

The next morning's trip was not as interesting, and the homes did not appear to be as well cared for. We took a short side trip to Helvetsfallet -- "Hells Falls" -- where we scrambled down a steep, wooded rocky hill, to cross a hanging bridge across a gorge with rapids foaming below. Climbing back up the hill I often had to stop to "admire the view" and puff.

Another stop was a Nusnas, where they have practiced their handicraft of hand carved horses since about 1840. It was most interesting to see the procedure from the sawing, carving, painting and decorating.

When we arrived back at Taby, Barbro had driven 2870 km. Gas prices had averaged about 80 cents (Canadian) a liter.

July 21 we got a Stockholm card for three days. This paid for our bus, subway, and boat trips, and admission to all tourist attractions. Stockholm, the "City on the Water" is built on 14 islands, between the Baltic Sea and Lake Malaren, so there are lots of bridges. We started with a guided bus tour of the city. Then we walked around to see specially old churches, etc. We spent some time at the Wasa Museum -- a ship that sank on her maiden voyage in 1628, and was raised in 1961. The next day we had a guided tour of the City Hall, with its spectacular hall of mosaic tiles. We then went to Stockholm Castle for a guided tour. We also saw the Changing of the Guard, with an Army Platoon providing excellent music.

We had lunch, smorgosbord, at the beautiful Grand Hotel, just to say we had been there. It cost about \$38 (Can) for two - our most expensive meal. But interesting!

A boat tour took us the Waldemaresudde Estate of Prince Eugen, the Painter Prince, to see his home and paintings, and those of others, which he had left to the country in 1940. The paintings and the flower gardens were beautiful. Then we continued the boat cruise. I took a picture of an Old Folks Home across the water. It looks so much like a castle that our guide said Russian tourists saluted. It made a good story!!

We finished the day by walking in the Kings Garden, a park in Stockholm, and listening to an open air concert. Two women and a man were playing old time instruments, music composed by Bellman, a well known Swedish composer. All Sweden was remembering Bellmans week, and many dressed in old time costumes. We had hoped to see the Parliament Buildings, which occupy their own little island, but they were closed, as were some museums and Art Galleries.

Day 3 we went by boat to Drottningholm Palace, where King Carl Gustaf XVI and his family have a private apartment. The rest of the Palace and most of the grounds are open to the public. We had a guided tour of the Palace, and were very interested in restoration being done. When the palace was built in the 17th Century, the Swedish builders took ideas from Versailles. However, they didn't have money for all the marble, so built walls and pillars of concrete and plaster and painted them to resemble marble. It was amazing to see how well the work was done. In the Palace grounds we saw the Theatre, and Barbro helped our guide with sound effects. There was also the Chinese Pavilion, a little pleasure palace with beautiful Chinese lacquer and china, and embroidery. We had to leave on our boat, so could not see all the grounds.

We went to Milles Garden, the Museum left by Carl Milles 1875-1955 - a famous Swedish American sculptor. The grounds with the huge statues were lovely. The fountains were turned off, as a TV crew were testing for a concert that evening.

We broke our sightseeing tours by going by bus and ferry to the rocky, forested Yxlan Island, northeast of Taby, a short distance off the coast in the Baltic Sea. Barbro's three children and their families share the cottage. Her oldest son, wife and their family of three and her daughter and husband and family of three were there to

welcome us. For our dinner we had a big pike. I was surprised to learn that the Baltic Sea is not salty, merely brackish. There are 25 cottages on the island, and they are supplied with electricity, water and garbage collection, including emptying the chemical toilets. And incidently, in Sweden you look for signs for Toalet, not bathroom or restroom.

There were lots of wild blueberries, raspberries and few last strawberries, so our walks were interrupted while we picked and ate. The older children spent their time fishing, and caught a good sized pike. The children made me regret that I couldn't speak enough Swedish to communicate. Only Kajsa (pronounced Kysa) 11, had learned some English in school.

The next morning we took the bus back to Taby, and spent the afternoon relaxing. Barbro had done our laundry, and I was favourably impressed by the facilities. The tenants write their names down in the laundry room for the time they wish to use the washer and dryer. There is a drying

cupboard where sheets and towels can be hung up and hot air circulates. There is also an ironing board and iron. The room is kept spotlessly clean.

July 26, we went to Stockholm with another three day pass. We walked the narrow cobbled streets of the Old Town, with churches and houses dating from the middle ages. We had lunch at a sidewalk cafe, and listened to the army band. Later there was a concert of Bellmans music in the square.

On Sunday we went to Skansen on Djurgarden Island. Skansen is the oldest open air museum in the world, and about 150 buildings of historical interest have been moved there from different parts of Sweden, to represent different periods and

different social classes. During the summer various trades and handicrafts are demonstrated. We watched glass blowers at work, and had a very interesting tour of the old apothecary shop, where the guide spoke English and really knew his herbs. It was the last day of Bellmans week and there were folk singers and dancers, and many others in costume.

That evening we returned to the city and Djurgarden to listen to open air concerts. The buses were packed at the concert area by the canal, so we were lucky to be first in line for the second bus and had a seat. Bus, subway and train service was excellent at all times. Stockholm subway is said to be the longest art gallery in the world, where artists have painted murals, and there are lovely mosaics.

On July 29th, Barbro drove us to the town of Floda, near Goteborg, where we stayed with her daughter and family while we were sightseeing. In Goteborg we walked around the waterfront. We went to see the Fish Church, which used to be a church, but has now been a fish market for a long time. Our walk through the Kings Park and Tradgardforeningens Park brought us to an excellent restaurant, and then to the Palm House, a glass Botanic garden filled with exotic plants. The most spectacular was a water lily whose leaves grow to two meters (7 feet) in diameter.

We went on a boat cruise from the canal out into the seaport. Since it was windy, some of the passengers got wet. We went for a ride on an old fashioned trolley car. These are maintained and operated by "buffs", and are a great tourist attraction, as well as being used by commuters. The fare is the same as for modern buses. Our last day at Goteborg was spent on a days boat cruise north to the Island of Marstrand, where the Carlsten Fortress

overlooks the town and island. It was started in 1658 when the Norwegian Island became Swedish. It changed hands to Danish in 1677, and back to Swedish in 1679. It was used as a prison for some time till 1882, when the fortress was closed. In 1896 it was restored, and is now used for military courses during the winter months. In summer it is open to tourists for guided tours. We were unable to fit the tour into our visit, but the exterior is certainly impressive.

On August 2 we left Floda, travelling northeast to Jonkoping on the big Lake Vattern, and along the lake to Motala. From there we travelled beside the Gota Canal, and stopped at several locks. At Ljungsbro the canal goes OVER the highway, by aqueduct! The Gota Canal was built from 1810 to 1832, and is 190.5 km long. It goes by rivers, lakes and canals, from Goteborg on the West coast, to Soderkoping and Stockholm on the East coast.

There are 58 locks, of which the highest is 300 feet above sea level. It was important for nearly a hundred years for easy commercial traffic. It was taken over by the government in 1978, and is now used only by tourist boats.

During the last part of our trip, we passed a lot of small and large fields of ripening grain. I was very surprised to learn that Sweden produces so much grain that they cannot use it all, and the farmers are being paid to produce less!

The economic situation in Sweden is not as good as it was a few years ago. For instance: a thriving lumber company east of Stensele was sold to a Finnish company, and a while later was closed, throwing many people out of work. The cost of living seems higher than in Canada, but I did not make notes on details, except for gasoline prices.

When we reached Taby, Barbro had driven 1136 km to Goteborg and return. Our driving tours totalled 4058 km in my four weeks stay.

I forgot to mention that we had daylight all night at Stensele. We were always too tired to wait till midnight to drive to the top of the hill to see the midnight sun. I took several pictures at 10 pm, showing beautiful reflections on the lake by Barbro's cottage.

When I left for home on August 4th, I came away with marvellous memories of Sweden. No one could possibly have a more wonderful vacation than I had with Barbro. We ended our four weeks together, not only cousins, but GOOD FRIENDS.