

Europe, July to September 2026

August 14-15, Stockholm

Two days in Stockholm which is why I did not post yesterday. Stockholm is the biggest city we will be in, so there should be a lot to write. There is a lot here, but most of it are the stories, not the sights.



It has an impressive old town, dating back to the 1200s. This is a cute little street to the left. Being in Old Town, it's old. The cobblestone streets are full of cobblestones. The very old shops are still there, selling not so old trinkets, pictures, water, hats, and shirts saying "I Love Sweden". Some of the local shops sell shirts that say "I Love Stockholm." And coffee cups.

The summary is, while it is an impressive town, I am not sure how it translates to something that is interesting if you're not here.

So, on to some stories. The first one is about Los Angeles. While not part of Stockholm, we can consider it Stockholm adjacent since our tour guide was an exchange student there during his

high school years in the 1980s. And, while there, he was walking in front of his high school one day when someone asked him if he wanted to be an extra in a film being made. He declined as he was off to ski. Just what our Boulder contingent would have opted to say. Turns out the person asking him was Michael J. Fox and the movie was Back to the Future.

OK, more pictures and more stories.

This fountain is near the palace in Stockholm. Sweden does have a symbolic monarchy much like England. Many centuries ago, Denmark and Sweden were always at war. Sweden had won the most recent one when Denmark showed up in 1520 with excessive forces and managed to put a siege on the Stockholm castle, preventing access for food and water for a long time. After 9 months and many deaths inside the castle walls, the Swedish royalty opened the doors and surrendered. Acting as good new hosts to their winnings, Denmark threw a 3-day party inside the castle, inviting everyone who was any one



to attend. Any Swede or Dane. Food and drink were plentiful until the third day when Denmark locked the castle doors, took all Swedish party-goers to this statue/fountain, and beheaded them. It was called the Stockholm Bloodbath. Denmark wanted no surviving royalty to challenge their dominance in the future. It's good that things like this are not legal today.



Turns out one member of the royal family, Gustav Vasa, did not participate in this party as he was far away on a hunting trip. Word reached him what had happened. He managed after a long time to round up what was left of the army and stage a successful battle to regain Sweden for the Swedes.

The statue to the left commemorates the successful return of Gustav, symbolizing his slaying of a dragon. We were told that Denmark is always depicted as a dragon in Sweden.



Another Swedish royalty story resides around this throne, which was used by Queen Christina, who ascended to the throne at age 6. She ruled from this silver throne for 22 years, and then abdicated because, first, she did not want to get married and, second, she wanted to convert to Catholicism, which was illegal in Sweden, a Lutheran country. On the tour, we were told she went to the Rome to become a nun. But Wikipedia disagrees. It says she did move to Rome, but not to become a nun. She became a patron of the arts, sometimes visiting a nunnery for guidance. She was buried in St. Peter's Basilica.

Interesting continuation related to her throne. Her story was significant enough for Hollywood to make a movie about her in 1933 starring

Greta Garbo. For this movie, Hollywood sent people to Sweden who studied and made an exact replica of her throne. Except for using something colored silver instead of real silver. The movie was made and the throne went into the prop closet.

Move down the line a few years to a 1989 Batman movie. The producers were looking through old props to find something ostentatious for that movie. Up pops the throne which, in one scene, was used as a seat for the Joker.

Wonder what the Swedes thought about this. Why do you think the tour guide even told us this story? I have no idea.



Here's a freebee. A nice picture of Stockholm with no story. Ah, except for one more fact. The current king and queen of Sweden are coming up on their 50th anniversary. ABBA was popular at that time and composed a song for their wedding. It was there when "Dancing Queen" was sung for the first time.

Which brings me to the last story. On the second day, Vicki and I went to the Nordic history museum. We saw many impressive pieces from the last 500 years. Of course, the one that caught my eye was this picture of an ale horn. Seriously, I did not know what it was, but the write-up called it an ale drinking horn. Who am I to disagree? Turns out, in the olden days, ale was a popular drink and friends would often arrange to gather and

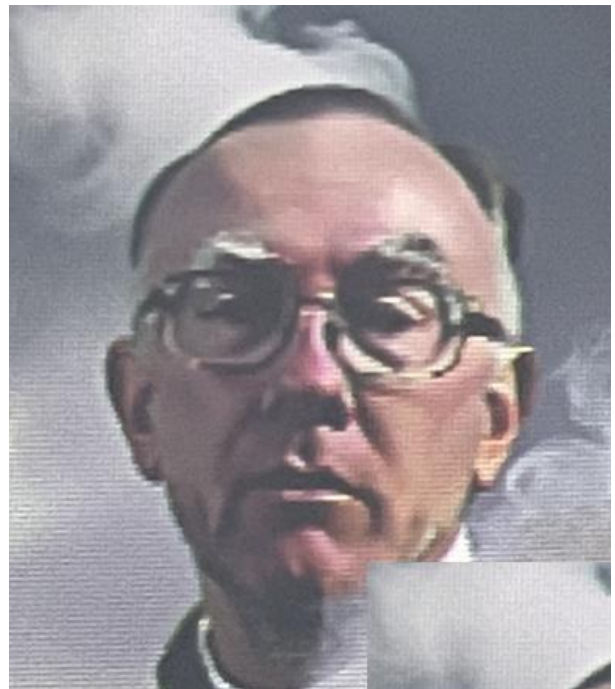


celebrate their comradery with a drink or two or three. The host would supply all the ale horns, and, as tradition would have it, not hand them out until all his friends showed up. When they did, he would announce “Mina vänner är här,” which means my friends are here (in Swedish). The horns were then passed out and drinking commenced. Believe it or not, this is the origin for the song, “Ale, ale, my friends are here.” Words were changed a bit, including ale to hail, but the thought is the same.



Two more pictures/art from Stockholm. The first is this at the entrance to the Nordic museum. It is made entirely of oak (and paint).

The second is of some famous scholar of the 18th century. Gave me a feeling a déjà vu.



OK, that's it until Copenhagen, which is two days from now, tomorrow being a sea day. And, in case you were wondering about some of the strange stories I mentioned, they are all true, except possibly for the explanation of the ale drinking song.