

Reviewing Stockholm

November 24, 2022

You must be crazy. Life is much easier that way.

Erkki

I spent two full days in Stockholm and took your (Jonathan's) (whom I've never met) recommendations to heart. Below is a timeline of my excursion into the beautiful city, with some lighthearted reviews, conversational highlights, and general thoughts.

1 Day one (arrived at 2:30pm)

1.1 Vete Kattan

I told an employee it was my first hour in Stockholm and that I wanted to get something Swedish. *Cool* [paraphrased], she said, and pointed to the saffron bun, princess cake, and vanilla bun. I asked briefly about the degree of English that was spoken in Sweden, and she shared it's the second best place to have English as your second language (whatever that means).

I ordered the saffron bun and muttered that I'd be back for the rest. It was very bun-ny and easy on the tastebuds—a great, hearty start to some days that will fly by.

1.2 Random Christmas market by Nobel Prize Museum

As one might, I went exploring! After a long walk I checked my map and realized I was quite close to the Nobel Museum, so I decided to walk / slide on the snow / tumble my way down Trangsund. And then I came upon God's gift: the Christmas market. I talked to some shop owners and almost bought waffles about nine times, ultimately opting for a cup of warm glogg. Absolutely magnificent.

1.3 Nobel Prize Museum

Great museum. Danny (the ticketer) was kind enough to share some facts about the place, a few of which I place below:

- Most winners donate something.
 - A surprisingly large number of economists have donated something related to baseball.
 - Amartya Sen donated his bike, which he used to travel around urban and rural India to research child welfare disparities.
 - Someone (I thought it was David Card but that turned out to be false) donated washing powder because a lot of their theory chats were not water-cooler conversations, but laundry conversations.
 - There's a Nobel Prize ceremony every year to celebrate the winners, which is a well-documented (and wickedly expensive) affair.

1.4 Herman's

Don't really know what I ate but I sat there for two hours and relished each of the seven plates I got. When words fail, photos can try their best.

Figure 1:



1.5 Nomad

I thought I walked into my hostel but turns out I walked into a bar called Nomad. It would have been a meaningless mistake—a quick walk in and walk out!—but a bartender stopped me. *I haven't seen you in here before!* Well of course you haven't. I just got here.

I eventually asked if there were any Swedish beers that I *had* to try. (Well, first I asked if they had a brutalist sour beer, and realized that was a silly question.) He said they had a pretty famous saisons beer—a fruity, house-made pale ale with an irregularly high alcohol percentage. And it was great.

While he moved around the bar preparing drinks for people whose names he remembered from times past, I inspected the tattoo near the back of his right elbow. A woman with a handbag. I asked for permission to ask about his tattoos (how silly we are!) and then asked about his tattoo, to which he shared the story of The Woman With A Handbag: when Neo-Nazis (specifically the Nordic Realm Party) marched in Sweden in the 80s, photographer Hans Runesson captured the moment when a woman struck one of the rally members on the head with her purse. The photograph won Swedish Picture of the Year.

Wasn't she mentally ill?, asked another bartender.

And why does that matter?, he responded.

1.6 Hostel chat with this guy named Ilia

Hostels invite absolutely ridiculous conversations. Roughly no one has any real business being in the place that you all happen to be in; everyone's just like *ya I'm traveling, life's been hard*, or *I just finished high school!*, or *I just left my husband!* It just so happens that I shared a bunk with a guy named Ilia, a Persian-Canadian soon-to-be-lawyer studying in Lund who called himself Persian instead of Iranian which I insisted on asking about.

It all goes back to the history of Iran.

I have time.

And we discussed Iranian history for two hours.

2 Day two

2.1 Public transport is so fucking confusing

There's a metro and a bus and a tram and a commuter-something and all the signs look sort of similar and the Google Maps logos don't match up well with the pictures and how am I supposed to get south?

2.2 Drop coffee

Really is incredible coffee. I told the barista I was sent there because someone said it was the best coffee in town, which she confirmed. I had the Cerro Azul—

a dark roast with notes of papaya and passionfruit—and it was fantastic. And great music!

2.3 Kalf & Hansen

I had too many near-catastrophe experiences walking in the snow, and decided to invest in some boots for my coming 36 hours in Stockholm. I got a shoddy pair from Humana, and asked the employees dancing to Robyn (she's Swedish!) what they thought the best lunch spot was for Swedish food. *Kalf & Hansen is really Swedish...*one of them said with a bit of hesitation. She shared you can only go there once every few weeks. *It's so much.*

Well that's code for it's **perfect!** How filling (or Swedish) can it be?

A plate of potatoes, beets, and thick, thick meatballs meant for a full Justin for the next five hours.

2.4 ???

I thought I walked into a second-hand store. I did not.

HEY!, from behind the curtain. Why is there a curtain dividing the store in half?

Hey! I'm just a customer.

I'M ERKKI. YOU DON'T SOUND LIKE YOU'RE FROM HERE!

We stood across what seemed to me now a comic book store, and he started asking really good, intense questions, about what brought me here and how much I like the snow. I looked around during our chat, and saw it was not just a comic store, but also a toy car store, but also a vinyl store, but also a pretty-much-every-other-moderately-interesting-but-otherwise-useless-item store.

This is not a store. It's a living room. You see there's no sign. You see? Why would I want a sign on my living room?

The curtain divided his side of the store from his wife's side of the store; she sells clothes and water bottles, while he sells trinkets. He shared he was behind the curtain doing some exercises—he had a stroke just four days prior, and was doing his prescribed workouts in private. Just when he was telling me this, his son (Erkki Jr.) walked in with a plate of rice. *So why are you here?*

I shared with them that I was feeling being a little crazy for the week, so I jetted off. Erkki Sr. replied:

You must be crazy. Life is much easier that way.

2.5 7-eleven

There are SO many 7-elevens!

2.6 Concert

I actually came to Stockholm for a Julia Jacklin concert in Johanneshov, which was quite lovely. Everyone I met seemed to study in Uppsala and trained down

for the weekend; when they found out I went to Oxford later on, they said Uppsala is like the Oxford of Sweden.

3 Day three

3.1 Vete Katten again because it was so good

I said I would be back! I had to choose between the princess cake and the vanilla bun this time, and no matter what I would've thought I made the right choice. I got the vanilla bun, sank into my seat, enjoyed the tasty ball of goodness, and then marched away to figure out how the 7 works.

3.2 Public transport is not confusing at all

Yeah, I was wrong about that “transport sucks” thing. It’s so good! And so easy.

3.3 Vasa Museum!

That’s a big ship!

At the restaurant, I finally caved and got the open-faced prawn sandwich. I am glad that I no longer have to wonder what it tastes like.

3.4 Brutalisten

Now this was one of the strangest dining experiences of my life. I showed up promptly at 5PM—as soon as it opened—while on FaceTime with my friend who’s one of the bigger “foodies” in New York City. The waitress, thankfully, was receptive to awkwardly explaining the concept to him over the phone:

We season using salt and water. That’s it. And one ingredient per plate.

As I was the only one there, I got to interact directly with the chefs who were preparing the food. They let me try a home-made potato chip (which they create without frying it, or adding oil, butter, or any seasonings) and let me choose which of the fallow deer shanks I wanted, should I choose that. I opted for the saithe and the oyster mushrooms, which had been picked in north Stockholm just a few days before, and which the chef said “made [him] melt” because “they were so delightful.”

Indeed, the mushrooms were the best I’ve ever had. The saithe was great, with a salty bouillon melted overtop it. See Figure 2.

3.5 Coquetel Social

I asked the waitress at Brutalisten where to get cocktails and she said to go here. The bartender was named Tyler, and we talked for quite some time about how designing clothes is the purest and most utilitarian art form in the world, and

Figure 2:



that his passion for that will probably make him quit his job sometime soon. And then he gave me a free beer alongside my Vesper Martini.

Also, since you're a tourist, you should probably head out and enter the door immediately to your left.

3.6 Lucy's Flower Bar

An electric, flower-full entrance invited me into a dark, closed-off space. I walked in and walked out. But then a *Hey, Hey!* from the bartender running after me kept me in my tracks. *The bar is over here.*

I told him I didn't really want anything (I was sent over by another bar, after all) but that I was just interested in checking the place out. *It's a top 50 bar, some say*, he said, pointing to the plaque above the doorsill: "The World's 50 Best Bars." But they have no sign on the outside, few advertisement or reviews online, call themselves a "flower shop," and have a bar that's visible only after twenty or so steps inside. I asked why. *We like to think we're a speakeasy*, he said. *And everyone who has to know about us already does.*