

A Selection of Sweden Posts from Travels in C Minor

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You're invited to check out my current art blog. www.susanwellington.weebly.com

June 22, 2012

A BICYCLE RIDE TO FÅRÖ

In the last few days I read in the news somewhere that the **Ingmar Bergman Center** in Fårö, (north of Gotland in the Baltic Sea) had received a grant of 15.6 million kronor to rebuild the center. Well if you've seen it as we did recently you'll realise it's well deserved. Here's the center now.



We got the bus from Visby. Travelled for an hour to Fårösund. Hired some bicycles there and caught the 6 minute free ferry across to Fårö. Then rode for 40 minutes to this place. Of course it was closed as they're only open for the weekends. I just laughed. Though I'm sure they're opening up for the **Ingmar Bergman week** coming up on the June 25th. We did get to see his grave though which is in the Fårö church cemetery. A simple grave in the **swedish style**. Ingmar Bergman was of course Fårö's most famous resident for 40 years and made a few of his films here. '**Persona**' being a famous one.

There's really not a lot on the island other than nature. The Fårö church and cemetery, the information centre and the Ingmar Bergman Centre is just about it, it seems. If you're looking to party look somewhere else!

But the nature is absolutely pristine. Crystal clear water and air. (Actually I felt that as soon as I got out of the ferry in Visby. It's like your lungs start working properly.) It probably isn't in reality as the Baltic Sea is meant to be quite polluted however it looks clean.

It was a fairly cold, cloudy, windy day so nature kind of shortened our ride. We didn't get to see Langhammars sea stacks or many of the stunning beaches. But Fårö does have this kind of magnetic attraction. The limestone perhaps?



Taken from the bus from Visby to Fårösund. It was a Viking village display I think. But I'm not exactly sure as we went by in a couple of seconds.



On Fårö looking south towards Fårösund- a tiny town of about 862 people, 262 more than in Fårö. The island has an archaic feel. People have been here for a long time. About 3000 years, as archaeologists have found boat shaped graves and cairns from the Bronze Age. No settlement has been unearthed from this period though. Nor Viking houses either.

Though some Viking silver coin hoards have been found.



The landscape of Fårö is famously stunted and flat and stony. The wind has had a kind of bonsai effect on the sparse pines forests. It's interspersed with swedish style farms and these small huts which I later found out were for the sheep. Called lambgifts (according to the internet) or sedge roofed shelters. Fårö of course means sheep island in swedish but to be honest there wasn't that many sheep. Just a few.



Riding along the main road from the ferry, a dry stone wall framing the pasture lands.



The commercial hub of Fårö. There's 600 permanent residents that live on the island and they all must have to leave it to get some milk it seems.





Fårö Parish church. Ingmar Bergman is buried in it's graveyard. There were a few people visiting it. The church is actually from the medieval period but has been extensively rebuilt so doesn't retain much of the character. It contains the seal painting above which was commissioned by 15 seal hunters in 1603 who were lost at sea for 14 days.



The stony water's edge of Fårö.



The tranquil waters of the Baltic Sea. It's the perfect place for shorebirds to breed as there's so few disturbances.



This was the bike lady's frontyard. Filled with a great collection of gnomes, farm animals and old farm equipment. Forgotten the name and address but it's on Strandvägen, Fårösund. All the people we met on the day were just really nice people.



Old wooden fishing cabin at Fårösund.



March 02, 2012

TRAVELLING LIGHT IN MALMÖ



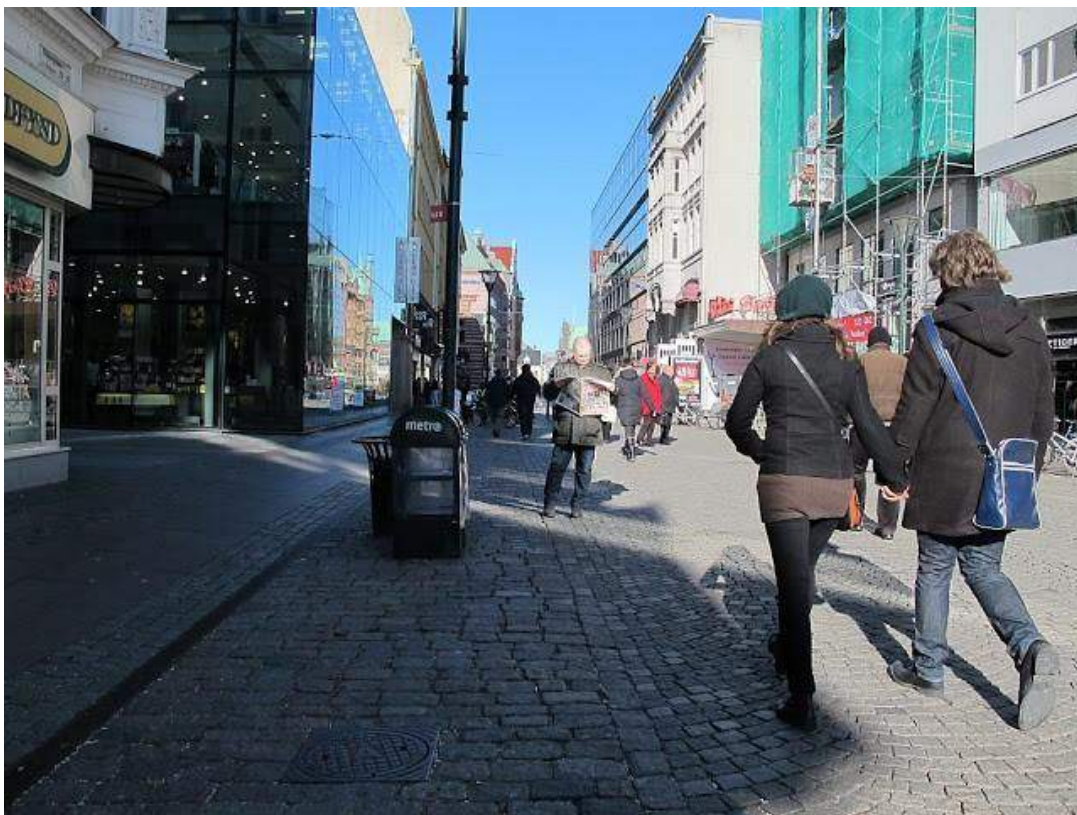
Malmö, Sweden's 3rd largest city is always in the news here and most of it isn't good. Though from visiting the place for 3 days all I can say is that it seems a bright, easy going place by the Öresund Sea right at the bottom of Southern Sweden.

We only experienced warm hospitality and the general vibe around the center of town, where we were staying ,was safe, and pretty quiet. Certainly much, much safer than walking around Melbourne at night. Though I noticed there were police vans parked silently in all the public squares but other than that, nothing.

Basically, on the surface, it's an enjoyable place to visit with plenty of cafes, restaurants, cinemas, galleries, museums, parks. You get the idea.



Malmö was founded in the mid 13th century. Love this public sculpture in Stortorget of a group of marching musicians. With Jörgen Kocks House (1525) in the background.



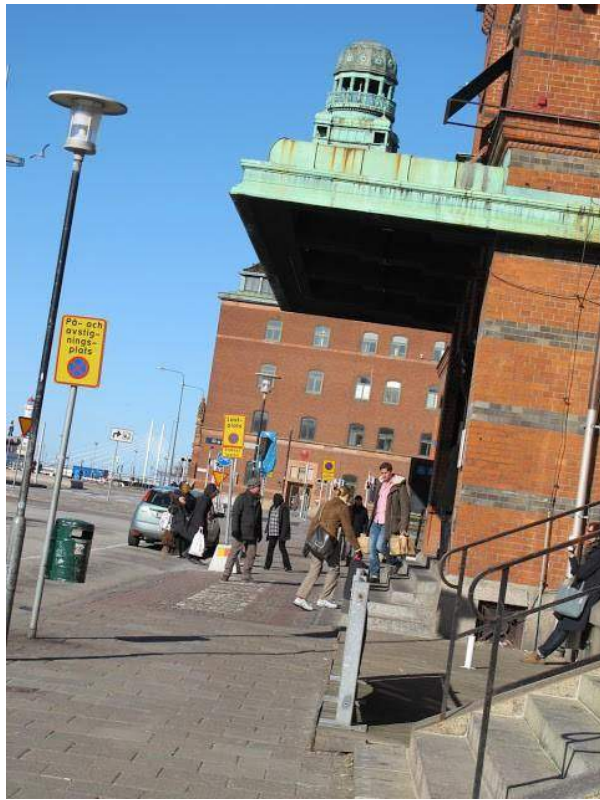
Walking on Södergatan in the sun.



Malmö's lighthouse (1878). Inactive since 1983.



Fresh salty air. I love it!



Entrance to Central Station. It took about 4.5 hours from Stockholm to Malmö by fast train. Travelling by train is a bit cheaper than flying and you get to see the countryside which got increasingly greener as we went south. I like it though, others find it a bit boring. But it's not that long. Try going by bus or train between Melbourne and Sydney in Australia which seems to take forever. No high speed trains yet.



You can take the train over to Copenhagen from Central Station which travels over the Öresund Bridge. This is the view from the train. It took only 18 minutes over the water. Check out the wind turbines.



There are views of water everywhere in Malmö. Central train station is on the left next to the canal. It's only a 15 minute walk from the centre of town to the station.



Old town's is full of beautiful, old buildings in various styles of architecture.



The apotek or chemist in English. Shops close pretty early in Sweden. Mostly everything's closed in Stockholm by 6pm. And in Malmö nearly everything was closed by 5pm. Just a few convenience stores are open.



Rådhuset (Town Hall) Stunning building. Built in 1546 in Dutch Renaissance Style. It's in the Stortorget (square), the centre of Malmö which was laid out in the 1530's. There was nobody around at 10am Sunday. In fact not many people the whole weekend. It was below zero so maybe that explains it. Everyone was in Copenhagen which was packed with people.

This fountain is in Gustav Adolf's Torg where we stayed at the Best Western Nobel House Hotel which was fantastic. Great hospitality, the room was beautiful and reasonably priced. Plus they always have a brilliant breakfast in Swedish hotels. I'd thoroughly recommend it.





The wildflowers have just started coming out after winter which is always inspiring.



Malmö's part of the Swedish region called Skåne. There was a problem with the train going back to Stockholm so we had to board a bus. But it was a good opportunity to see the countryside of Skåne which is full of rolling hills, forests and lakes. And also a few wind turbines.



A good place to go cycling. I'm definitely interested in going back to the Skåne area. Especially to see [Kristianstad's Biosphere Reserve](#).



Taking the [train between Stockholm and Malmö](#): The trains depart every two hours from Stockholm Central Station and take a little over four hours. Economy [train tickets](#) start at around \$80/£50. They're very comfortable to travel in.



July 13, 2010

THE HISSING OF SUMMER LAWNES: BEST BEACHES IN STOCKHOLM 2

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Cycling in Saltsjöbaden in summer.

We've been in London for the last week and I'm glad to be back in Stockholm to recover from the pace. So while I'm processing my thoughts about London I'll tell you about two beautiful beaches that we'll be visiting again this week to escape the summer heat. They can be easily reached by public transport and, while popular, are really not that crowded during the peak summer season.



The view on the walk to Erstaviks beach.



Erstaviks beach. Pretty cool I reckon. You don't get big expanses of sea in Stockholm which I miss but here it's a more expansive bay as it gets closer to the Baltic Sea. There's sea breezes. And salty air. Though not that salty.

But it's a deeply relaxing spot to be. Very grounding.



Erstaviks badet seemed like a popular place for windsurfers. You can hire boards there if you feel like having your arms wrenched out of their sockets in the wind.



Erstavik is a pristine beach 30-35 minutes from Slussen by train that you reach after walking a couple of kilometres (30mins) from the Erstaviks badets station. Not as hard as it sounds as the track is easy and it's a simply stunning walk through beautiful forest with magnificent views of the water with the occasional windsurfer sailing by.

There's a fairly wide area of sandy beach (though it's still rough to my feet) and a large area of grass to sunbake to your hearts content. Lots of people sunbake on the larger rocks because they're so smooth. The water's beautiful and clean and there's no poisonous jellyfish or crabs to step on and give yourself a heart attack.



Baby seagulls in Saltsjöbaden.

The interesting thing that I didn't know about the swedes and northerners in general is that they love a suntan. You could even tell them apart in London. I think maybe it's the long winters people have to put up with up here but as soon as the sun warms up they're stripping off. In Australia there's still some die hard sunbakers but you get burnt to a crisp in Oz if you're out longer than half an hour without 30plus slapped on your skin. I'm happy to remain lily white for the meantime.



The other beach is at **Saltsjöbaden** which I've mentioned in another blog during winter and it's hard to believe it's the same place without the snow. There's a family oriented secluded public bathing area in front of the Grand Hotel that you have to pay a low entrance fee for but it's worth it so that you can have your coffees and food at tables if you want. You can even smoke! There's separate male/female areas for nude sunbaking if you wish too. There's not a lot of sand but there's some and it's quite soft. It's a good fun vibe. It's a great place to do some birdwatching too. Saltsjöbaden's the last station on the line from Slussen.



Saltsjöbaden public baths



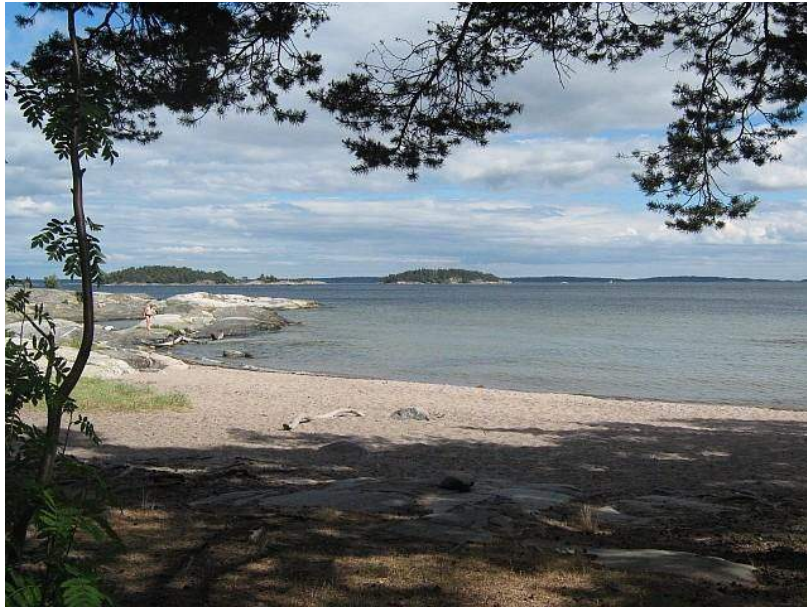
Just a beautiful place. And of course everything is super organised.



There are heaps of boats of every kind everywhere. Most people seem to have access to a boat. Lucky them. And the swedish flag is often prominently displayed.

July 04, 2010

SUMMER INTERLUDE: THE BEST BEACHES IN STOCKHOLM 1



Björnö, Sweden

Australia is famous for its beaches. If you live in a city in Oz there's a surf beach or bay beach somewhere relatively close.

My last house I lived in I could walk to the beach in 2 mins which is heaven. Any worries you have get swept away by the sea.

However swimming in it's another matter. There's poisonous dangerous critters everywhere and dangerous rips, so beware. Our own Steve Irwin, the crocodile hunter, was killed by a stingray while filming underwater in the Great Barrier Reef.



It was a bit overcast on the day but the sea in general is a kind of grey blue colour which is very calming to look at. Different from Oz with it's more azure blue.

So I must say it's heaven knowing you can just walk in the water here without a worry in the world.

Even in the forest, well they have ticks, but that's about it. No worries about snakes or poisonous spiders. It's bluddy beaut!

Well they do have bears but supposedly they're really shy and you hardly ever see them. So no worries about your tent being rammed by wild pigs here. Or waking up to a poisonous spider on your pillow.

So with the greatest relaxing pleasure I introduce the **3 best beaches in Stockholm** where not only can you swim, sunbake and get your lattes (alas no surfing) but you can live to tell the tale.



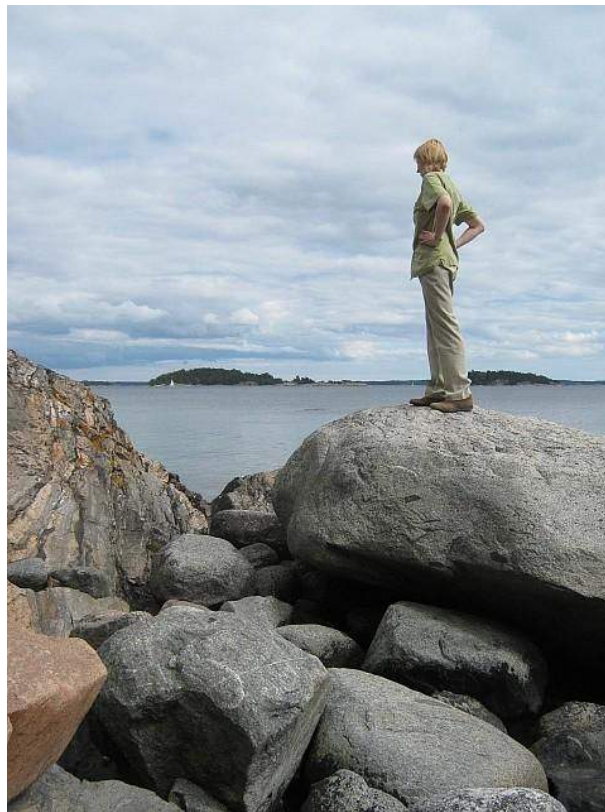
Walking in the forest is easy and comfortable with pine needles making the ground nice and soft and fragrant.



The first is the absolutely stunning beach at **Björno nature reserve**.

It's about an 1 hour bus trip from Slussen station (bus 428 to **Björkviks brygga**) in Stockholm.

It's quite an unbelievable spot-as it's so remote even though it's only an hour from Stockholm and the bus goes right to the beach-so there's no walking. There's no shops people so take your picnic and this being well organised Sweden, there's what in Australia we call a thunderbox, right near the bus stop-a toilet where you can have the interesting sensation of having flies zoom up your bum.



There was only a hand full of people on the beach...

(and rather bizarrely a ginger cat in the forest that was meowing until we came. Incredible because we were trying to get away from the meowing of our own cat. Do they have a secret communication system between all the cats in the world to annoy you? It seems so.)

...even though it's summer, so you can easily find a spot and feel like it's the end of the world.

You can only get this sensation right outback in Oz. It's so unbelievably peaceful.

I suppose because there's so many places to swim around in Stockholm, people are just so spread out.

You can sunbake on the rocks and there's a little bit of lovely sand but I like the rocks cos you don't get sand stuck all over you after you've swum. There's endless paths to walk in the forest and birds to watch. It's heaven.



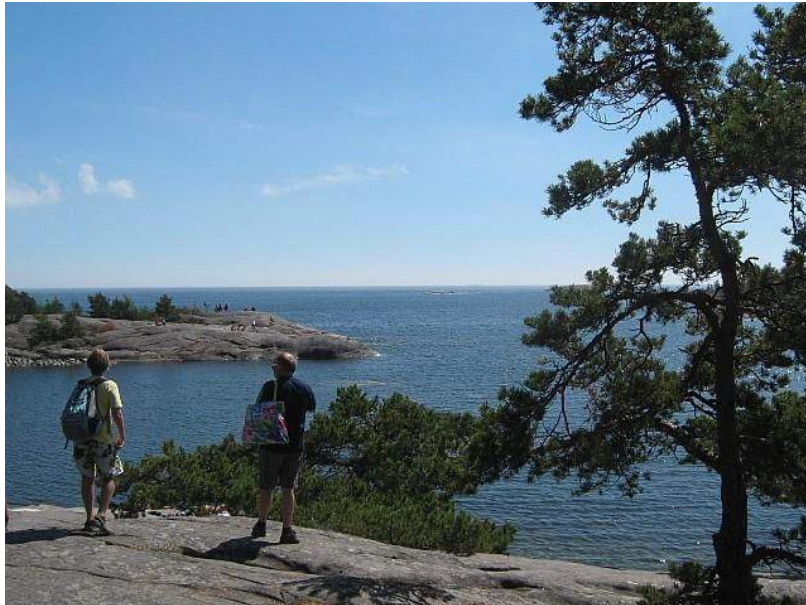
Swimming at Björnö.

The water's kind of refreshing to swim in. ie. not that warm.



August 04, 2010

SUMMER ISLAND HOPPING IN STOCKHOLM



Utö beach through the trees.



Boats galore along the 'Under the Bridges of Stockholm' tour.



The tranquil bay entrance to Utö.



The quaint little town of Mariefred.

Over summer (or anytime really) in Stockholm one of the things you must do is visit one of the many islands in the Stockholm Archipelago. We managed to visit a couple recently- only 23,998 more to go!

The island of Utö is a popular resort that has been lived in since before the vikings, so it's old! It's 50 km south- east of Stockholm and to get there it's a bit long winded but it's worth it. First you get the train, then bus, then a fantastic ferry across the waters to Utö, which I think for me was the highlight. There was no seating left on the ferry so we were forced out on the bow. But it was absolutely beautiful. With a coffee perched in one hand and face into the salty air and sunshine, it was magic seeing the islands drift by. I thought of Abba all the way for some reason. I think because they wrote many of their songs on an island and I imagined them doing it. It's like the atmosphere up here is suited to making music.



On the ferry to Utö. A breezy ride.

I was looking forward to a sandy beach and a bit of swimming but chickened out as, alas, once again no sand- you had to swim off rocks. I've come to the conclusion that there really isn't any sandy beaches in Sweden.

What they call sand here isn't really, it's like industrial sand you get from a nursery. Well there may have been some but we didn't see it. But the beach we went to was stunning in a different way. Surrounded by pine forest and edged in these giant stones which everyone was splayed out on catching a few rays. Only a few people seem to swim, most seem to sunbake and eat and drink. I haven't seen so many people doing such serious sunbaking since the 1970's.



One of the beaches at Utö. The stones were pretty hot under your feet. Obviously I'll have to get used to it.



Rock pool at Utö beach.

It's a huge island and you need a bicycle or moped to get around, all of which can be hired. We hired some bicycles which we had to queue for an hour to get but I'm glad we did as you really need them as it's probably a 40 minute walk or longer to get to any swimming beach. What struck me about Utö was how uncommercial it is compared to any Australian resort. It's still completely traditional. There's no garish advertising, shops with beach resort gear everywhere and take away food shops. Just quaint and traditional red painted buildings in a informal and picturesque marine setting. How do they do it? I don't know. It's a major battle most of the time in Australia between groups wanting 'progress' and groups wanting to retain the 'character' of a place. Most of the time the 'progress' people win. It's awful.



Fishing's a national pastime in Sweden.

If you can't be bothered getting all that transport yourself you can get on board one of the sightseeing tours in Stockholm that go all over the archipelago. We took this old coal fired steamship built in 1903 to Mariefred (It really is hard work shovelling coal into the furnace which you can see the guys doing as you walk on by). It was great though the weather was rainy and overcast. Being on board this steamer is like being in an episode of 'Poirot'. Mariefred is well worth going to. It's a beautiful, little town with an imposing castle, Gripsholm Slott, in the centre.



The old coal fired ferry from 1903. Take a book as it takes about 3.5 hours to get to Mariefred.



The graphics museum in Mariefred is a converted barn.



Catching some rays on the ferry.



The 16th century Gripsholm Slott

Closer to home we took the 'Under the Bridges of Stockholm' tour which leaves from the waterfront in front of the Grand Hotel. It's a very enjoyable and relaxing tour of about 2 hours that gives a potted history of Stockholm and it's people. Going on a sunny day was just perfect. Don' t bother going if it's overcast because you're missing how dazzling Stockholm can be in the sun.

www.stockholmsightseeing.com

www.mariefred.info

www.utoturistbya.s

June 25, 2011

MEDIEVAL MAGIC: GOTLAND SWEDEN



A couple of weeks ago we visited [Gotland](#), the magical medieval island off the east coast of Sweden. Our main purpose initially was to visit the [Lars Jonsson's museum](#) near Burgsvik on the southern tip of Gotland. He's an incredible bird painter of international renown who paints birds while looking through a telescope.

But we got waylaid in the northern capital of Visby where we were staying, as it's hard to leave.

It's the most magnetic place full of ruins, stunning beaches and medieval buildings. You can see the old Visby wall above. It runs 3.6 km around the oldest parts of town and was built in the 1200's.

The original population was Vikings but trade brought many different contacts (Germany, Russia) who would come to Visby to trade. They left their mark mainly through church building most of which are now in ruins.



This was a hardware store which we dropped into during a bike ride around Visby. There are the most beautiful wildflowers, and not so wild, everywhere in Sweden during summer.



Visby Botanical Gardens. In 2005 the garden celebrated its 150th anniversary and presented a pink rose 'Wisby' specially cultivated for the occasion.



A wall of one of the old church ruins in old town in Visby. In 1226 the Dominican order came to Visby and St Nicolai, a Gotlander, became the church prior. He is regarded as Sweden's first writer.



On the bicycle ride. There were heaps of bikies in town too all slurping on ice creams in the main street. It's just a beautiful, easy place to ride.



Old town in Visby is only a tiny place and the best way to see it is simply to walk. The medieval alleyways still remain to a great extent under which traces of the Vikings dwellings have been found.



The Cathedral Church of Saint Maria. The only working church in old town. All the others are ruins which are used as backdrops for concerts etc.



The pinnacles of Saint Maria's church which was built in the early 13th century.



The Port of Visby. The freshness of the light and atmosphere was really noticeable.



Södertorg (Southsquare) in old town. There were very few people around even though the weather was perfect. People got off the ferry and disappeared. Probably to their country houses perhaps. I don't know but there were few tourist crowds to deal with which was nice.



Stora Torget. This is the main restaurant area. The restaurants were good though pretty expensive as is usual in Sweden and really salty which is also typical.



Mute swan in the sea. It was interesting to see so many ducks and swans in the sea. I suppose because the waters so brackish.



The beaches are absolutely stunning. Crystal clear water though the Baltic's heavily polluted it doesn't look it.



Didn't go for a swim. Too lazy. Just looked instead. And relaxed.



Wall painting in Vamlingbo medieval church.



Lars Jonsson Museum from the garden.



On the ferry. Watch out for those lifeboats.

www.vamlingboprastgard.se

To get to Gotland catch **Destination Gotland's daily** ferry services from Nynäshamn, south of Stockholm, and from Oskarshamn on the east coast of Sweden. From the ports in southern Sweden and the bridge over the sound in Malmö it takes 5-6 hours by car to get to Oskarshamn. The high-speed ferry brings you from the Swedish mainland to Visby in 3hours.

October 27, 2013

LUNCH OUT IN UPPSALA: COSTAS RESTAURANT



If you happen to be in Uppsala one day a fantastic restaurant to dine in for lunch or dinner (if you like Greek food that is) is Costas Taverna/Bar.

We popped in there one day as we were walking through old town looking for something to eat and discovered it had beautiful fresh food, served in cosy surroundings, with the sounds of Greece tinkling in the background. The prices are good and Costas is gracious and friendly so we've been back and will continue I suppose every time we visit Uppsala. Maybe next time we'll branch out from the gyros and souvaki! But I don't know.

Costas Restaurant ([Facebook page](#)) Svartbäcksgatan 23, 75332
Uppsala, Sweden
018-14 02 30
Mon - Fri: 4:00 pm -
11:00 pm Sat: 12:00 pm
- 11:00 pm

October 18, 2013

BOB DYLAN AT STOCKHOLM'S WATERFRONT CONGRESS CENTRE 12/10/13



Bob Dylan came and went like a gunslinger at Stockholm's waterfront congress centre the other night- singing with his legs splayed like he was ready to shoot or ride a horse. It was funny.

And not loud by any means- the 6 piece band- 2 guitars and one pedal steel- played this constant, quiet chugging and alternatively fluid rhythm like a country and western lament behind Bob's craggy, barely there voice which strangely would rise up at the end of nearly every lyric line. Like the old nuns in school! Maybe that's right. Spirituals are one of the foundations of the blues.

The whole feeling of the concert was like some old style Americana minstrels arriving and disappearing into a prairie dust storm on the back of a Ford pick up. Well that's what I was imagining as I was being put into a trance by the steady rhythm.

All the songs from the 60's to now had been rearranged away from their original versions into an almost easy listening (to my ears) mix of country and western, blues and other genres so that it was like listening to entirely new songs. To me the original versions won easily. But it was still amazing to hear these versions.

I mean he's 72 now so you do what you have to do. Though he seemed to look and get about like a much younger man. It was a fitting end to the day after checking out the brilliant colours of the autumn leaves in Uppsala.





CAFES IN STOCKHOLM

Cafe Rival

Address: Mariatorget 3, Södermalm Stockholm Tel:

08-545 789 00

If anyone's expecting to see anything about Abba at the Benny Andersson owned, Parisian style Cafe Rival you'll be disappointed. There's not one photo or anything else about Abba. There are though interesting photos by the local photographer Ulla Montan capturing the local art people of Södermalm and the cafe is a really nice place to go for a coffee after looking at the galleries on a Saturday afternoon or on any day in Söder. The food and drink was excellent and it has it's own bakery so fresh pastries hopefully are assured though we didn't have any. He owns the stylish Hotel Rival next door as well.

Cafe Nova

Järntorget 82, Gamla Stan (Old Town),

Stockholm Tel 08-4114953

I love this cafe. It's one of the few places in Stockholm you can get a chai latte made with real tea leaves. You can get your newspapers from across the road (english too) and repair here after you've had a walk around the fantastic Old Town. The main room has very dim romantic lighting if you're not in the mood for newspapers. It's always filled with people having animated conversations and you can sit outside too, to check out the passing parade.

Keferepet Cafe.

Address: Klarabergsgatan 35, City, Stockholm Tel:

08-4402555

Located near the beautiful St Klara church, it's on two levels, and serves a good coffee and the usual selection of cakes. I had a semla bun which was just perfect. Upstairs is slightly formal but with comfortable tables and lamps along the windows. Kind of a 60's ambience to me but not in a groovy Rolling Stones kind of way but more like the Swingle Singers. But there's something about Stockholm as a whole that's like going back to the 60's maybe the quietness and lack of skyscrapers. And the courtesy.

The Atrium Restaurant, National Gallery

Address: Sodra Blaisieholmhamnen, Stockholm

Ph: 08-6113430

This is an impressive place to have a coffee or a meal after you've exhausted yourself looking at paintings or not. It's a comfortable renaissance style room if there is such a thing- perfect for having a stimulating discussion about art. Sculptures adorn the walls. The lighting's relaxed. Prices are pretty good. For a coffee and cake they're all about the same all over Stockholm. And we had Sunday lunch here and it was good value and tasty too.

Wayne's Coffee

Address: Drottninggatan 55, *City, Stockholm*

Tel: 08-402 17 00

Wayne's Coffee is all over Stockholm. It's packed on the weekend and especially on cold days it's hard to get a seat. It's kind of young and studenty if that's your thing. The music was an enjoyable mixture of old and new. The coffee and cakes were good sized servings.

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Cafe Söderberg

Kungsträdgården 2:4 City, Stockholm Tel:

08 217475

This is a really cute art nouveau styled cafe in Kungsträdgården. You feel like you're lunching in a hothouse because of the style of the windows and the fact that a tree grows through the stained glass centre of the room. It's near St Jacob's church so you can have a coffee or hot chocolate after a visit, not that it's particularly meditative, though on the day we went there were few other patrons. I imagine it's probably pretty busy in summer with tourists because it's in the heart of Stockholm with some lovely views of the garden and water.

The coffee and hot chocolate was so so but the visual atmosphere in the cafe made up for it.

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Konditorni Kungstornet Cafe

Kungsgatan 28, City, Stockholm Ph:

08 206643

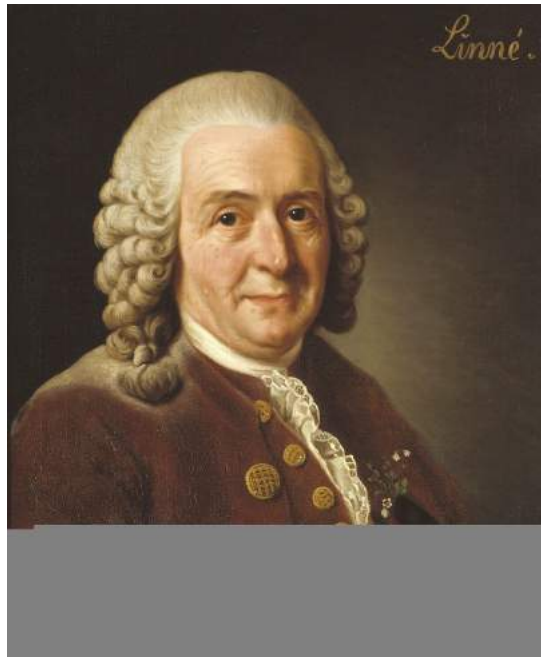
This is a really lovely place to come for afternoon tea. On two floors, it is decorated in a combination of classic and modern style. It's more of an older crowd. Comfortable, laid back ambience perfect for that private tete a tete. Cakes and coffee were excellent.

Here's a link to a pretty comprehensive list of Stockholm's great cafes, restaurants, bars, fashion and general groovy places if you like design. I haven't been to most of them but it's good to know just in case your in the mood for a bit of grooviness.

<http://www.designsponge.com/2010/06/stockholm-guide.html> Here's **'Lost**

in Stockholm's' 15 best cafes in Stockholm.

CARL LINNAEUS' GARDEN



If you are planning a trip to Sweden and are interested in gardens and scientific history, an essential place to visit is Carl Linnaeus' botanical garden in Uppsala.



Uppsala on an autumn day.

Carl Linnaeus (1707-78) is the renowned 17th century Swedish botanical scientist, who developed a new classification of the plant kingdom. Based on grouping plants according to their number and arrangement of sexual parts, it is no longer used, however the hierarchy in which he placed them, (species, genus, order, class, kingdom) still is. His method of naming plants and animals called the binary (two names ie. *Homo sapiens*) nomenclature, is also still used all over the world. Linnaeus' most important works are *Systema Naturae*(1735) and *Species plantarum*(1753).



The Fyrisån river goes through the center of Uppsala.

What has this got to do with a garden? Well when Linnaeus became Professor of Medicine at Uppsala University in 1741, the position came with a house and garden. This garden had previously been one of the foremost botanical gardens in Europe in the 17th century but in 1741 was in a poor state, because of a fire that had swept through Uppsala in 1702. Linnaeus got to work and together with Carl Harleman, (the most distinguished architect in Sweden at the time) transformed the botanical garden into the Baroque French style of the period.

Every part of the garden was well thought out and thousands of plants were cultivated. These comprised trees, shrubs, medicinal plants from all over the world (obtained through his international contacts) as well as practical plants, perennials, annuals. Every known species of Swedish tree was planted along the border of the garden. A characteristic of baroque gardens is the parterre which is an ornamental flower garden whose beds and paths are arranged to form a pattern. Linnaeus' garden has five parterres which group plants into spring, autumn, annual, perennial and southern.



Carl Linnaeus' Garden, Uppsala

Sweden has a very cold climate and to preserve the less hardy plants a beautiful orangery was also built, as well as various greenhouses and hotbeds. Linnaeus emphasised that successful horticulture was built on the knowledge of the natural environment of plants and he was ahead of his time in this idea. As a result he built three ponds for plants from different humid environments.

Happily the garden flourished and students flocked to it, to listen to Linnaeus' inspiring lectures and botanical demonstrations. It was not unknown for him to greet them dressed only in his nightshirt for the morning's nature walk. According to Linnaeus 'nature does not wait for powder and wigs'.



Violet Spondour

The main task of the garden then, was as a teaching aid for medical students. They were to learn to identify medicinal plants at the apothecary's (apothecary is the historical name for a person who prepares and sells 'drugs') but also be able to recognise wild medicinal plants. The latter was particularly useful since apothecaries were few and far between in 18th century Sweden. Examples of medicinal plants in the garden included wormwood (against intestinal worm) and horseradish (good for the digestion).

Linnaeus also cultivated many plants for uses other than medicine, such as plants for the dyeing of yarn such as madder root which produces a good red dye. Or woodruff which you could use to protect your clothes against moths. Several fibre plants were also grown, for example lime which produced bast for making rope.

Flowers in Carl Linnaeus' Garden, Uppsala





Carl Linnaeus' Garden with view of his house, Uppsala

There were also foreign animals in the garden. They lived partly in the orangery and partly in a house for animals. A great favourite of Linnaeus was a tame raccoon which entertained children and visitors with its pranks. Other animals in his menagerie were guinea pigs, goldfish, peacocks, parrots and various monkeys as well as Swedish animals like cranes and hedgehogs.

So what's the garden like today? Well all the animals have gone. Only the six monkey huts mounted on tall poles remain of them. The orangery is still there but is now used for festivities and for exhibitions on the garden's history. Uppsala University still runs the garden and reconstructs as closely as possible Linnaeus' garden as he planned it. That is, only species known to have been cultivated in the garden in Linnaeus day, about 1,300 species, are allowed. The wild tulip, *Corydalis nobilis* and yellow anemone are the only plants surviving from the 18th century.

The spirit of Linnaeus still lives on



Uppsala University

The Linnaeus Garden Svartbäcksgatan 27, Uppsala.

January 26, 2011

GREAT PLACES TO SKI, SLED AND ICE-SKATE IN STOCKHOLM



Skiing always looks so exotic when you come from a hot climate. And glamorous. Well that's what's in my imagination from watching too many James Bond movies. (As an aside they're playing all the James Bond films on Swedish tv every week which I'm enjoying at the moment.) Though the Swedes you see out doing their morning exercises on skis don't particularly look glamorous and there's definitely no smiling. Or lipstick. I haven't managed to go skiing yet in Stockholm though I have to soon as the snow is starting to melt.



Recently in one of the free train newspapers, there was an article on places to go skiing in Stockholm. The problem is if you don't own skis many of the places don't always have hire facilities. Well that's the excuse I give myself. But there are some. So if you're interested in skiing, ice skating or sledding, here's a list of places to go in Stockholm that are easy to get to. I translated it (with huge help from Hiie of course) straight out of the newspaper. I can't vouch for any of the places as I haven't been to any of them. But I checked their websites and transport details and they look pretty good some of them. So hopefully next weekend we'll get to one.

Skiing, sledding and ice-skating in Stockholm

There are ski trails, ice rinks and sledding hills for the whole snow period.

Flottsbroacken

The largest hill skiing runs in Stockholm. Five runs. Sledding hill and snowboard park. Open Monday to Friday 10am-10pm and Saturday-Sunday at 9am-6pm.

The same times apply for rentals of ski gear. The Inn is open everyday 11am-3pm. To get to Flottsbro by public transport take bus 706 from Huddinge station.

<http://www.flottsbro.se/>

Here's their hire equipment page. It's in swedish but just use the google translate at the top. It says you can hire skis, snowboards and blades. As well as poles, helmets and boots. Can't hire sleds it seems. They recommend you book online which can be hard if you don't speak swedish. They like to do everything here online!

Phone: 08-53532700 (all phone numbers without international and country codes) **Hammarbyacken**

Opens at the end of December. Thereafter, open Monday-Friday 10am-10pm, Saturday-Sunday from 9am-6pm, as long as weather permits. Same times for cafe and restaurants for ski rental and ski lifts. Four hours skiing costs 150SEK for adults and 100SEK for 8-15 year olds. Younger children ski for free.



It's really cute seeing the young kiddies being dragged by sled to school. How much fun would it be to be a young child in Sweden?



Snowmen in the sun.

Hellasgården

Lighted 2.2 km track (lit until 9pm) .Sledding hill. Hole in the ice for winter swimmers. Sauna including bodygym(open Tuesday-Sunday). Long ice skating rink (ice skate rental available). Food and drinks available during the day Tuesday-Sunday. Catch bus 401 from Slussen station to Hellasgården and get off at stop Nackareservatet. www.hellasgarden.se **Ski hire page in english.**

Skate hire page in english

Phone: 087 163 961

Rudans District (Rudsjöterrassen)

Illuminated cross-country trails that may have artificial snow if necessary. If weather permits, cleared skating rink at Lake Rudan (SjöRudan). Rest Cottage and food and drinks available. Catch the commuter train (pendeltåg)to Handen which is near Lake Rudan, then walk.

No website

Phone: 08 6068975

Three sledding slopes

Observatorielunden (Observatory Hill) Catch the T-bana to Rådmanngatan station. Bonus: There is a cafe called Himlavalvet serving waffles.

Tanto. Catch the T-bana to Zinkensdamm station. A good slope at Tantogården, and smaller, but very durable, runs at Zinkensdamm IP (Sports stadium).

Nybohovsbacken. Catch the Tunnelbana to Liljeholmen station. Classic, long sledding hill a few minutes walk from the subway.



Sergel's Torg on a mid winter's day. The center of the city.

Ice skating

In Stockholm there are over 30 ice rinks supported by the local councils (communes). For inexperienced skaters go to Kungsträdgården ice rink, which is the only one where you can rent skates. Open daily until 6pm, Tuesday and Thursday until at 8pm.

Details about this and other sites can be found at the [Stockholm website](#).

There is also a large number of plowed ice skating courses in the Stockholm area. These are listed on www.vikingarannet.com. For courses in skating see www.alliansen.net.

Lida District

Ski slope for beginners .SEK 60 per day for adults, SEK 40 for children. Equipment rental. Open daily at 10am-3pm. Three lit tracks for skiers, 800 m, 2.3, and 2. 4 km (lit to 10pm), and several long, unlit tracks (up to 17.9km. Prepared artificial snow. Sledding hill is lit until 9pm every day. Cleared skating lanes on Sjö Getaren (LakeGetaren) with the right weather. Rental of cross-country equipment. The inn is open from 10am-5pm each day. To get to Lida take the commuter train (pendeltåg) to Tullinge station and from there catch bus 721.

Ph: 08 778 4380

UrsviksMotionsgård

Lighted tracks from 400 metres up to 10km until 10pm. Motionsgården has a sauna, cafe and gym training opportunities. Open Monday-Thursday and 9am-9pm Friday-Sunday at 9am-2pm. Barbecue facilities at the end of the lighted tracks.

Ursviks Motionsgård Address: Ursviksvägen 99 Catch the bus 157/504 from Sundbyberg station. No web page

Ph: 087068377



What is it with people throwing their sneakers onto electricity wires?

Gärdet-Kaknästornet at Djurgården

If there is enough snow (20 cm) they make skiing tracks on Gärdet and northern Djurgården.

There are lighted tracks at Fiskartorpets outdoor facility located on Björnäsbacken 15 at Northern Djurgården. Catch bus 55 to Storängskroken bus station (Ph: 084 116 210) and then walk.



My little attempt at a snow cat on the balcony table.

Photograph at top of page copyright: Telegraph

PS You can now buy skis in STADIUM shop during winter.

September 12, 2012

IF YOU WANT TO LEARN SWEDISH...



I just thought I'd give you a brief run down of a few swedish language websites that I've found helpful in my feeble attempts to learn swedish. They're mainly all free resources. Of course nothing really beats studying formally in the real world but sometimes you just don't have the time so the online world's a fantastic resource.

Swedish flashcards.com you can sign up for their free newsletter and get sent practice words and sentences everyday if you want. It's graded from beginners onwards and you can practice writing in swedish. If you pay a basic fee you can hear everything pronounced. There are plenty of others but I've found that over time I keep using this one as it's practical and they don't hard sell like most of the others.

Swedish Pod 101 on YouTube is good for beginners too. It has well produced videos focused on particular themes ie. what's in the kitchen or most common verbs in swedish to know etc.

Tyda.se is an online dictionary. Basically you type in the swedish word and it gives you all the possible meanings in english plus all the parts of that particular word in swedish, ie if it's a verb then the present, past, infinitive etc. I use it everyday. If you want a book of swedish verbs and all their tenses and conjugations **201 Swedish Verbs** is good.

Norstedts dictionaries seem to be the most common to buy in Sweden. They're really written for swedes studying english but english speakers use them too. They have the noun endings- whether the noun is common or neutral and what it is in plural which you have to know. It gives no idea though about pronunciation. I've found the Berlitz mini swedish/english dictionary is the only dictionary that shows pronunciation. Though realistically you can only really 'get' the pronunciation by listening to it spoken. A good way is listening to **swedish radio** or watching **swedish tv** or if you're in Sweden listen to peoples conversations when you're out. Or practicing with some swedes, that is if you can get them to stop speaking english!

Here's some online news sites that are helpful if you want to or if you're learning swedish.

8 Sidor-online swedish newspaper in basic swedish. It has sound too so you can read and listen to it spoken at the same time.

Klartext-news in easy swedish. The news is read in swedish and it has a brief summary written so you have basic idea of what is being said.

If you're in Sweden and want to meet up with some fellow swedish learners **Meetup.com** seems to be a great service.

There are plenty of other resources online and off but these are just some that I have used and enjoyed. Hope this helps in your journey to learn swedish.

Update 2017:At [google playstore](#) you can download many of the above as free apps. I've found the **Språkplay** app, which is a collection of shows on **SV1**, including news in easy swedish, helpful as it gives written text while the show is playing.

November 15, 2011

BIRD PONDERINGS ON AN EVENING IN STOCKHOLM



Sometimes at dusk I like to ponder my day while watching the sun go down. This was a recent sunset in Stockholm. Probably around 4pm. At this time many birds are going home to roost for the night. Very quietly. Unlike in Australia where you are surrounded by many different varieties of birds in all seasons all making a racket. They're everywhere. Screeching and squawking away their time. It's fantastic. Plant a eucalypt and watch them come.



Crimson Rosella. The brilliant colours of the parrot family are unmatched in my book. Photo by Noel Hart

However, in Sweden we do have the bouncy little blue tits (no it doesn't sound good in English) and a whole host of other birds such as the beautiful white swans (knölsvan/sångsvan).

But sometimes walking through the forest it's difficult to spy many birds at all.



The Blue Tit coming in for a landing.



White swan (knölsvan) taking off.

However the **Blue Tits (blåmes)** are everywhere at the moment, clustering around many bird feeders all over Stockholm.

I bought one large feeder full of peanuts (I thought they ate insects and seeds but what do I know. Apparently they like the occasional beer too.) last week and by the end of the week those tiny tits had eaten 650 grams of peanuts.

The greedy buggers.

So now I'm rationing the food everyday as I love having them around.

Magpies

One bird that is around the whole year is the Magpie (or Skata in Swedish) which always reminds me of Australia. It's very similar to the Australian Magpie and it stalks around with absolute confidence eating anything and brightening up a dull day.



Skata (European Magpie)

Under Christianity in Scandinavia, as in the rest of Europe, people changed their original beliefs about the Skata from lucky to unlucky.

In old Norse mythology, Skadi (the daughter of a giant) was a priestess of the magpie clan.

The black and white markings of the magpie were seen to represent sexual union, as well as male and female energies kept in balance.

Later on in time, Scandinavians thought that magpies were sorcerers flying to unholy gatherings.



Australian magpie.

They look similar don't they?

The Australian Magpie is a Shrike rather than of the Crow family though.

The female magpie will attack you if you're anywhere near her nest. Especially if you're on a bicycle.

People paint faces on the back of their **bicycle helmets** to trick the birds.

Common swedish birds

Some very common swedish birds you can see outside your window.

Blue Tit (Blåmes)

Great Tit (Talgöxe)

House Sparrow (Gråsparv)

Wren (Gärdsmyg) Blackbird

(Koltrast) Fieldfare

(Björktrast) Magpie (Skata)



Blackbird. (Male) Sweden's national bird. Photo by PetSam

March 24, 2014

LET'S DO THE CRANE DANCE!- A VISIT TO HORNBOGRSJÖN BIRD LAKE



The view from the entrance to the lake. There were quite a few caravans and mobile homes in the carpark. Serious birdwatchers. I'd been wanting to go visit the famous bird lake Hornborgsjön in the south of Sweden for a couple of years. Especially since you don't see a lot of birds around most of the time in Stockholm. To me anyway. You can walk through the forest and barely see one.

And then you'll hear the lovely sound of wood being hit in the distance.

I always think at first oh someone's making something. No it's the dashing black, white and red **Great Spotted Woodpecker** (Större Hackspett in Swedish). What a beautiful bird. When we first moved to our new place a woodpecker landed on the tree in front of the kitchen. We took that as a good omen. You never see them in this situation.

The light has been steadily increasing the last few weeks in Sweden which makes you jump for joy. It's just so long the winter and the darkness. And it's not just humans who long for the light. The animals and birds jump for joy too.

One bird you can see jumping for joy is the European crane who arrives en masse at Lake Hornborga (Hornborgsjön) during March and April every year to stay at the Lake for 1 to 3 weeks.

You've got to be organised to see them though. And this year they arrived early and in huge numbers so we booked a train from Stockholm (around 3.5 hours) and then got a taxi (10 mins) to the lake. Yesterday it's reported by the **official site** there was over 10,000 birds.

Whooper swans out front of the thousands of cranes.



Supposedly you can sometimes see thousands of cranes dancing simultaneously at Trandansen- the area around the information centre (I call it trancedansen) but we didn't see that. Just a few here and there dancing.

It was still an amazing spectacle seeing nearly 10,000 birds in one place. And not just cranes but swans (the yellow billed whooper swans(sångsvan) which I'd never seen), Canada geese, Mallard ducks and 32 other types of birds.

Fortunately it didn't rain and we had a bit of sun to warm up the 8 degrees. And of course being Sweden there's always a cafe to get a coffee and cake somewhere. Which you can at the information centre and next to the nearby church.



Bird watching from the area around the Trandansen.

It's well worth the trip if you love nature and birds and it's relatively easy to get to by train. If you're in Stockholm it's on the Gothenburg line. There's even a bus running a few times a day from Falköping (bus 203) which is the closest town to Trandansen if you haven't got a car. Though don't expect anything much to look at in Falköping. Everything was closed on Saturday except a couple of restaurants.



You really need a strong zoom on your camera to get good close ups of the birds but it's a spectacular vista.

Other stuff:

- In the past Sweden had a Crane's Day (Tranedagen) on the 25th March. Various traditions were started on Crane's day such as locking away all your oil lamps as it's getting lighter at bedtime. Another is running barefoot in the snow to increase good health. Sounds good.
- The crane has long been recognised as a symbol of spring as well as happiness, prosperity and long life.
- One of the areas the European Crane breeds is in Sweden. It returns (from mainly Spain, France, Germany though the information about this varies according to sources) to Sweden in March where it gathers at Trandansen at the southern edge of Lake Hornborga between March and April which is one of its resting stops along the way to their breeding territory. Lake Hornborga is where a large part of Sweden's cranes come to eat grains, rest, find a suitable partner and dance.