chocolate cake and two different ice creams...all very good.

The guide took our group back to the hotel on a different route than when we came to see more of the city. Mike and I stayed a little bit longer at the park and got tickets to ride a roller coaster that was hidden inside a fake mountain. It was a fun ride, sometimes in the dark with others on the coaster screaming in Danish. We checked out a little more of the park and shops and then went back to the hotel for some rest. On the way we took photos of a statue of Hans Christian Andersen a Danish author. Some of his most famous fairy tales include "The Little Mermaid", "The Snow Queen", "The Ugly Duckling, and "The Nightingale". Our hotel was right across from City Hall and a large public square in the centre of Copenhagen. One day Mike and I went inside City Hall decorated with flags, murals and statues. Lots of wedding parties were gathering in the main hall taking turns to get married upstairs. At one end of the City Hall Square was the Dragon Fountain. The central motif of the fountain is a bull fighting a dragon. One the edge of the basin sat three water spraying dragons.

Our half day tour on Thursday started at the Langelinie promenade by the waterside to see "The Little Mermaid" statue. The bronze statue by Edvard Eriksen depicts a mermaid sitting on a rock. Based on the fairy tale of the same name by Danish author Hans Christian Andersen, the small statue is a Copenhagen icon and has been a major tourist attraction since 1913. We continued to visit Rosenborg Castle built as a country summerhouse in 1606 and is an example of Christian IV's many architectural projects. It was built in the Dutch Renaissance style and has been expanded several times, finally evolving into it present condition by the year 1624. The interior was beautiful with

mural, carpets, furniture and statues. In the main hall was the impressive coronation chair with narwhal-tusk and ivory decorations. We went through the castle to end up at the exhibition of the Crown Jewels and the Danish Crown Regalia.

Our coach stopped at the 17th-century waterfront, canal and entertainment district of Nyhavn. Lined by brightly coloured 17th and 18th century townhouses, bars, cafes and restaurants. Serving as a “heritage harbor”, the canal had many historical wooden ships. Mike and I looked around for house No. 9 which is the oldest house in the area dating back to 1681. We then found house No. 20. This is where Hans Christian Andersen used to live and where he wrote the fairy tales “The Tinder Box”, “Little Claus and Big Claus” and “The Princess and the Pea”. He also lived twenty years in No. 67 and two years in No. 18. With time on our own Mike and I started walking over to Church of Our Saviour, a baroque style church most famous for its helix spire with an external winding staircase that can be climbed to the top offering extensive views over central Copenhagen. It is also noted for its carillon which is the largest in northern Europe and plays melodies every hour from 8 am to midnight. The climb to the top of the spire was very rewarding for the experience and view. We left the church and it started to rain. We continued to walk to visit the 17th century tower and observatory Rundetaarn, (Round Tower), the oldest functioning observatory in Europe. Once inside the tower you walk up the equestrian staircase that leads to the top that affords expansive views of Copenhagen. We thought the views from Church of Our Savior were better. We went back to our hotel to get ready for a dinner date we had with a local resident that was a friend of Mike’s nephew. We went to her shop and met. She took us to a restaurant called Kjobenhavn. We met her boyfriend who was celebrating his birthday that day. After a nice dinner we said our goodbyes and walked back to the hotel.

The next morning we continued with our group to visit Kronborg Castle in the town of Helsingor, Denmark. The castle is situated on the extreme northeastern top of the island of Zealand. In 1658 Kronborg was besieged and captured by the Swedes who took many of its valuable art treasures as war booty. In 1785 the castle ceased to be a royal residence and was converted into barracks for the army. The army left the castle in 1923, and after a thorough renovation it was opened to the public. We left the castle and continued our day trip to visit the home of Karen Blixen, best know for her memoir of Out of Africa. She also wrote short stories, among others, Seven Gothic Tales and Babette’s Feast. Born Karen Dinesen, she later married her Swedish cousin Baron Bror von Blixen-Finecke, and began writing under the name Karen Blixen as well as the pen name Isak Dinesen and the pseudonyms Osceola and Pierre Andrezel. Returning to the hotel we changed and took a walk along Stroget, the world’s longest pedestrian street. We changed directions and went back towards Tivoli Gardens. We stopped in an Italian restaurant and had a good seafood dinner.

This morning we made ready to leave Copenhagen and take a ferry to Oslo, Norway. We made a stop at Christiansborg Palace, located on the tiny island of Slotsbolmen, which contains the Danish Parliament, the Supreme Court and the Ministry of State. Parts of the palace are used by the Royal Family for various functions and events. The Royal Reception Rooms include The Tower Room and The Oval Throne Room where foreign

ambassadors to Denmark are received by the Queen. The Great Hall is the most imposing room in the palace. This is where you will find the Queen's tapestries. I though this palace was the most beautiful we saw on the whole trip. After leaving the palace our next stop was to walk around the fishing village of Dragor. It was a quaint, quiet fishing village with many well-preserved historical buildings. The old part of the town is a compact, picturesque maze of alleys with yellow-painted houses, red roofs, and cobblestone streets built in the traditional Danish style.

NORWAY

We started our trip to visit Norway by boarding the overnight DFDS ferry to Oslo. On the ferry which used to be a cruise ship we had a small cabin with a window. After settling in we were to make our way to dinner. After a buffet style dinner we looked around the decks a bit and then went to rest. We were given a booklet describing the cruise hour by hour and interesting places the ferry would be passing during the night. As we were eating dinner the ferry passed Kronborg Castle as seen from the water. Most of the places we passed were at night or early morning so we missed those. The next morning we packed and made our way to breakfast and then went to on the top deck to see the beginning of the fiords and many small villages till we reached the port of Oslo. This section was the highlight of the ferry cruise to see our first glimpse of the fiords of Norway.

We boarded our coach that was waiting for us just outside the ferry exit. As we traveled north to ski country and admired the unspoiled mountain region we stopped in the town of Lillehammer. Known for the ski resort that hosted the 1994 Winter Olympics. The ski jump was something to see. We had little time so we did not get to walk up some stairs to the top of the ski jump but did go and climb a ladder by the torch used during the Olympics. We continued on our route to Maihaugen one of Northern Europe's largest open-air museums and is one of the largest cultural facilities in Norway. The founder, Anders Sandvig, collected old houses and farmyards within the Gudbrandsdalen valley to provide a sample of Norwegian culture and history in a museum. He first started in his backyard, but when his collection grew, in 1901, the town council offered him a permanent site for the museum. In 1904, the city of Lillehammer set aside an area already known as Maihaugen and bought Sandvig's collection and established Sandvig Collections, the formal name for Maihaugen. We had a private tour and were taken in a many small houses and the Garmo stave church. In 1882, the church was disassembled and sold to Anders Sandvig, who brought it to Lillehammer, where it was re-erected at Maihaugen in 1920-1921. A stave church is a medieval wooden Christian church building. The name derives from the buildings' structure of post and lintel construction, a type of timber framing where the load-bearing posts are called *stafr* in Old Norse and *stav* in modern Norwegian. Mid-afternoon we departed for the village of Gala and our ski lodge hotel the Wadahl Hotel located in the snow topped mountains.

Today we experienced more of Norway's scenery as we traveled from Gala to Geiranger. We had to take a detour from our route as the road we were to travel was closed. The route we did take was full of scenery and we didn't feel we missed much by taking a

different route. We arrived in Geiranger, a small village in Sunnmøre region of Møre og Romsdal county in the western part of Norway. It is located in a fairytale landscape with its majestic, snow-covered mountain tops, wild and beautiful waterfalls, lush green vegetation and the deep, blue fjord. Geiranger is under constant threat from the mountain Åkerneset which could erode into the fjord. A collapse could cause a tsunami that could destroy downtown Geiranger. We took a walk into the village to visit the octagonal church and cemetery. Between Hotel Union where we were staying and downtown was a trail that wandered down to the village passing waterfalls and countryside. Once in the village it was full of tourists from the three cruise ships we saw in the harbor. Lots of shops full of souvenirs and gifts. Some cafes, restaurants and a pub for the men folk hanging out for a beer waiting for their wives and family to get done shopping. Mike hung out while I went in a few shops. I went back and got him and we went to the local chocolate shop for candy and walked back to the hotel. We threw on our bathing suits and went for a swim in the hotel's inside and outside heated pools. After a nice dinner our group went to visit the antique car museum in the basement of the hotel. In 1869 in Geiranger Quakers bent on saving souls arrived at a time when the locals thought themselves good Lutheran Christians already. The Quakers may not have been lucky as missionaries, but they were taken with the beauty of Geirangerfjorden and spread the word on their return home: within twenty years the village was receiving a regular supply of visitors. Seizing their chance, local farmers mortgaged, sold and borrowed anything they could to buy ponies and traps, and by the end of the century tourists were being carted up from the jetty to the mountains by the score. In 1919, the horse was usurped when a group of farmer-cum-trap-owners clubbed together to import cars – the region's first taxi service. The present owner of Hotel Union has restored a dozen or so of these classic cars, including a 1922 Hudson, a 1932 Studebaker and a 1931 Nash, and has them in the antique car museum. He lets some of the cars out for a ride for special guests and weddings.

The next day our group went for a pleasant country ride up Eagle's Bend Road to Herdalssetra with hairpin turns through mountain passes, stopping for panoramic views of Geirangerfjorden and its surroundings along the way. We stopped at a goat farm that produces a white, unripened cream cheese called Snøfrisk. They also make a brown Norwegian cheese made of goat's milk or a blend of goat and cow's milk. For lunch we were served a bowl of vegetable soup and thin sheet crackers. We could go to the cheese table loaded with different goat cheeses and several varieties of the Snøfrisk spreads. The owner took us on the farm grounds and showed us the process of goat cheese making.

Next day was a full-day journey to Bergen from Geiranger. A series of ferry rides took us past tiny villages, waterfalls and steep mountains plunging into the fjord waters. We arrived in Bergen that morning. We stayed at the Radisson Blu Royal Hotel located in the city center of Bergen near the historic wharf area.

We were taken on a three-hour morning tour to drive past the old warehouse district where colorful houses are packed tightly together where Hanseatic merchants toiled in the 14th and 15th centuries. We left the town center to visit Trolhaugen, the country home

of composer Edvard Grieg overlooking lovely Nordaas Lake. This was his summer home where he stayed and wrote some of his music, and where he and his wife Nina (Hagerup) Grieg, his first cousin are buried. Edvard Hagerup Grieg was a Norwegian composer and pianist. He is widely considered one of the leading Romantic era composers, and his music is part of the standard classical repertoire worldwide. Nina (Hagerup) Grieg was a lyric soprano. When guests came to stay at their summer home Edvard would slip away and leave the guests to his wife to entertain. When they left she would send out a message that they had left and he would return. He always had a frog and a pig with a four leaf clover in its mouth in his possession. His lucky frog was his concert companion. Before stepping onto stage as a pianist or a conductor, he would rub his lucky frog in his pocket for good luck. He had three little figurines on his writing desk, where he spent much of his time corresponding and composing. The first is a red troll-like doll, the second being a pig with a 4 leaf clover in its mouth, and the third being his lucky frog, his favorite. His troll, pig and frog were always placed, at the end of the day, on the bedside table. According to Nina, he never failed to say “good night” to the group of three.

With time on our own Mike and I went to visit the Leprosy Museum. Between 1850 and 1900 Bergen was an international capital of leprosy, with three leprosy hospitals and the largest concentration of patients in Europe. The city’s oldest leprosy hospital, St. George’s Hospital, is now not only a monument to thousands of personal tragedies; it is also an important arena for the dissemination of Norwegian work and research on leprosy. In many parts of the world leprosy is commonly known as Hansen’s disease, named after the Norwegian physician Armauer Hansen who discovered the leprosy bacillus in Bergen in 1873. The last patient at St. George’s Hospital died in 1946. It was a sad but interesting museum to visit.

We made our way to the fish market district and went inside a building that had several seafood restaurants. We had a lunch of fresh mussels, oysters, several types of fish and shrimp. We then made our way to the funicular from the city centre to the top of the Floyen Mountain for a view of the town of Bergen. Stopping in some interesting antique and junk stores we entered one that had so much stuff in it is was wall to wall with only a small isleway lined with piles of everything you could imagine, from stuffed birds to Viking helmets, glassware and weapons. We went back to some of the shopping and flower markets to look around and back to the hotel to rest awhile and change for dinner. We decided not to venture far for dinner and had dinner at a very nice relaxing restaurant called Enhjorningen in the old section with the colorful timber houses. The name Enhjorningen (unicorn) was first recorded in the year 1304, when it was mentioned in evidence given in court. A wooden unicorn hangs on the building outside of the restaurant we ate at. These houses were used as an inspiration in the Disney movie “Frozen”.

Leaving the next day for a day of extreme beauty “Norway in a nutshell”. We traveled first by coach to Voss where we took a trainride on the Bergen Railway changing trains at Myrdal. Then boarded the Flam Railway, an excursion that descends through the steep and narrow Flam Valley, nearly 2,900 feet deep. During the 50-minute ride we sped

through 20 tunnels and curved around 21 hairpin bends, stopping at the mighty Kjosfossen Waterfall. After a few minutes music starts playing and a person in a bright red dress started dancing at the top of the falls. This person was pretending to be a ‘hulder’ a seductive forest creature found in Scandinavian folklore. Her name derives from a root, meaning “covered” or “secret”. One of a race of sirens, living in the woods, seductive but dangerous. Considered to be a part of the troll family the female is fair-haired and beautiful, except for her cow’s tail. She hides her tail in order to lure young men into marrying her. Once married the hulder’s tail falls off, but the true nature of the troll remains in the huldra. If the man does not treat her well, she will turn incredibly ugly, and the man will suffer and regret being tricked by a huldra throughout his marriage. After we disembarked in the small village of Flam to take a ferry to Gudvangen. We experience the grandeur of Naeroyfjord, a fjord arm of stunning Sognefjord, a 125-mile long waterway that reaches halfway across Norway; and the Aurland fjords in the Flam Valley. From Gudvangen, we traveled by coach and ferry to Lofthus, nestled on Hardangerfjord in Norway’s Western Fjord District of snow-capped mountains. We reached our hotel around 5:30 in time to enjoy the beautiful swimming pool and canal at the Hotel Ullensvang in Lofthus. Several heated pools were indoors, one for children and adults and one just for adults. The indoor pool would give access to the outdoor pool with a fountain you could turn on to cool off and an area at the back of the pool with built in steel type lounging chairs. You could admire the magnificent view of the Hardanger mountain range and Fjord. We also floated down the heated man made canal to another pool. On the grounds were fountains, statues and a cabin near the inn that was the inspiration and birthplace of the musical composer Edvard Grieg.

The next morning our group was taken to an excursion to Steinste Farm, one of the largest fruit farms (strawberries, cherries, apples) in the area known as “Norway’s fruit orchard.” The family who own and run the farm took us on a tour and presentation. Before the tour we met inside a lovely dining room where the sister of the owner delighted us with a hot cup of tea (as it was cool and raining outside) and a piece of her homemade apple pie, clotted cream and strawberries. She makes thousands these pies every year for the tourist trade. With help from migrant workers the family is able to run and upkeep the farm. We left to visit a local salmon farm near the fruit farm. We took a boat to the floating salmon farm and were given a tour and information about the raising of the salmon.

We went back to the hotel and Mike and I rushed off to take a walk to the village of Lofthus. We visited the Ullensvang Church and cemetery looking for tombstones with the name Lofthus or similar spellings. I have Loftis ancestors and some family research has stated that the Loftis family originated from the town of Lofthus in Norway. We ran into a local woman walking with her sister and brother-in-law. We asked her about Lofthus and the people who lived there. She was at the cemetery to visit the grave of her beloved husband who had died a year ago. She said she was part of a group of researchers that kept records of the people of Lofthus. She said if I was not leaving the next day she could have looked in her notes for information about the Lofthus families. I tried to give her my e-mail and genealogy site address but she refused saying she did not use a computer. I gave her a sheet of paper I had a write up on my Loftis family and

about the origin of them living in Lofthus which she accepted. Mike and I did not want to delay her from visiting her husband's grave as it was beginning to rain and her sister and brother-in-law were visiting from Oslo so we told her good bye and continued to walk back to the hotel. On our way back to the hotel we passed a building where a party was going on inside. A man dressed in a traditional Norwegian costume yelled out for us to approach him. He had another man in a suit with him and a woman dressed in a traditional costume. They had beers in their hands and seemed like they had had several before that. "Come see us in our traditional costumes" he said. I asked him if he was the groom and he laughed, hugged the girl and said NO! I took their picture and said have a good time. At our hotel a wedding party was arriving at the hotel for another wedding, all dressed in traditional costumes. I loved the pewter buttons on their costumes and found some for sale in the hotel gift store. Expensive like everything in Norway but I wanted them and purchased some. I found other buttons in Denmark, Norway and Sweden that I liked.

This morning we went to the fjord village of Eidfjord to visit the Hardanger Nature Center. The nature center had displays, movies and information about the animals, birds and plants of the area. Our next stop was to see the 83rd highest waterfall in Norway called Voringfoss. It has a total drop of 182 meters and a major drop of 163 meters. Quite impressive, one of my favorites. He continued our route across the wild barren of Hardangervidda, a semi-barren mountain plateau that provides grazing lands for reindeer herds and hiding places for trolls. Trolls dwell in isolated rocks, mountains, or caves, live together in small family units, and are rarely helpful to human beings. Depending on the region from which accounts of trolls stem, their appearance varies greatly; trolls may be ugly and slow-witted, or look and behave exactly like human beings, with no particularly grotesque characteristic about them. We did not see any reindeer or anything as a matter of fact because there were "white-out conditions" on our route. We waited till a convoy of cars and buses gathered and then we all followed a truck with a large plow as the leader. You could not see in front of you except for the tail lights of the car in front of you. At times you had no vision but winter...pure white. Other times you could see that the snow on each side of the road was higher than the coach and covered cabins till all you saw was the top of the roof. Our route included so many tunnels I lost count, there are over 900 road tunnels in Norway. One of the tunnels had even had a roundabout.

We arrived in Oslo in time for dinner on our own. Mike found a place in Oslo called Mamma Pizza and we went there and had a very good pizza and salad. We walked around the area near where we were staying at the Hotel Royal Christiania. We went to the Central Railway Station and walked around. We found a pub serving drinks and Mike got a few beers and we just sat there and people watched.

Oslo, the capital of Norway, sits on the country's southern coast at the head of the Oslofjord, and is known for its citywide green spaces and museums. Many of these are on the Bygdøy peninsula, including the Norwegian Maritime Museum, the Vikingskipshuset, with ships from the 10th century, and the Norsk Folkemuseum, with artifacts from Sami and Viking cultures. Founded in 1050, Oslo is the oldest of the

Scandinavian capitals, though it was completely rebuilt in 1684 after a fire destroyed much of the city. Our morning tour introduced us to the Royal Palace, built in the 19th century, Askershus Fortress and Castle and Akerbrygge, the redeveloped harbor area. We stopped to look at the Holmenkollen Ski Jump with a capacity for 30,000 spectators. We took a walk at the Frognerpark where the renowned bronze sculptures of human figures. Also called Vigeland Sculpture Park are the works of the Norwegian sculptor Gustav Vigeland. The park features 212 bronze and granite sculptures all designed by Gustav Vigeland himself. Most of the sculptures are placed in five units along an 850 meter long axis: The Main gate, the Bridge with the Children's playground, the Fountain, the Monolith plateau and the Wheel of Life. This park was outstanding in beauty and style. We then stopped for a quick look in the National Gallery to see paintings by Edvard Munch. We were not allowed to take photos but viewed several of his paintings. One of his paintings many people recognize is called "The Scream". The Scream exists in four versions: two pastels (1893 and 1895) and two paintings (1893 and 1910). There are also several lithographs of The Scream (1895 and later). We also saw another of his famous paintings called Madonna. Our last stop with the group was to the Opera House where we left our group and went inside the Opera House for lunch. The dining area overlooked the harbor. After lunch Mike and I went for a walk on the roof that gives a wide view of the city and harbor. It was a very big roof slanted in areas to walk all around the building giving the feeling of being on top of a mountain. It was so windy on top that sometimes you could hardly stand up and walked on an angle.

We made our way to Oslo City Hall passing several nice fountains and gardens. On December 10 (anniversary of Alfred Nobel's death) each year, Oslo City Hall hosts the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony in which the annual laureate gives his or her lecture and is awarded the medal and diploma. Inside were large murals by Henrik Sorensens depicting scenes from Norwegian history and legends. He painted these murals between 1938 and 1950. He also included many images for World War II. We went back to Askershus Fortress and Castle that was built to protect Oslo, the capital of Norway. It has also been used as a prison. We stopped at the restaurant called Café Christiania a French influenced Norwegian cuisine & British afternoon tea in a brasserie/cafe with a roof terrace. I had the Boeuf Bourguignon, braised beef, cornichons, bacon, mushrooms minion, and red wine sauce with potato puree on the side. It was my favorite dish of the whole trip. The décor was unusual with cases lining the walls full of antiques, cameras, manikin heads with hats, watches, dishes, instruments. The waiter said that the owner 'had a disease' that he liked to collect stuff and had lots more.

Our last day in Oslo, Norway was spent going to Bygday in Oslo to the Viking Ship Museum that houses three ships the Oseberg ship, Gokstad ship and Tune ship. The museum is most famous for the completely whole Oseberg ship, excavated from the largest known ship burial in the world. The Viking displays included sledges, beds, a horse cart, wood carving and other grave goods. Next door is the Kon-Tiki Museum which houses vessels and maps from the Kon-Tiki expedition, as well as a library with about 8,000 books. The museum was originally built to house the Kon-Tiki, a raft of balsa wood of pre-Columbian model Heyerdahl used to sail from Peru to Polynesia in 1947. Another boat in the museum is the Ra II a vessel built of reeds according to

Heyerdahl perception of an ancient Egyptian seagoing boat. Heyerdahl sailed the Ra II from North Africa to the Caribbean after a previous attempt with the reed boat Ra failed.

After our visits to the museum Mike and I took a walk around Oslo heading towards the Mathallen Food Hall. We passed several neighborhoods; one had heavily decorated walls of graffiti. Some small alleyways had bars in the back of the buildings with more street art and chandeliers made of beads and leftover crystals, hanging in odd places. It was raining so we made our way back to the hotel to pack for our extension to Stockholm. At Mathallen Food Hall we had a delicious lunch of shrimp scampi, fish soup and for dessert the best homemade vanilla caramel pie made by 'Hello Good Pie' in the Mathallen Food Hall, Maridalsveien, 17, Oslo, Norway.

SWEDEN

Departing from Oslo we arrived in the early afternoon in Stockholm and stayed at the Scandic Grand Hotel. Stockholm, the capital of Sweden, encompasses 14 islands of the vast Stockholm archipelago on the Baltic Sea. The cobblestone streets and ochre-colored buildings of medieval Gamla Stan, the old town, are home to a 13th-century cathedral, the royal palace of Kungliga Slottet and its underground armory, cafes and restaurants. Ferries and sightseeing boats shuttle passengers between islands, beneath more than 50 bridges.

Luckily our rooms were ready and we took our luggage to our room and started preparing for our outing. The Stockholm extension was on our own and I had planned places and things to see ahead of time. The weather was sunny and nice so I told Mike lets get going. Our first priority was to purchase the Stockholm card for 72 hours. Your card lets you use public transportation, free admission to more than 75 museums & attractions and a canal ride. We are sure we got our money's worth with this card and it saved us a lot of time getting tickets and using the public transportation. We arrived at the station for the #7 Tram and took it to Skansen the first open-air museum and zoo in Sweden located on the island of Djurgarden. It was founded in 1891 by Artur Hazelius to show the way of life in the different parts of Sweden before the industrial era. We hopped off the tram and entered near the funicular railway inside the park. We wandered around the village of different houses, a church, gardens and restaurants. Some of the houses and shops were opened with people dressed in traditional costumes playing the parts of a baker, shopkeeper, pottery maker and a local resident. It was like visiting Greenfield Village in Dearborn, MI or Williamsburg in VA. We stopped for lunch in a tavern called Stora Gungan and I had Swedish meatballs and Mike had marinated steak, potatoes and a soft boiled egg in the middle. Served in the dining area with furniture from the old Stockholmska company taverns, curtains on the widows it was quite pleasant. For desert I picked from a variety of bake goods at the front counter. My choice was a piece of gingerbread with currants and a fantastic heart shaped pasty with a custard filling...I could have ate a couple of those. We left to visit a cabinet maker shop and a glass blowing shop and last to Seglora Church with original murals on the walls and ceiling. We then wandered though the zoo with wolves, black bears, bison, elk and wolverines. Instead of taking the funicular down we walked down to one of the exits and had nice

views of the city. We ended up exiting by a charming café called Flickorna Helin Voltaire. My idea was to eat here for lunch earlier but it was not that close to where we entered. The building is quite unusual, looks like a small fairy castle with round towers and ornate spires. We went inside to look at the café dining area and bake goods on the counter. They have a pleasant outdoor terrace also.

Across the street was a park overlooking the river. Mike took a rest on one of the benches and I noticed a large statue on a small hill of a woman in a full-skirted gown. I thought she looked familiar. The statue was made of bronze and inscribed Jenny Lind. I knew immediately who she was because I had researched her and I had many buttons with her image in my button collection. Jenny Lind the “Swedish Nightingale,” opera star. Jenny Lind was born October 6, 1820 to an impoverished and unmarried mother in Stockholm, Sweden. Her parents were both musicians, and young Jenny began singing at a very early age. As a child she began formal music lessons, and by the age of 21 she was singing in Paris. She returned to Stockholm and performed in a number of operas. Throughout the 1840s her fame grew in Europe. In 1847 she performed in London for Queen Victoria, and her ability to make crowds swoon became legendary. The American showman Phineas T. Barnum, heard of Jenny Lind and paid a large sum for her to come to America to sing. Barnum promoted her as some mystical being blessed with a heavenly voice so when we arrived in massive crowds gathered to see and hear the “Swedish Nightingale”. I love it when traveling to stumble onto something I had read about or researched for a project and had not planned on seeing it.

The museums usually close early so I told Mike we needed to get walking in time to visit the Vasa Museum located on the western side of the island of Djurgården. The museum displays the only almost fully intact 17th century ship that has ever been salvaged, the 64-gun warship Vasa that sank on her maiden voyage in 1628. The main hall contains the ship itself and various exhibits related to the archaeological findings of the ships and early 17th century Sweden. Inside the museum the ship can be seen from six levels, from her keel to the very top of the stern castle. Around the ship are numerous exhibits and models portraying the construction, sinking, location and recovery of the ship. Why did the Vasa Sink? King Gustav II Adolf, partly. He ordered a large ship with so many heavy-calibre cannon, and approved the ship’s dimensions. Master shipwright Henrik Hybertsson, partly. He was a talented shipbuilder who had delivered several successful ships to the navy, but he had too little experience with building ships with two gundecks. Captain Söfring Hansson, ultimately. Vasa’s sinking can also be blamed on the captain. It would have been safer to sail the ship with the lower gunports closed, since he knew the ship was unstable. Who knows why the Vasa sunk but the ship’s lack of stability was the major cause. It was quite the ship to behold with its size and ornate decorations in full color. We ran out of time to enter the Nordiska Museet Museum so we took the tram back to town and Mike and I stopped at The Flying Dog Beer Palace so he could have a few beers.

After a nice breakfast at our hotel we ventured down to the metro station to get on a train to Millesgården an art museum and sculpture garden, located on the island of Lidingö in Stockholm, Sweden. It is located on the grounds of the home of sculptor Carl Milles and

his wife, artist Olga Milles, who are both buried there. The museum is built on terraces overlooking the water. It was quite peaceful this morning absent of the large tourist crowds. Several groups of children were laying on the terrace in the sculpture park with their art pads looking up at the sculptures high above on columns. They were busy finding the one they wanted to sketch and busy at drawing them. Carl Milles was a professor at Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan during 1931-50. Since we live not far from Cranbrook we have visited it many times and admired his works. We went thorough the house and gardens and ended up at their outdoor café. We found a shady spot and ordered lunch. Mike had a seafood stew and I had a marvelous shrimp salad with a garnish of caviar on top of a grilled crusty bread slice...another of my favorite lunch choices. Mike with his beer and me with a glass of champagne it was a relaxing afternoon. We made our way back to the bus station to get to the metro to get off at the The Swedish History Museum. I wanted to see the Viking exhibits and especially the "Gold Room" a large vault in the basement with over 52 kilos of exquisite gold relics on display. In Sweden they have found artifacts from as far back as the stone, bronze and iron ages, but their Viking age discoveries are probably the most remarkable. We left and on the way through town I was looking for mancovers on the streets with the letter "K". It is told that if you step on a cover marked with a "K" you will be lucky in love. I only saw the "K" on a cover two times in my search. Also I saw the covers with the letter "V" several times which if you step on it you will have all the luck it is told.

We stopped at in front of Concert Hall to see the fountain by Carl Milles called "The Orpheus Group". The statue shows how Orpheus is going to Hades, the land of the dead to plead for his wife Eurydice. The works in progress of this fountain are displayed in a room at Millesgården. Orpheus is in the middle and he is surrounded by 8 male and female figures. One of the male figures has got the facial features of Beethoven. Beethoven was for C. Milles a symbol of a great, suffering artistic genius. Orpheus is in Greek Mythology the greatest of all musicians. He was often playing on his lyre. The stories about him are centered on his ability to charm all living things and even stones with his music, and how he tries to bring back Eurydice from the land of dead. When Orpheus finally met his own death, the birds wept on the hillside, the trees shed their leaves and the nearby streams were swollen with their own tears. Orpheus' spirit went down to the Underworld and there he found his beloved Eurydice. The sister fountain "The Orpheus Group" is at Cranbrook Academy of Arts in Michigan. The fountain does not include the huge figure of the god Orpheus. The sculptures of Carl Milles were acquired by George Booth in the 30s and why he did not include the figure of the god Orpheus is unknown. We then made our final stop of the day at Vete-Katten a 1920s-style café for pastries and coffee.

For our last day in Stockholm we took a bus to Gamla Stan (the old town), which still has the character of a medieval city. Its narrow lanes follow the same curves along which the seamen of former times carried their goods. No one restores a house or hotel in Gamla Stan without revealing the remains of an old fortified wall or an early workshop. Traces of even earlier times remain. At the corner between Prastgatan and Kakbrinken, some bygone workman has casually repaired the wall with a Viking runestone, probably the first stone that came to his hand. The Vikings were so busy raiding and plundering to

spend time writing more than the runes that decorate their memorials. We followed a walking tour of Gamla Stan I had printed out at home. As we were wandering around I hear a band playing music and saw people rushing towards the Royal Palace and I knew it must be time for the changing of the guards so we ran over to the palace. The guards were changing and the crowds were large. I melted in with the crowd and took a few photos and squeezed myself out of the crowd to reunited with Mike who opted not to get too far inside the crowd. The guards were constantly telling the crowds to make way for the marching troops exchanging places. We went inside the German Church and sat down for awhile to listen to a group of musicians practicing for an upcoming concert. The light shining through the stain glass windows was so inspiring. We followed the suggested walking tour map to Marten Trotzigs Grand, the narrowest street in Gamla Stans. It is more a stairway than a lane, less than a metre wide. One side of the lane is covered with street art. Time for lunch and a break so we took a seat at one of the outside tables at Magnus Ladulas etabl. 1970. I had the lunch special of tender slices of marinated steak with a delicious sauce and a cold Zingo. Mike had a big bowl of a fish stew and a beer. I said lets stop in at the Nobel Museum free admission with our Stockholm card. Located in the old Stock Exchange house in the middle of Gamla Stan, this museum has lots of materials on the Nobel Prize, including videotaped speeches by laureates. We looked up Albert Arnold "Al" Gore a distant cousin of mine on the kiosk. He received the Nobel Peace Prize (together with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) in 2007. We went inside the Storkyrkan Cathedral the oldest church in Gamla Stan. Originating as a 13th century Gothic structure, the exterior was remodeled in Baroque style around 1740. The church is the seat of the Church of Sweden bishop of Stockholm. It contains two pieces of famous artwork: the 15th century wooden statue of Saint George and the Dragon and a copy of the oldest known image of Stockholm, *Vädersolstavlan* ("The Sun Dog Painting"), a 1636 copy of a lost original from 1535. Saint George and the Dragon was brought back with the Crusaders and retold with the courtly appurtenances belonging to the genre of Romance.

According to the *Golden Legend*, the narrative episode of Saint George and the Dragon took place somewhere he called "Silene", in Libya; the *Golden Legend* is the first to place this story in Libya as a sufficiently exotic locale, where a dragon might be found. In the tenth-century Georgian narrative, the place is the fictional city of Lasia, and the idolatrous emperor who rules the city is called *Selinus*. The town had a pond, as large as a lake, where a plague-bearing dragon dwelt that poisoned all the countryside. To appease the dragon, the people of Silene used to feed it two sheep every day, and when the sheep failed, they fed it their children, chosen by lottery. It happened that the lot fell on the king's daughter, who is called Sabra in some versions of the story. The king, distraught with grief, told the people they could have all his gold and silver and half of his kingdom if his daughter were spared; the people refused. The daughter was sent out to the lake, dressed as a bride, to be fed to the dragon. Saint George by chance rode past the lake. The princess, trembling, sought to send him away, but George vowed to remain. The dragon reared out of the lake while they were conversing. Saint George fortified himself with the Sign of the Cross, charged it on horseback with his lance, and gave it a grievous wound. He then called to the princess to throw him her girdle, and he put it around the dragon's neck. When she did so, the dragon followed the girl like a meek

beast on a leash. The princess and Saint George led the dragon back to the city of Silene, where it terrified the people at its approach. But Saint George called out to them, saying that if they consented to become Christians and be baptized, he would slay the dragon before them. The king and the people of Silene converted to Christianity, George slew the dragon, and the body was carted out of the city on four ox-carts. "Fifteen thousand men baptized, without women and children." On the site where the dragon died, the king built a church to the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint George, and from its altar a spring arose whose waters cured all disease.

We went to locate a statue of a sitting boy only a few inches high situated on a flat bench surrounded by coins left by tourist, in the courtyard of a Finnish church in the heart of Gamla Stan. The statue is a self portrait of the artist Liss Eriksson who said the statue was of himself as a boy simply 'gazing at the moon.' Nuns from a nearby convent knit miniscule caps and sweaters to keep Iron Boy warm throughout the city's brutal winters. Rubbing his head is supposed to bring good luck.

Our last stop was at the Riddarholm Church the burial church of the Swedish monarchs. It is located on the island of Riddarholmen, close to the Royal Palace. The congregation was dissolved in 1807 and today the church is used only for burial and commemorative purposes. Swedish monarchs from Gustavus Adolphus to Gustaf V are entombed here. After the Protestant Reformation, the monastery was closed and the building transformed into a Protestant church. A spire designed by Willem Boy was added during the reign of John III, but it was destroyed by a strike of lightning on July 28, 1835 after which it was replaced with the present cast iron spire. Coats of arms of knights of the Order of the Seraphim are in the walls of the church. When a knight of the Order dies, his coat of arms is hung in the church and when the funeral takes place the church bells are rung constantly from 12:00 to 13:00.

Back to the hotel to pack up for our early departure the next day to the airport with a short layover in Frankfurt and back in the air for the rest of the journey to Michigan. Had a great time, good memories shared with our other travelers and some memorable meals.

Glad to be home and already thinking about where our next destination will be.

Audrey & Mike Lambert - 2015

Note: I have many more pictures of our trip to Denmark, Norway and Sweden on my Pinterest pages in sections: Travel; Angels and Winged Angelic Beings; Charms, Amulets, Symbols, Legends, Customs, Rituals and Religions; Crafts from Around the World; Lighthouses around the World; Food, Drinks and Products Around the World; Transportation; Beautiful Gardens; Children and Young Adults around the World and Doors and Gates.