

Stockholm 2023

This short-form document contains just the text portions of my Stockholm facebook posts.

To see my original Facebook posts in their entirety, with all photos and comments included, click on the link within each post that says:

<To Facebook Post>

You will find the link just below each post's title.

The link will only work if you are a Facebook friend of mine.

Otherwise, you will have to open the long-form version of this document which you can find at:

www.samadhisoft.com/travel-logs

Day 0 - s0 - Tue – 11Jul23

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

Departure. Scandinavia, here we come. Only most of the planet still stands between us and where we're going. Next stop, Sydney, then Dubai and then Copenhagen.



Day 1 - s0 - Wed – 12Jul23

[<to Facebook Post>](#)

Into Dubai at 0530 am. 31C outside. I'm suspecting it'll get warmer. Another flight awaits us to Copenhagen soon.

Day 1 -s0 - Wed – 12Jul23 - Part 2

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

And on to Copenhagen.

After a nearly 14 hour flight from Sydney, Australia, to Dubai, a mere six hour flight on from there to Copenhagen would seem like a walk-in-the-park, yes? And, essentially it was easier.

But let go back. Dubai was interesting; even to two tired travelers. Parts of it reminded me of Singapore's world-class airport; Changi. We only had two+ hours for our layover however, so we didn't get to see a lot of it or to get an overall impression of the place.

Oddly enough, I wanted to spend money while I was there!

Spend money? Yes.

You see I have a **Wise Card**. Amazing things, really. You can have up to 50 currencies on them and shift money between the different currencies in seconds. No, this isn't some sort of advertisement and Wise isn't paying me to say all of this. But, if you travel and you are annoyed with the constant fuss that goes on about conversion rates and etc., then you might want to check one of these out.

To setup to use a new currency takes five seconds. Moving money into the new currency from one of your other currency accounts takes another five seconds – and you are done.

I'd done this the day before when I setup an account for **Dubai Dirhams** and then transferred \$20 USD into it from my U.S. Dollar account. That gave me about 73 Dirhams - and I was eager to spend them; just for the fun of it,

So, after locating the gate B8 where we were to catch our onward flight to Copenhagen, we located a coffee shop in the airport hall and I walked in PROUDLY waving my Wise card in all directions and loudly clearing my throat so everyone would notice me.

I ordered myself a small toasted sandwich and a medium cup of flat white coffee (I was a bit surprised that they knew what a 'flat white' was but I guess the desirability of flat whites has been migrating across the planet before us).

And, sure enough, when it came time to pay, I touched my Wise card to their machine, computers had sex somewhere, and bing, "Approved", appeared.

When I ordered these items, I had no idea what they cost so I fired up the Wise app on my iPhone after we got to a table to see the transaction listed in my Dirhams account. That's another nice thing the Wise card does: It 'looks' like a VISA credit card to the vendor but it 'acts' like a debit card to you.

So, right after you buy something, you can, within seconds, see the transaction on your Wise App.

When I looked at my Dirhams account at the table, it was empty!

Well, that brought up another smart 'trick' that Wise does. If you overspend your Dirhams, it will look through your other currency accounts to see which one has the best exchange rate, and it pulls the shortage amount from that account; so that the purchase will complete.

Sure enough, when I looked through my other Wise accounts, I saw that Wise had grabbed 0.21 British pounds from my British Pounds account in order to cover the slight shortfall in my Dirhams account. My bill in Dubai had been about 74 AED (Dirhams) but I'd only had 73.

Last thing on Wise and then I'll quit. For currency conversions, Wise uses the 'Mid-Bank' rate and then adds a small percent of its own. The Mid-Bank Rate is what the banks use to convert currencies among themselves. So, when you do a conversion like when I transferred the \$20 USD into 73.05 AED, it shows you everything (how

much you are converting, how much you will get in the new currency, what the current Mid-Bank rate is for those currencies and what Wise's percentage added on is).

Well, after that fun, we went back to gate B8 to await our flight to Copenhagen.

We were in one big hall and, finally, they let us through, one by one, after viewing our boarding passes and passports together. And that put us into yet another big waiting hall – where we got to wait some more. And then we boarded.

Nothing particularly notable about the flight. The fellow in the seat beside me was interesting in that his Levis were massively full of holes and halfway through the flight he took off his shoes and socks and went barefoot thereafter and sat crosslegged on his seat. Luckily, he was a small man I didn't care.

Colette and I were dog-tired by this point in our journey.

The next 'interesting' bit happened when we landed in Copenhagen. We all stood and gathered our carry on luggage and then waited. And waited. And waited.

Turns out they had a '**technical fault**' and they could not open the doors from the plane ramp into the airport hall. So, technicians were called. After, perhaps 20 minutes of standing and listening to a young child among us singing the most amazing arpeggios of "I'm unhappy and I want someone to do something to fix it" at top volume, the doors opened and we were saved.

Then we go to the massive baggage pickup area and went to belt '4' where our sole checked bag (mine) was scheduled for an appearance (Colette is traveling 'carry on only' this trip).

Did I mention Apple Tags? For \$40 USD or so, you can get one of these amazing devices, the size of a medium coin, and put it in your luggage and then you can 'check up' on where your luggage is when you travel. All through the magic of the Apple Corporation.

Well, after 15 minutes of watching other folks from our flight collecting their luggage and departing, I consulted my iPhone to see if my bag had somehow decided to fly off to Iceland or Brazil.

Nope, it was only 0.1 kilometer away. But where ever it was, 0.1 km away, it wasn't arriving at the luggage collection point 4 where we were waiting. Well, that was a relief. I have read horror stories of folks watching their bag appearing in another country.

After what was another 20 or 30 minutes, my iPhone suddenly informed me that my bag and its Apple Tag were 0 km away and, sure enough, the luggage gods spit it out upon the belts. And happy were the tired travelers.

Next adventure? Step up, step up – no crowding! We've got plenty for all.

After a discussion of how tired we were, we decided to opt for a cab to get us to our hotel. Ubers are illegal here. And while we have explored this very city back in 2019 using busses and trains, we were feeling too tired to try to resurrect the 'how' of it all at the moment.

So, out we went to the Cab racks and bim-boom-bam a cab man stood before us. How much to go to the Cabinn's Hotel? Not more than 250 Danish Kroner, says he. We do a quick calculation and discovered that this is about \$60 New Zealand Dollars. And our hotel is quite close (five minute drive) to the airport. Time for a rethink. Back into the airport and we easily recognized the machines wherein you buy tickets for the trains. They have been our friends before. Colette knew that our hotel was just two train stops away in Orestad. So, we approached the machines, put them into English and pushed buttons – just like we knew what we were doing. Moments later, 48 DDK (Danish Kroner) (about \$11 NZD) was deduced from my Wise DDK account and we had two tickets to ride in our hands.

But, tired as we were, the simple discrimination between Trains and the Copenhagen Metro System wasn't clear to us and so we entered the Metro system hall. And, except for a nice employee there who corrected our misunderstandings, there's no telling where we might have ended up out in the wilds of Copenhagen.

Ah, yes, we said, "Trains!" and so corrected we headed off the train hall (which we did recognize once there – having used them a lot in 2019.)

Remember now most signage is expressed here in Danish so a lot of gawking, questioning and, finally, guessing is involved. After that highly analytical process, we got onto a train, hoped that it was not taking us to Sweden and sat down.

Two stops later, seeing signs saying **Orestad**, we got off.

I took a picture of Colette at this point just so that if they find our bodies later, they will know how far we got. 😊

Now, next problem. We do not, as yet, have a SIM - so we are not connected to the Internet. Luckily, Colette had studied a map to see how we should proceed walking to get from the Orestad Station to the hotel. But, realistically, studying a map earlier and looking at a large concrete train station now isn't always going to be a smooth translation.

But, luck was smiling on us. If you look, closely, at the picture of Colette at the Orestad station, you can see two people approaching in the distance. Our saviors!

They spoke English and they were friendly. A brief chat revealed that they were walking from the train station to their hotel and it is just beside our hotel. **And they were willing to guide us.** How sweet is all that?

The good news is that the walk was only about three blocks up the road and then a left and two more blocks.

The bad news was that it was raining intermittently – sometimes, quite hard.

We walked and we talked. Sometimes, we had a pause for awhile until the rain stopped again. This was the sort of rain where there are a lot of patches of blue with passing dark clouds which unleash torrents.

Our new friends were **Donna Biswas** and her husband (whose name I neglected to get). They are from Bangalore, India. They are currently wandering about here in Scandinavia vacationing and adventuring.

They were very interesting folks to talk with and I suggested that we become FB friends. And, indeed, overnight, it has become so. It was their last day here in Copenhagen so it was our good luck to encounter them just when we did.

They walked us to our hotel and bid us goodbye before they entered theirs. And we entered ours in search of our room and our much desired bed after being more than 24 hours in transit from the other side of the planet. After some hours of much needed sleep, I'm recording all of this now in the early morning hours and soon we'll go down for a much desired breakfast.

And then let Day 2 begin.

Day 2 - s0 - Thu - 13Jul23 – Staggering a bit from jet-lag

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

Probably one of the saddest things about visiting a place like Denmark is to see how terribly **downtrodden** all the people are from the “cradle to death” socialist systems that they suffer under and the enormous taxes that they pay.

If they only were as fortunate as people in many of our other advanced western nations to have Capitalistic principles enshrined as the top priorities of their societies.

If they were so fortunate, then surely God's riches would trickle down upon them through the blessings of privatized medicine-for-profit and national governments which are largely shaped and controlled by the wealthy and the larger corporate powers.

But, sadly, the people here in Denmark and Scandinavia were too impatient to wait for the compassion of the wealthy and corporate to manifest itself in their lives in the form of trickle-down wealth. And so they precipitously took matters into their own hands. And now look at them. These poor sad people.

IRONY ALERT! If you are not sensing irony writ-large here, then you must be tone-deaf.

We spent quite a few hours walking around Copenhagen today and sitting at various places and watching people and life. I saw a relaxed, happy and healthy people going about their business without undue amounts of stress about anything that I could detect. I saw a prosperous city and a huge world-class shopping center. I saw nice apartment blocks and clean streets. I saw parklands and several forms of top-notch public transport.

I tried to imagine the realities that exist behind their eyes as they go about their lives. They exist within a world of securities that most of us can only dream of.

Medical expenses here are paid for. Unlike in some places, where, if you have one medical emergency and you're not covered by medical insurance, then your life is simply done. Your house is gone (if you had one). And you will probably spend the rest of your life sleeping in your car.

Education here is paid for – no student loans are begging people for decades after they've graduated. And you didn't like that degree? Then go and get another one. Educated citizens are happy citizens. Good decision-making citizens. Empowered and creative citizens.

Retirement? You are covered. No worries and great support facilities.

Get laid off? Your industry died under your feet? No problem. The government will retrain you in a new and upcoming field or skill while they pay you unemployment benefits. Benefits which are a substantial portion of your former wages. And the unemployment money they give you? Untaxed.

It is not a particularly well-known fact, but there are more Danish entrepreneurs, per 100,000 of population, than there are Americans. The reason being that to fail as an entrepreneur in Denmark is not to fatally fail. It just means that you can get up and start again. Whereas in the American system, if you fail once, you may be, indeed, done.

And the taxes? They pay up to 50% right off the top here.

Here's a mind boggler: When we were here back in 2019, they were having a national election. And we observed them vote for more "Cradle to Grave Socialism" and thus even higher taxes. What didn't they want? More immigrants.

So, we sat and watched them. In the shopping mall, on the trains, pushing their baby carriages and just walking around.

This is not a dark repeat of the Socialist or Communist systems I've seen with their gray streets, industrial pollution, food lines and downcast people.

This is a place of wealth and prosperity. If you ask people here if they are resentful of the very high taxes they pay, they say, "Why would I be resentful? Look at all I get."

The world in general, sadly, doesn't learn from others when they do things better. The Finns, for example, do education really well and the Japanese do hospitals systems really well.

Have you ever looked at the list of who the happiest countries are year after year?

These Scandinavians run their societies in a really well balanced manner. They are not an anti-Capitalistic societies; far from it. Remember, that the world's largest shipping company, Maersk, has its roots here. Lego has its roots here. Ikea has its roots here. Volvo, Ericsson, H&M, Carlsberg, Nokia, Electrolux are just a few of the large entities which arise from these countries.

Here's the trick. It is a simple and even axiomatic truth. You cannot have two number one priorities.

Having a number one goal of establishing a fair and equitable social system for all your people, doesn't mean that you are anti-Capitalist.

It just means that if there's a collision between your number one goal and Capitalism, then it is Capitalism that gives way. And that works.

Having it the other way around, as most advanced western societies do, leads to quite different results.

We're still struggling here with jet-lag so our day has been a bit fragmented but fun and interesting – none-the-less.

We're in an interesting hotel. Here's the link, if you want to check it out:

<https://www.cabinn.com/hoteller>

The room we are in is extremely small. But its point is to simply give you a good place to sleep. And it is well located.

We began the day by going downstairs for a buffet breakfast; which was excellent.

And then we walked through the gigantic **Fields Mall** just a block down from us here in Ørestad. It was early and much of the mall wasn't open at that hour - but we returned later in the day.

See: <https://www.visitcopenhagen.com/.../plan.../fields-gdk412275>

Our point in walking through the mall was to get to the **Ørestad Metro Station** on the other side and to then take the Metro then into central Copenhagen.

We want to go and revisit some of the things we enjoyed when we were here for a month in 2019.

We jumped off the Metro at "Kongens Nytorv" and decided to walk from there into central which was not too far. See Metro map: <https://intl.m.dk/>

Interestingly, after four years, memories started to flood in on me as we walked. I could see/remember in many cases what was ahead of us and recall things that had happened. It was fun.

I took a fair number of photos as we walked. Eventually, we arrived at **Norreport** which is quite a central station. But, along the way we stopped into a Danish Starbucks and enjoyed a coffee and a cookie.

Then I began to ask around for where I might buy a SIM for my iPhone. Because, other than when we were in some business' WiFi, we were blind for finding directions or looking things up.

We finally got some good directions: "One block back, take a left and then go another block and look for a Kiosk shop."

It took a bit of fun wandering but we found it and I bought 60 GB of data access and a Danish phone number for 99 Danish Kroner (\$23 NZD or \$15 USD). And the fellow even changed the SIM for me.

We continued on and came to a set of interesting shops we'd enjoyed before here. But then the rains came down massively and we had to run into one of the shops for cover.

Some more coffee and a sandwich Colette bought us and then we were ready to head back to our hotel. Turns out there was a Metro Station just beside the shops so avoiding any rain was easy.

We came home, slept an hour and then went over for a good look at the Fields Mall.

It did not disappoint. I think it is the largest mall in Denmark and its main pivot store, 'Bilka', clearly was the equal or better of most of the Costcos I've seen in the US in terms of size and product offerings. It was simply huge.

These people are not lacking for consumer goods.

Later yet, we came back and I, unfortunately, tried to take a short nap - and I was out for five hours. So, that's not very helpful for shifting my sleep schedules to my new location. Ah well, we'll get there.

I'm going to stop for now. But there'll be photos.

We'll head back into town tomorrow for a 2nd visit and then, on Saturday we'll head out to **Dragør**; where we stayed in 2019 for a look around and to visit a friend there.

See: <https://travelmelodies.com/dragor-denmark/>

Day 3 - s0 - Fri - 14 Jul23 – An easy day in Copenhagen

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

We're still getting jet-lag sorted - but the efforts are coming along.

Today, we wandered back into Copenhagen again to look for other areas we've enjoyed in 2019 and wanted to see again.

Our big goals today were to:

(1) Go back over to Norreport and then to wander east along the 'no cars' streets and squares that extend from there.

(2) Head over the the Parliament buildings area and see if we could find the little park with the statue of Kierkegaard in it.

(3) And then to head up towards where the Queen's Men do the changing of the guard.

I also shot several video clips from the Metro that gives some sense of what things look like here. I.e., the apartment buildings and the corporate offices and such. All very well kept.

The rest is just sight-seeing and I'll make comments with the photos as is appropriate.

Tomorrow, we're off to the town of Dragør; where we stayed when we were here last. A sweet place and I am very much looking forward to seeing it again.

Day 4 - s0 - Sat – 15Jul23 – A trip to Dragør and a visit with a friend.

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

A nice day of enjoying being increasingly free of jet-lag and traveling around.

The morning began with our usual buffet breakfast here at the hotel. After that, I took some photos of a display of the Ørestad Area Model in the hotel lobby.

Then we went onto the Metro Green Line, north to Christenshaven, changed to the Metro Yellow Line, going south to the airport and then switched onto the 35 bus. The bus which took us out to Dragør.

Dragør was where we stayed when we were in the area for a month in 2019.

It is fun to see a place again that you loved four years ago. The memories come flooding back. We found a few things that were changed - but most were the same.

After departing the bus, we walked to the little central square where we liked to drink coffee, eat 'Canalsnagles' and watch the ducks come up from the harbor and beg snacks.

Well, the coffee and the Snagles were much the same - but the ducks were gone. And the Irma Market, that dominated the square, was shut down (a causality of the Covid years?).

A bit sad but then change is inevitable.

This town has so much charm. After our snack, we took a walk down 'memory lane' and went walking and looking at things. Lots of photos with explanations will follow this text.

We had two reasons for going out to Dragør. One, of course, was the nostalgia of revisiting a place we loved.

The other was to visit with friends that we'd made back in 2019.

We had a definite arrangement to meet our friend, Jennifer at 1:30 pm.

But, earlier, when we were wandering, we went by the Dragør Visitor Center to see if our friend Inger-Lise might still be working there. Alas, she wasn't. We chatted with the lady there and I left one of my cards and asked her to give it to Inger-Lise and to say 'hello' for us when she saw her.

After indulging our nostalgia, we walked over to Jennifer's place. She's lived nearly 50 years around Dragør. 30 years and one house and now 20 more at her current one.

Jennifer's originally a Brit who came to Denmark as a au-pair, married a Dane, Carsten and then settled here in the Dragør.

Sadly, her husband, Carsten, passed away just a year ago. So, we were not able to renew our acquaintance with him. Jennifer, herself, has had a tough year; both emotionally and physically with Carsten's passing and with her own health problems.

So, it was really nice to see that she was looking good and was in good spirits. She seems to have focused on staying engaged with friends and family; which is always a positive and optimal response.

We imagined that we were just coming by for a coffee and a chat. But **Jennifer laid out a lovely Danish lunch for us**. And we stayed and talked with her for several very enjoyable hours.

Now, there was one wrinkle in our day that hasn't been mentioned thus far.

It involved a missing bus ticket. You see, we rode the bus out to Dragør and just assumed that, once there, we could just buy another single-ride ticket to get back.

Well, little doggies... It turns out that the bus drivers, themselves, can sell you a ticket. But they only accept Danish cash sales.

So, there we were, newly arrived in Dragør, with not a cent of Danish cash on us and very much in need of an ATM machine to get some Danish cash so we could buy tickets back to Ørestad at the end of the day.

We looked around for ATMs. Mmmmm ... there don't seem to be any? We began to suspect this after asking folks and searching the Internet. Things were looking bad for us.

We decided to take a walk up Kirkevej where we knew there was a Lidl Market. Maybe they'd have an ATM? Turns out they did not have an ATM.

But after explaining our problem to them, they were willing to do a deal with us. If we bought something with our credit card (that famous Wise card, don't cha know?), then they would add 100 Kroner onto the bill and give us a 100 Kroner back as our change.

Sweet! Mission accomplished.

Once back to Ørestad on the bus, we stopped in to Fields for a coffee and then went back up to our cosy room here at 'Cabinns Metro'.

Jet lag wasn't entirely done with us and by 8 pm, we were both gone. Zzzzzzzzzzzzz.

Day 5 - s1 - Sun – 16Jul23 – Copenhagen to Stockholm

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

Well, as I write this, we are here in Stockholm settled into our new home for the next 40 days.

But what a strange journey it was to get here.

We checked out of our hotel (easy – just throw the room-key cards into a return bin and walk away).

Then, dragging our suitcases behind us, we went and caught the Metro to the Copenhagen Airport; which also doubles as the train station. We were going early – just incase.

Colette had it all mapped. Train number, train platform and train departure time. Seems clear and straightforward.

Got there and located Platform 1 where the trains to Sweden depart from. Easy. Looked at the Departures Board but our train is not on it. Maybe, it is too early for it to be there?

Seems that the Danish and the Swedish systems are each in each other's space here and given that we're in Denmark, the Swedish information seems to get significantly less promotion. All we wanted was a clear confirmation that our train, Swedish System #536, was going to leave from Platform 1 at the expected time. After a lot of search, Colette finally located a small secluded display area that specifically showed the Swedish trains.

And she comes back aghast!

Train 536 to Stockholm has been cancelled!!! Yow – **we've got trouble, Huston!**

Several consultations with 'official-looking-they-know-all-about-trains-people-in-uniforms' quickly ensued.

Their consensus seems to be that this is not all that unusual.

And that the train we were taking to Stockholm will not be crossing from Copenhagen to Malmo today. But that it can be found over in Malmo and it will continue on from there to Stockholm.

Why the train is too shy to make the crossing, we're not sure. But rather than embarrassing anyone, we forego asking.

So, the summary of the official suggestions are that we 'Hedy-Hoo' ourselves over to Malmo ASAP.

And then, once there, locate the Stockholm-bound train in question, board it and make our way to Stockholm – almost just as planned.

They also said that to get to Malmo (without a ticket don't cha know) we can board any of the trains which are frequently going from Copenhagen to Malmo. And, if anybody asks, we can just show them our train #536 ticket, explain what's going on and everyone will smile and it will all be good.

So, we do this.

We go down to Platform 1, find the next train going to Malmo, board upon it, smile at everybody, wait for questions, none come, we ride across an international border without so much as a peep and soon we've arrived in Malmo.

We get off at Malmo Station and we determine that trains departing to Stockholm depart from the Station's platform 7. So we go there.

And there is, indeed, a train sitting there waiting to depart for Stockholm. We find carriage 6 and locate seats 43 & 44 upon it, place our luggage items overhead and seat ourselves. We're not entirely sure we're on the right train in spite of the fact that it is going to Stockholm.

So, we wait and the carriage fill up and no one comes and says, "Why are you in my seat?". And the train departs. Cool.

We think, what are the chances that this entire carriage is full and yet no one has come for these specific seats? They must be our seats and therefore, we must be on the right train. High-fives, backslaps and obscure hand signs are made all around.

Time passes, the train rolls on and somewhere, not too long before we going to stop in a town named, Hässleholm, a conductor comes by and asks to see our tickets. He says, **“You know you are on the wrong train?”** “No”, we reply.

He knows about the cancelled train and he already knows (before we do) why we're sitting here in these seats. He says, “Your are on train #534 which runs about 55 minutes before train #536.” They really could have explained things better to you back in Copenhagen.

He's friendly and sympathetic. But he says, “I'm going to have to put you off at Haässleholm because I have no extra seats and people are boarding there who have these two seats reserved.

He says, “When the #536 arrives, you can get on, sit in your assigned seats and all will be good.

He then says that **because we will have 55 minutes of sitting there and doing nothing waiting for the #536, that he will accompany us to the dining car now and give is a few snacks, free, to help us pass the time.**

Well, that's all a nice turn-around.

And so it all comes to pass. Haässleholm arrives, we alight, we sit, we nibble, we talk to a station employee who passes by and we find out that Haässleholm is about 250,000 people and it is very quiet. ...And then we sit some more.

Finally, #536 appears, we board, our seats are empty and we sit – secure in the hard-won knowledge that we are are, finally, at the right place at the right time.

BUT WAIT – there's more (Just like on those TV ads for exercise machines that you just really, really need. And that you will finally sell in a garage sale in just a year or two later – having only used it a half-dozen times).

NEW FUN: My iPhone's Internet, which was working since I bought the Lebara SIM in Copenhagen, stopped working once we crossed the Swedish border!

Apparently, the Lebara SIM was country specific - even though I had requested one which would work across countries.

So, as if we don't have enough going on, now we're “Internet blind” in a new country.

That's a particular shame because I had agreed to call our Stockholm host, Elsa, when we arrived at the Stockholm train station, to let her know we're getting into a cab and that we'll be at her place in 20 minutes.

Luck favors us, however, and when I don't call, she calls me. Apparently, incoming stuff still works.

We get the cab, make the ride, meet Elsa and, after an orientation, we settle into our new place after a very eventful day.

It is a beautiful place and I am happy we're here. But I think a beer and some bed time are next in order.



Two little travel mice - clueless that they are on the wrong train.

Day 5 - s1 - Sun – 16Jul23 – Copenhagen to Stockholm – Part 2

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

Nice day here in Stockholm as we settle into this new place. It's really quite beautiful off the balcony right now. Large black clouds have rolled in. They are dark and thunder is rumbling in the distance. Boats are passing by and the light is changing in all directions.

It's such a fine place to just sit, and look at. This place, that we traveled so far to experience. Yep, lots of struggles to get here. But I think it's all worth it.

Whoop! just got driven off the balcony by a squall.

Day 6 - s2 - Mon – 17Jul23 – Settling in and sorting out

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

To say that the week or so that it took us to get here has been high adventure, logistically and emotionally, would not be an exaggeration.

But, here we sit. Arrived, alive, happy and very pleased to be here.

This morning, we took a walk over to the nearest shopping mall, the Liljeholmstorget Galleria. Now, don't that word just roll off your tongue like easy butter? 😊

But, in spite of not being able to say it – we did find it.

We had **three missions** this morning.

One was to sort out my iPhone Internet problems. And I easily accomplished this; with the help of a fellow at the Telenor Shop. Things always seem to look difficult - until you see them in the rear view mirror.

The **second** task was to buy some groceries. Shopping in a new country, in a new language and in a new store is always an adventure. And today was no exception. But with my trusty, newly Internet-enabled, iPhone in hand and the translation App fired up, we were able to decipher most of what we needed fairly well.

Have to say Swedish super markets are really something; if this one's any general indication. I was pretty dazzled by the place.

And our **last mission** was to buy transport tickets. In this case, we bought two - three-day unlimited tickets.

So, we can ride the city's transport system as much as we want for a few days and see what we think.

Swoop, swoop and swoop and we'd done all three tasks; as well as sitting and having a coffee shop treat.

Turns out that the train and bus station in this Grondal Area are immediately beside the Liljeholmstorget Galleria!

Got to love how these Europeans make use of efficient and intelligent public transport systems - while the rest of us in the U.S. and the antipodes are left rubbing two sticks together, dragging our knuckles and muttering, 'car, car, car', like Father McGuire saying 'drink, drink, drink' in "Father Ted".

All we had to do to use our tickets for the first time, was to walk to the busses a very short distance away. Soon we were waiting for the bus. And then, soon, we were riding it.

We came back up here for a nice lunch which Colette made us and I did a bit of nature watching outside; as a lovely storm rolled in and through.

And the afternoon has yet to unfold – more soon.

And the afternoon....

With our new ride-all-you-can tickets, it seemed like we should go out and 'ride'. And so we did.

Colette had the idea that we should visit the core old-town of Stockholm; and area called '**Gamla Stan**'. It is where the king's Palace is.

To do this, we had to catch the 133 bus that runs through our neighborhood and ride it to the Bus & Metro Station at Liljeholmstorget; where we were this morning.

And then, once there, transfer onto the city's Metro service and ride a Metro train to the Gamla Stan station.

When we arrived at Gamla Stan, it was busy. And this is a just a Monday afternoon. People were everywhere. There were several cool streets thronged with people and we said we'd come back and explore some of them. But first we were headed for the Palace.

On the way to the palace, we came to a square with a huge building which was labeled, "**Nobel Prize Museum**". The square was quite interesting just in and of itself. It contains an ancient fountain that people still drink from.

We walked on a bit more and came to an Oblique; much like the ones I've seen in several European cities. And then an amazing church.

And then, finally, we came to the palace's square. At that point, I turned and shot several photos as there were cool things to see in several directions.

In the palace square, itself, people seemed to be lined up in an odd way as if they were expecting something and had to stand in a line just so. A little investigation showed that they were waiting to see a '**Changing of the Guard**' ceremony. So, we got in the line as well and waited.

When the event came off, I shot two small movie clips of it. The precision was interesting as was the fact that the officers barking the orders were often women. Sweden seems low on the Patriarchy Scale, to me.

Once that fun was over, we walked on and strolled onto one of the packed streets. At this point, I shifted my wallet into my front pocket, as I often do in crowded places.

Most of the shop windows were full of fascinating stuff of all sorts and there were numerous bars and restaurants that looked really fun. Colette reminded me that we are going to have visitors while we're here so we'll have good opportunities to bring folks down here, show the area off and then have a meal. Yum!

After the busy street tour, we stopped into a Coop Store and I got an ice-cream and Colette got a bottle of water. We walked on and we found a really cool old German Church and we strolled through its grounds.

And by then we were thinking it was time to head home.

Heading home was just a matter of reversing how we'd gotten to Gamla Stan. Easy as pie for old train buccaneers like us.

Back home, Colette made us a nice meal, I washed up and then I enjoyed a bit of patio time which I suspect I'm going to be doing a lot of while we're here.

Day 7 – s3 – Tue – 18Jul23 - Trains, Buses and boats around town

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

A note about the nomenclature of the opening line of each post.

- 'Day 7' is how many days we've been traveling.
- 's3' is how many days we've been staying in Stockholm.
- 'Tue' is ... come on, everybody know what a Tuesday is. 😊

Today was a lot of traveling and sightseeing. We are literally beating our 'travel all you want cards' to death.

We began the day pursuing a lead our friend PJ gave us. It was the identity of the deepest Metro Station here in Stockholm. And it is called, 'Kungstradgarden'.

So, we set off to go there. And we had a follow on plan to go and explore a popular area south of 'Gamla stan' called 'Sodermalm' afterwards.

Well plans go astray. When we came up from the Kungstradgarden Station into the light of day, we liked where we were so much we just stayed and explored it and decided 'Sodermalm' could wait for another day.

I'm not going to say too much about these explorations as the notes with the photos will, I hope, suffice.

After the morning's adventures, we came home, I took a nap and then we concocted our next plan 😊

We decided to walk west down the shore to where there's a ferry terminal that serves this area. We further decided that we'd ride the ferry to where ever it goes and that we'd stay on it until it returned us to the City's Central Station. And from there we could take our normal Metro & Bus route home.

And, indeed, that's what it did and it was great fun seeing some of this city from the water.

Again, I'm not going to say too much about these afternoon boat adventures as the notes with the photos will, I hope, suffice.

Cheers, from one seriously beautiful city.

Day 8 – s4 – Wed – 19Jul23 - Morning insights

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

A friend asked me to watch out for the 'other side' of things here in Stockholm. i.e., the unsavory, the messy, the impoverished and etc.

Yesterday, on our long travels around the city, I did see four instances that I think would qualify as a bit of the 'dark side'.

In two instances, I saw men digging into public trash cans looking for things. One of them looked very much like he might be living out of his backpack. Whereas the other fellow looked quite normal to me; in terms of dress and bearing.

In another instance we saw, sitting on the sidewalk leaning back against the wall in an affluent business area, a woman with her 'stuff' all around her, calling out to everyone who passed. She was trying to make 'eye-contact' with them, apparently, to solicit money from them. She reminded me of some of the Roma beggars we've seen on past European trips. But I'm not sure if she was Roma or not.

And the last instance we saw was on the Metro, itself. A woman was walking through the cars from one end of the train to the other. And, in each car, she stopped and gave a set speech. And then, if no one reacted, she walked on. She was quite gaunt looking.

These 'instances' have, thus far, been few - and all I've see in three days here.

My overall impression, again, is that **these societies are about as close to perfection as humanity has gotten in our long and twisted history.**

As I said the other day, with ironic humor, these folks are not starving and downtrodden from their Socialist "Cradle to Grace" welfare systems. Anything 'but' that would seem to be the case. These are healthy, happy and strong societies; in so far as I can see.

But, I am still looking for the 'cracks' in the edifice.

I've always been a 'people watcher'. So, as we move about, I'm always keenly aware of how people are interacting with us and each other.

I see tolerance, kindness and compassion a lot. Even in the way one person will move aside to make space for another. In the way they answer a question, if I ask one.

Walking through a nice business district, yesterday, I would have been hard-pressed to see any signs that this society is struggling under the yoke of their Social Welfare system. The lights are on, the people are smiling, the shops are full of shiny consumer goods and the infrastructure is all functional and clean.

The governments here are Democratically elected. And **attempts by special interest groups to control and shape elections are resisted.** This means that the results of their elections are largely reflections of the public's actual will; rather than manipulations by the hidden string pullers; who seem to quietly run so many of our 'advanced' western nations.

The City of Stockholm, which is between one and two million people, depending on where you choose to draw the line, has a strong 'zero-tolerance' policy against graffiti. And, indeed, I cannot recall seeing any.

To sum up, in so far as I can, the country has money. It seems to spend a lot of it on the infrastructure of the country. There is not much poverty evident in the places we've seen thus far. And I'm not sensing social tension as we move about.

Day 8 – s4 – Wed – 19Jul23 - Afternoon insights

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

Today, we decided to go see an area called Sodermalm here in Stockholm. And it was OK. But it did not knock our socks off; as other areas have.

We walked around Sodermalm and tried to find the center of the place. And, in the end, we decided that the 'press' it gets must be as an evening venue and a bar hopping hot spot. Because during the day, there wasn't all that much about it that was flash.

It was less affluent than the areas we visited yesterday. And there was a bit more graffiti evident. The buildings were a bit older and less well kept. All in all, it didn't feel sketchy or dangerous. But it was definitely less interesting.

Once we'd exhausted Sodermalm for fun, we walked for a long time until we got tired. And then we jumped on the first bus we saw. The faithful #55. And we told it to 'take us wherever you go', and it obliged.

If you look at the map of our morning's travels, you'll see we wandered quite a bit and saw neighborhoods we'd have never seen otherwise,

The city of Stockholm is built up across many islands. And one sees high-rise apartment buildings on the larger islands in all directions.

And every neighborhood, full of such buildings, is an entire world around which people's lives revolve. And all of it was new to us today. And we'll see it once and then probably never again. Strange isn't it, that there is so much in the world and that we are so small.

We came home after that, had lunch and I had a sweet nap out on the balcony.

We went out again in the afternoon to further explore the local mall. But nothing notable happened there.

So I want to switch and want to talk about trees.

As in the trees that we saw on the train ride from Malmo to Stockholm. And as in those that we saw on our Ferry ride yesterday.

As a preface, I spent 20 years of my life living in the U.S. Pacific Northwest (PNW). And there are a lot of trees in that area.

Inevitably, if you were there long, you would see a lot of clear cuts. Entire mountainsides denuded of trees.

And, if you and nature were lucky, then someone may have come behind that clearcutting and planted new trees to replace those cut. ...Sometimes.

Let's switch back to Sweden.

On our long train ride across the south of Sweden, we saw endless farms, fields and forests and occasional towns. 'Neat as a pin' might be a good way to describe the farms and outbuildings I saw. Many of the buildings were painted in a rust-red color that the Swedish farmers seem to favor.

There were no mountains at all. Just gently rolling countryside.

And the land, itself, seemed to be divided fairly evenly into mixed forests and fields.

Occasionally, there would be a large section of just forest or some large, plowed set of organized fields. But mostly, the forests and fields were distributed in a pleasing mix.

In all of this, I never saw a clear cut. Not once. Sometimes, I could see that sections of the forest had been thinned - but that was it.

Back to the PNW. I remember the debates and anger in Washington State in the 90's over the rights of those who worked in the forestry industry to not have their incomes curtailed due to cutting restrictions. When you drove through lumber towns, every house had a sign in the window saying, "This house supported by logging". You could explain to them that if they kept on cutting at the rate that they were, then soon they would have no trees left. And the entire lumber industry would just fold up and blow away.

But many of them could not see the long and balanced view of things. And even today, I believe the anger still runs deep there.

Riding across Sweden, I could see that someone here had gotten the idea of 'controlled forestry' sometime ago.

My thoughts were a lot the same yesterday when we rode the ferry out to the western end of Stockholm and then back in again.

Endless forests on the islands around us and never a clear cut in sight.

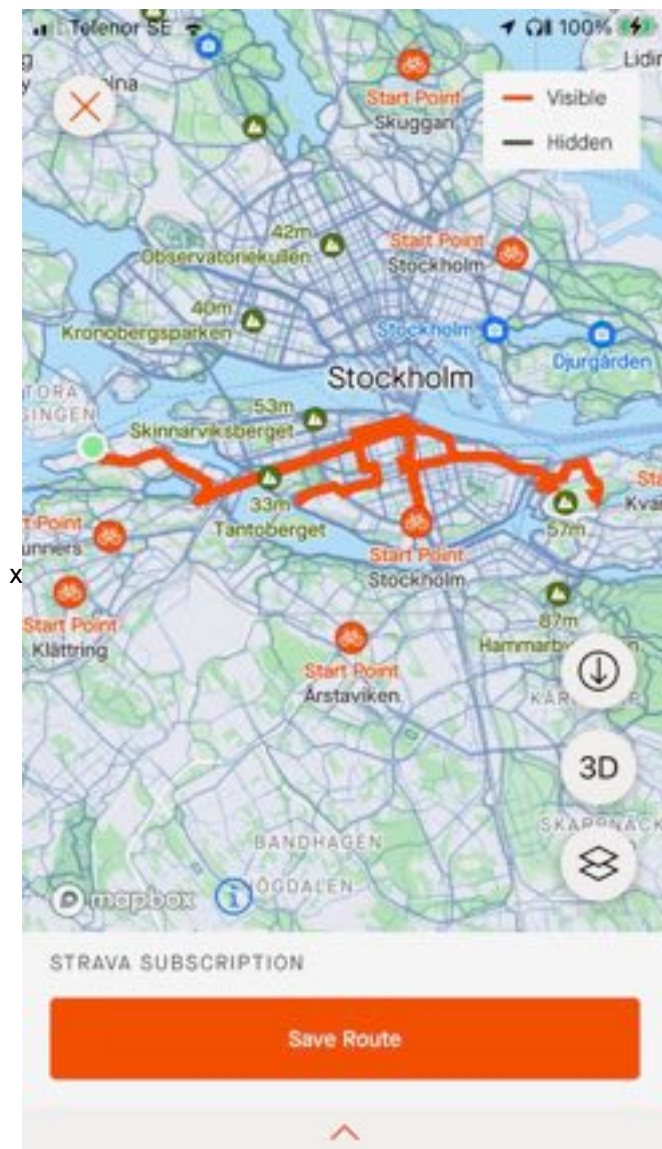
I know that currently the law in Sweden prevents folks from building closer than 100 meters to the shore in these islands.

But you can see that a lot of the cabins here are closer than that to the shore. So that means that a lot of them are grandfathered in from pre-regulation times.

When I looked at the houses and cabins ashore as we passed, the development all seemed respectful of the nature it was nestled within. Never a big empty plot of cleared land 'just because they could'. Never just a pile of junk on the land, because it 'mine' to do with what I want.

There's a lot I like about Sweden. And this seems to just be another thing to add to that list. They seem to walk their environmental talk here.

And here's the map record of our adventures to Sodermalm and beyond on the 55 bus. Sodermalm is the island in the center of this map. Our place is the green circle on the left and bus 55 took us into the wilds over there on the right side of the map.



Day 9 – s5 – Thu – 20Jul23 – exploring Kungsholmen Island

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

Off for another exploration today and our target was Kungsholmen Island.

We understand now how to get around on Stockholm Metro system so 'boom', we were there. And we just started to walk.

First we walked west from the arrival Metro station, Fridhemsplan, down a long business street. When it began to get close to the eastern shore, we turned north and go to the island's north shore and then doubled back east following the water. At perhaps half way across the island going east to west, we turned south again and went straight through the middle of the island until we hit the southern shore.

By then, we'd seen a lot, it was nearly noon and we were hungry. A look at the map showed that an interesting looking place called "**The Street Food Labs**" was close by so we navigated our way to it.

The food was good. I had the Fried Shrimp Tacos and Modelo Negra Mexican beer. Yum!

And that all served to make me sleepy. So, with Colette's agreement, we jumped on the Metro back home had I had a nice nap.

I'm up now typing and Colette's gone in for a nap. You know, we've got a really tough life here.

There's some pictures of stuff we saw along the way. Skip through them, if there are too many. They are mostly Stockholm eye-candy.

Day 10 - s6 – Fri – 21Jul23 – Saltsjöbaden

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

We had a fun adventure this morning.

Our intent was to ride the light rail line 25 out to its terminus at Saltsjöbaden.

But, when we got to the Slussen station for the transfer, we discovered that line 25 is no longer running. The whole thing is shutdown for construction.

After an inquiry at the ticket office, we learned there is a bus which is substituting for the train and its number is 25M.

While we were waiting for the 25M bus, we ended up talking with lady that had a friendly dog. And she was on the bus with us.

Not sure exactly what we expected to find out at Saltsjöbaden. Colette said it was developed as a 'salt bathing resort' in the late 19th century. When we got there, there was not much going on, Surely we had hoped for an Espresso House coffee shop and a snack as a minimum.. But we found less than that.

Saltsjöbaden appears now to serve as a port from which folks can board ferries to sail further east into the eastern archipelago area.

In addition to the ferry docks, There is a large, old-style classical hotel called the "Grand Hotel Saltsjöbaden" and a few house and shops scattered around.

We wandered the hotel grounds, hopefully, but couldn't see how to engage with their staff for a coffee and snack. When we inquired at the main desk, we were told that, "they were still serving breakfast", as if that explained everything. **I felt a bit like we were at Faulty Towers on an off day.**

Once we ran out of things to do and see (fairly quickly), we decided to ride the ferry back to the city. When we went over to the ferry terminal and we ended up meeting the same lady, who had the nice dog, there.

We engaged her in conversation again and she, in turn, pulled some other people into the conversation; all Swedes. And we all discussed what we, Colette and I, might be going to do next.

Among the ideas discussed were that we could (1) sail a ferry back to the city, (2) we could sail one of the ferries further out into the archipelago or, (3) we could simply turn around and catch the same bus 25M back into the city.

After quite a bit of back-and-forth, it was determined that our SJ System tickets wouldn't allow us sail further east into the archipelago; without additional fees.

And it was also revealed that there apparently was no ferry running from Saltsjöbaden back into the city. That was a misconception on our part.

So, in the end we decided to take the 25M bus back into the city. We didn't want to depart into the further eastern regions of the archipelago without a clearer idea of where we were going and why.

But, the folks at the ferry terminal were really nice and I enjoyed the chat we had with them. And I may get some email from them with some recommendations about the archipelago; but that still remains to be seen.

Once we were back on the 25M bus, headed towards the Slussen station in the city, things got interesting for me, the people watcher, because a lady and her daughter came onboard with two enormous dogs, which created a bit of a scene; though I get that this is a pretty normal thing on Swedish buses.

Then another lady with two children and a tiny dog and a baby carriage all got on. And the older of her two boys ended up sitting next to me with the tiny dog. He explained to me that the dog's name was, "Gracie". And I had a little bit of a chat with him (in English) and took a picture of Gracie. **I found that I just marveled over the idea of Swedish buses, being full of families and dogs all together.** And I took a couple of more pictures of all that.

Finally, we got back to Slussen and transferred to the central station where we found an Espresso House and had an excellent coffee and sit down.

Then we decided to come back home to Liljeholmen station, do some shopping at the mall, take the 133 bus to the apartment, have some lunch and then maybe an old-man nap for me.

When we were at Central, we noticed that the street out front looked really interesting. So it's entirely possible that we may go back there this afternoon and give that interesting street a good walking to.

And that, so far, is the story of 21 July.

Postscript. We did go back and walk that street and it was great fun. Thousands of Stockholm'ers strolling, shopping, looking and gawking – just like us. Big fun.

For a picture or two of Gracie and all the rest of the fun, see the photos....

Day 11 - s7 - Sat - 22Jul23 - A ferry ride to Ropsten

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

Short and sweet today. We rode the Metro to the Kungsträdgården (the deepest Metro) Station again and then surfaced there and went looking for the #80 ferry.

After a bit of fun finding it, we boarded it and rode it to the end of the line. It was a great ride and it stopped at six to eight places before it was done. The maps will show you where we went.

The terminus was Ropsten which is also a Metro Station so we jumped off the ferry and rode the Metro back to our own Liljeholmen Station; switched to the 133 bus and came home.

Fun and no fuss, no muss.

Day 12 – s8 – Sun – 23Jul23 – A visit to two small islands and an end-of-the-line trip

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

Today, we set off to the two small island: Skeppsholmen and Kastellholmen.

They are both quite near the center of the City of Stockholm and they both have a lot of history and beauty.

So, the 133 bus took us to the Liljeholman metro station, Then the 14 line took us to the Central Station. And then the 7 bus took us to where we could walk over to the two islands.

What a pretty area of central Stockholm it all is. Water and boats and classic old Scandinavian buildings is every direction and some of the best weather you could ever want.

Rather than a lot of text here, I'll add some descriptive text to the pictures we shot.

After we were done touring the two islands, we went back to central for a coffee and a sit down and decided that we had one more adventure in us for the day. So, we decided to take the 14 line all the way out to its terminus at Morby Centrum – just to see what was there. And we did. It turned out to be a nicely turned out shopping center but we did not venture beyond that.

And then we came home about 4 pm.

We did have one weird wrinkle for the day.

My **Wise card**, with which I've been very pleased, suddenly stopped working between when I had my coffee at Central in the morning and tried to have another in the afternoon. Just stopped.

The pay-wave function just seems to have turned off. And when you swipe it, nothing happens.

I've got other cards so this is not the end of the world. But it has been so easy to use that I'm going to miss it if has really gone belly-up.

More news soon.

Day 13 - s9 - Mon - 24Jul23 - several adventures and a techo slam dunk.

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

A day of mixed adventures today.

The first thing we did was to take the bus to the shopping center so I could see if my Wise card was working today. But it's still failed. Contactless payments have stopped working and both the chip and the stripe functions are acting flakey.

We discussed this problem and decided that we had too many things planned for today to simply stop and try to deal with this issue.

But given that tomorrow is probably going to be a rainy day, it can wait until then. Or, if we get back early enough today, I can try to call Wise in the afternoon.

So, with that decision made, our first adventure after coffee was to take the metro over to the Central Station and go in search of the giant food hall called, "Ostermalms Salluhall", that we've read about. Apparently, it is pretty spectacular.

See: <https://www.ostermalmshallen.se/>

We found it and had a good look around. It was a fabulous place with many things on offer. Maybe too many. We were spoiled for choice and didn't know what to do.

In the end, we decided to walk back over to the shopping center called, "Gallerian"; which we had discovered back on the July 18 to see what we could find that might be simpler there.

And, once there, we settled on splitting a small pizza and two Cokes and we were happy campers.

So, that was two adventures and one technical problem for the day so far.

But we still wanted to have another adventure so we decided to go for another trip to the 'end the line' metro adventure.

In this case, we opted to go to the end of metro line 13; where the last station is called, **Norsborg**.

See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norsborg_metro_station

The logic was that after we got out there, had a look around, had some coffee, and came back, we'd still be on our own line 13, and we could just get off at our Liljeholmen Station, shop and head home on the bus.

An 'efficient' adventure, you might say.

It was a long way out to the Norsborg Station. 13 stations, in fact.

And strangely enough we noted that one station before Norsborg Station, at **Hallunda Station**, virtually, everybody on the metro got off. Hmmmmm. But, we stayed on.

When the metro pulled into Norsborg, we got out and walked over to what looked there might be some sort of a shopping area there. But, in fact, there was virtually nothing and we were a bit puzzled.

At one point, when we were deciding where we might look next for coffee, I stopped and asked three gentlemen I saw sitting on a bench if they spoke English. But they all shook their heads, "No".

Then I said, "Coffee", and I pointed left and right and put a big question mark onto my face.

One of them shook his head, "No", again and made a motion that made me think that he was telling me we had to get back onto the metro and go back one station in order to find coffee.

I remember then that virtually everyone had gotten off at the Hallunda Station so this began to make sense to me.

So we did just that. We returned to Hallunda Station and we found a small but nice shopping center there. We had a look around and I had a latte there.

See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hallunda_metro_station

Then, as per our original plan, we got back onto the metro, returned to our Liljeholmen Station, did some shopping and then jumped on the bus and came home.

When we got back to the apartment, there was still enough day left for me to try to call Wise about my misbehaving card, so I did.

And after about a 15 minute wait (with terrible music), a fellow came on the line and talked to me.

The long and the short of it all was that he could see no problems with my card - though he could see that I had two transactions denied.

So we talked about how and why that might have happened.

He gave me some suggestions; which I really didn't feel that hopeful about.

But then he mentioned that as an alternative, **I could link my Wise card to my Apple Pay**, if I had an intelligent iPhone.

I told him that I wasn't aware of this option and he sent me some email about how to do it.

Yahoo!

I made the link from apple Pay to my Wise card and now even if the contactless payment capability on my Wise card is bogus, I can still get everything I want done through the Apple Pay option. Isn't technology wonderful?

So, that brings us to the end of this sweet day. Pictures as usual with various commentaries follow.

As I look out the window, just now, I can see dark clouds gathering and tomorrow's promise for rain is looking quite possible.

But, that's not the worst thing that could happen to us. This apartment is a pretty cool place to hang out.

Day 14 – s10 – Tue – 25Jul23 – Rain, cards and pens

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

A mellow and fun day, today. It was forecast to be rainy on and off during the day so we hadn't planned much. As per my yammering about my Wise card problems yesterday, today we made a trip over to the Liljeholmen Station and Mall area and I gave my new technologies a test. Whoop -Whoop! They worked.

I put my Apple iPhone with Apple Pay now linked to my Wise card up to the pay terminal and computers began to have monetary sex in my name. All I had to do to approve all of this promiscuity was to touch my finger to the button on my iPhone certifying that it was, indeed, me who was approving the celebrations. Moments later, 72 SEK had migrated from my Wise account into the account belonging to Espresso House and all were happy.

That was pretty much it for the morning. Rain was still threatening for mid-day here so we decided to return home, let the bad-boy rain do its worse over mid-day and then, when it had burnt itself out, we would venture out again; brave mice that we are.

Well... Things don't always work out just like you'd hoped, do they?

Indeed, we did wait across the mid-day and noted that the weather reports were varying a lot as to when the alleged rain might occur. They were varying faster than the odds at a crooked horse-racing track.

Finally, we looked outside, saw no rain and ventured out.

Our goal for the afternoon was modest. Colette had located a hi-class Pen Store in the Sodermalm area she was interested in. She's been filling in her spare moments here with art projects (you just cannot keep the Energizer Bunny down, don't cha know?).

So, we took the Metro over to the Hornstull Metro Station; which was suppose to be the best one from which to walk to the Pen Store.

See: <https://penstore.se/>

It all worked out fairly nice at first. We exited the metro station and got onto the right street, Hornsgaten, and stated walking towards the Pen Store which was at 98 Hornsgaten. It looked like about three blocks but in fact, it was more like 10 or 12.

And then the clouds got dark again and the skies opened up. "Whoop, Huston – we got a problem."

We tried it for awhile but the awnings to walk under got few and far between and the rain started coming down really hard.

Finally, at some point we could see we had at least a block ahead of us without a shred of cover and us with only one small umbrella. But, at that moment, we were under a protective overhang. So we just decided to wait where we were until things cleared.

It was about ten minutes we spent there watching it bucket down. But then a patch of lighter sky (with even some blue in it) began to drift over us and we knew it would end soon.

Another two blocks and the Pen Store came into view. And it was a really cool place – well worth the struggles to get there. Colette got some stuff that pleased her to add to her collection and I even bought small pen that I might not have really needed. But I just wanted to hear computers have sex in my name again 😊.

Then, we walked a short distance to the Mariatorget Metro Station, which was actually quite a bit closer to the Pen Store than the Hornstull Station had been (in spite of some travel app's best advice).

We rode back to Liljeholmen Station bought some food for this evening. Colette, bless her soul, has been cooking good stuff for us virtually every evening. But tonight, we decided to get some store-prepared stuff just for a change. Mine is Spaghetti Carbonara – my favorite! She got some sort of a fancy salad.

When we took out of here the first time, this morning, I shot some pictures to give the sense of what we see here when we walk from the apartment to the bus stop. Just for fun to give the flavor of the place.

And there are a couple from in the Pen Store as well.

Day 15 – s11 – Wed – 26Jul23 – A trip to Vaxholm Island

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

Today, we picked out an island that Colette had heard nice things about; Vaxholm Island, and we went there.

See: <https://www.stockholmarchipelago.se/en/173770/Vaxholm/>

It was lovely and I consider today to be one of our best “go out and explore days” on this trip.

After some coffee table research, we decided that we would go out by bus and return by ferry.

This bus-out-ferry-back order in our plan was largely driven by the fact that locating exactly where ferries depart from within Stockholm City has not as easy as it might seem for us thus far.

Bus departure points are considerably easier to track down.

And once out in a smaller place, like Vaxholm, locating the ferries should be a good deal easier because the places are so small you'd wonder just how and where they could hide a ferry, right?.

And, in the worst case, we could always just take the same bus back.

Ha! So, having an absolutely bullet-proof plan-in-hand, the intrepid travelers sallied forth.

133 bus to Liljeholmen, 14 Metro Line to Tekniska högskolan Station (hoping no one will ask us to say it) and then out to the Metro Station's bus area seeking the 670 bus, we were. And there at bus stand 'F' stood the proud beast – and it was a double-decker (lucky us) and we got on it first (even luckier us) and then we went in and got the front-of-the-bus-on-top-primo-seats. Now, I don't want to brag ... but did I mention 'lucky us'? 😊

The ride out was fairly long, 45 minutes, maybe, but it was quite fun and interesting. And the view was great.

Then we arrived in Vaxholm. What a pretty little place. I have the feeling that a lot of Swedes come here for a day out of town from Stockholm.

We walked around, shot lot of photos, had lunch in a nice place and then went off and found our ferry back.

I shot pictures of several of the menus we looked at. Seems like the last time I shared a menu picture, it got a lot of comments and likes. So, I think people are curious about menus.

The ferry ride back as quite nice as well and it took us through a new part of the archipelago that we've not seen before as it made half a dozen or more quick stops along the way for folks to jump on and off.

The ferry docked in Stockholm near where the 7 tram runs (a bus we know and love), so we took that bus to Central, rode the Metro to Liljeholmen, jumped off for the evening's meal shopping and then home on the ever trusty 133 bus.

I think people are starting to recognize us on the 133 because we're on it two or three times daily.

Have I mentioned that we are literally whup'ing to doo-doo out of these nice all-you-can-ride 30-day bus passes of ours? No? Well then, I won't, because you know me ... I don't want to brag. 😊

Day 16 – s12 – Thu – 27Jul23 – Farsta Strand and a Meetup Group in Gamla stan

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

A fun day. We decided to go off on another run on the metro to see someplace new. Today, we chose Farsta Strand; which is at the southern end of the 18 Metro line.

Easy enough. Ride the metro and get off, right? Well, it should have been. But the last few metro stations on the 18 line were out of action for construction so there were 'replacements buses'. 18B, they were called.

Sounds like I'm working up to big drama here? But I'm not. We got to where we wanted to go and saw all the things we wanted to see. And we only got on the wrong bus once and went back to where we'd just come from ... just once. 😊

Being two little, slightly lost mice in the maw of the big metro machines, I didn't think that was too bad.

Farsta Centrum was a big shopping center which was relatively close to Farsta Strand (Strand means beach).

So, we got to see both of them and had a nice walk as well.

The Strand was nice. A walk along a wooded shore. I mentioned to Colette that I have yet to see trash on the forests floor here in Sweden. Or on the city streets. No KFC bags, no McDonald's cups, nada. And that led to a long discussion about Swedish culture and if this is a reflection of that culture.

I've read that Swedish culture is big on group consensus. I.e., meetings will go on and on until everyone agrees that the meeting's conclusions are shared by all the participants. I wonder if that consensus thinking extends to things like the trash issue?

“We don't throw trash here. And if you do, you are going to get the 'stink-eye' from everyone, far and wide.”

We could sure some of that back in New Zealand where it isn't all that unusual to see a bag of the evening's McDonald's trash just simply thrown out of the car where ever the buggers happened to be when they were done with it.

Farsta Centrum was yet another shopping center we've seen near a metro station. I wonder if, as the government built the metro stations out from the city's center, there wasn't an intentional coordination with respect to building shopping centers nearby? And all this to support the populations which would inevitably spring up near the new metro terminals?

In any case, virtually all the Centrums we've seen have been nice and have many of the same stores.

I've yet to see one that looks like it is dying-on-the-vine as some are in the US and NZ - if they were poorly located or if something else displaced them and left them economically un-viable.

We sat in an Express House's outside seating at Farsta Centrum and just watched the people passing by and enjoying ourselves.

In the afternoon, we returned to our area, Gröndal, and settled in for a bit of do-nothing time.

In the evening, we attended a Meetup Group that meets here in Stockholm for drinks and a chat in English once a month. And tonight was the night.

So, off we went to Gamla stan to a place called, “The Bishop's Arms”.

It was easy to find and, when we got there, the meeting was well along. Maybe twenty people who looked to be 30's or 40's somethings were gathered along a long table that was full.

We got a beer and a wine, and while we were doing that, we started talking with a fellow from Bangladesh named Newton. He was with the Meetup Group and this too was his first time to attend.

The big table was too full to join so we sat at another table just by it and after a few minutes, Newton came and joined us.

Newton is now a resident of Sweden and came here with his family via Estonia. He works in IT and said that given the right IT skills, it is not too hard to get a Swedish visa.

We chatted on for awhile about all sorts of things that we were curious about, with respect to each other.

And then Martin, a German fellow from Munich, who is also living and working here in Stockholm, came and joined us. And we were off again sharing stories and observations.

Both Newton and Martin were very interesting and engaging people and the conversations among the four of us flowed well. People like this can give you insights into various things that I doubt you could ever get in any other way.

Martin enlightened us on the differences between the Swedish and German train systems. And Newton told us about working hours and expectations in Bangladesh.

After an hour of so, Colette and I departed, walked about a bit in Gamla stan for fun, then rode the Metro and bus home and considered it an evening well spent.

Day 17 – s13 – Fri – 28Jul23 – A walk in the neighborhood

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

A lazy day, today. Slept in, laid about and then decided to go out and give this neighborhood that we're in a good-walking-to.

We've seen parts of it over these last two weeks. But we've never gone out and had an intentional walk-about. So, we did. Like most everything we've seen here in Stockholm, outside of the densest inner city areas, it is all a mix of tall apartment blocks interspersed with forests and greenbelts and an amazing number of children's playgrounds.

Today's a bit of a rainy day, on and off. So, we've mostly stayed in.

Tomorrow, we're off on a nice adventure. We're going to take a train from Stockholm's Central Train Station and go to Borlänge; which is 2 hours and 15 minutes north and east of Stockholm.

A friend of mine, Joakim, from when we both worked at SLI (10+ years ago) in Christchurch, New Zealand, lives there along with his partner. And they are going to spend the day with us and show us around their area. That should really be fun. There's no better way to get to know a country better, in a short time, than to have some good exchanges with folks who live there. I feel very fortunate that Joakim and I have stayed in touch over the years.

We'll stay over for the night in Borlänge and then take the train back here mid-day on Sunday. It should make for a very interesting weekend.

Days 18/19 – s14/15 – Sat/Sun – 29/30Jul23 – A trip to Borlänge, Sweden

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

It would be hard to pack more into the last day or two than we have. And all of it enjoyable for any number of reasons.

An old friendship renewed and an adventure out into the Swedish countryside with two people who love the area deeply. It doesn't get much better than that.

Years ago, when I worked in New Zealand at a company named SLI for two years in 2011 & 2012, I met Lars Joakim Andersson; who also worked there.

He was a young fellow; like most of the people working there. I think I was, by far, the oldest person employed there. At the time, I assumed he'd been traveling the world, like so many young people do, and that he'd just stopped over in New Zealand for a year or so and was working at SLI to make some money before he moved on.

When we visited with him and his partner, Jannika, yesterday, I found out that he'd actually lived in New Zealand for 13 years and that he'd come over from Sweden as a child with his father. Ha! That gave me a good laugh. I'd just made some assumptions way back when and had believed them for years.

(As an aside, as I am writing this at 7 pm on July 30th, we are having a amazing and fun storm here just off our balcony. The clouds have closed in and rain ,thunder and lighting are all happening in an impressive way. What fun! I just love that sort of thing.)

Well, to get back to the point of this story, Lars (or Joakim as he now prefers) and I stayed in touch over the years after we worked at SLI and after he returned to Sweden. And when he heard that we were here in Stockholm, he reached out and invited Colette and me to come out and visit Jannika and him where they now live near Borlänge.

And we did. And what a great fun it was.

Yesterday, we took the train from Stockholm and arrived mid-day after a 2 hour 15 minute ride. Joakim and Jannika were there at the Borlänge Station to meet us.

See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Borl%C3%A4nge>

They took us first to their house for a quick look around. And then we set off on a ride that took us to multiple places and through a lot of beautiful countryside.

The first place they took us was to lunch at a beautiful site overlooking Siljan Lake's eastern shore just by the town of Rättvik.

See: <https://www.swedentips.se/dalarna/rattvik/>

We had a nice lunch outside and then walked around and looked at some of the other buildings. One was a tower that you could pay a small amount of money and go up high to see the lake better. Another was a house from about 1850 that was preserved to look just as houses then did. Inside, they had some Swedish traditional clothing from that period and all the furniture and stuff that would have been used then.

At another location outside, just across the parking lot, there was a building up on blocks that I asked Joakim about. He told me that buildings like that are used for storing things. And they are up on blocks to keep the rats and such from getting in and spoiling what's stored inside. The building is labeled 1795. But the explanatory plaque states that it is probably much older. It was moved here in 1899; just for display. There's a lot of deep history here.

After that, we drove a short distance south to Tällberg; which is also on the lake.

See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T%C3%A4llberg>

There's a collection of old-time wooden buildings here and it is, apparently, a very popular tourist location. We had a walk around and before long the idea of ice cream became popular among us - so we had some! And it was quite special. It came with quite a few different presentation variations and flavors. Yum.

Then we drove South East from Lake Siljan to a town called Falun that is quite famous for a huge Copper mine that is there.

See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Falun>

We also thought about getting some Pizza there too. But when we checked, it was going to be at least 30 minutes as they were quite busy on a Saturday afternoon on a beautiful weather day.


We did walk around and have a good look at the open pit copper mine. It was an impressive place; as you'll see when you read the signage from the mine that I photographed.

Well, the pizza didn't happen at Falun. But the idea was still popular. So we went and got some at a place in Borlänge and took it back to Joakim and Jannika's house.

Jannika laid it all out. We had four types. And we all sat down and had a nice meal sampling them all.

Of course, during the day, as we ate and drove around we talked about thousand things.

Joakim told us that he currently has three businesses. Though it sounded like Jannika runs one of them for him (the solar cell business).

We talked about world politics, Swedish politics, what makes Sweden different and on and on. We talked about the house they bought and its history (used to be a church). We talked about Jannika's two daughters (12 and  and their interests. I found out that Jannika is into rocks and has a nice collection of them.

I can't possibly recall all the things we discussed but it was all deeply interesting.

When we were getting ready to go and Joakim was going to take us to our hotel in Borlänge, he took me off around their property to pick no less that four types of edible berries that grow there.

We took off after that and Jannika stayed home to take their dog for a walk.

Did I mention that they have a dog and two sweet cats? All wonderful animals that I loved interacting with. As we drove all over during the day, their dog went everywhere with us and was good company.

As Joakim drove us to our hotel, he took us on a side trip to show us another interesting bit of history in his area.

This was at Ornäs; where some rather famous stuff happened during a war between Sweden and Denmark:

“One of the most notable sites in Ornäs is Ornässtugan, a historic building that is considered the oldest preserved secular wooden building in Sweden. Ornässtugan is best known for its role in Swedish history, when Gustav Vasa, the future king, was hidden there from the Danish troops during the 1520s.”

See: <https://dalarna.nu/en/ornas-pearl-dalarna/>

We walked around the site and the building for about 15 minutes as Joakim told us a bit of the history that went on there . But the gatekeeper was about to shut the gate for the day so we had to leave. The gatekeeper, however, gave us a nice booklet about the place to take with us.

Joakim then drove us into Borlänge and showed us where our hotel was and bid us good night.

He and Jannika are away in the morning to drive up to the small town where they both grew up called, Mora. Apparently, a house and property he owns up there has sustained some water damage and he needs to go and see it all first hand to get it sorted out.

See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mora,_Sweden

After Joakim dropped us off, we began a new adventure.

I'd opted for us to stay in an inexpensive hotel in Borlänge since we were only going to be there for one night and we'd be away by train back to Stockholm the next day.

Well, **the hotel was different.**

First, it was an 'unattended' hotel. That means you pay for it on-line and then they send you codes, via instant messenger, for the doors to get in and to get the key for your room. |

See: <https://www.sagahotell.se/>

It was all a bit odd. But it was only half the price of a normal hotel and it sounds interesting.

About four in the afternoon, while we were still out and about with Joakim and Jannika, and as promised, an IM arrived telling us the code to the hotel's front door and the code to get into the 2nd floor and the code to open the key box. And all of that was as expected.

So, we went to the front door and entered the first code. All was good and the door opened.

We went up to the 2nd floor and entered its code. And all was good – it opened.

Then we went to the key box by a big sign that said 'Reception' (but no one was around) and I entered the code and the key box opened ... and it was completely empty. Oh, oh. There was suppose to be a key in it for our room – room 3.

We looked around and were at a loss. The directions had been very clear.

Nearby was a box that said "Return Keys Here". We looked in it but all we found was an envelope which said "17" on it.

We walked down the hall and found room 3 and I tried the handle but it was locked.

Well, the obvious thing to do was to sit down and call the hotel people. There was a phone number posted to call in case of problems.

So I tried too. But for reasons I still don't understand, my phone would not and seemingly could not place a Skype call from there in the hotel - in spite of the fact that I had a reasonable amount of Skype credit.

I was getting a little rattled about this point.

One of the other tenants walked down the hall and I got the idea to follow him and see if I could borrow his phone to call the hotel management. So, I followed him down the hall and as I turned the corner, I saw the door to room 3 closing behind him! What?!

After a moment's thought, I knocked on door 3.

It opened and I explained that we were suppose to be in room 3. No, the fellow seemed quite sure that they were suppose to be in room three. It was him, his wife and two small kids. The conversation was all politely done. But also it was also a bit tense.

I asked him if he could use his phone to call the hotel management and see what was going on? He agreed and he called and the manager talked back and forth in another language (Swedish?) for some time while I listened but wasn't able to follow.

Part way through their conversation, his wife came out and she showed us (he and I) the IM that they had received. I looked at it and noted that at the bottom, it identified their room as room 17!

I pointed this out to him. And, after a moment's further consideration, I realized that the envelope that said "17" back in the "Return Keys Here" box probably had the key to room 17 in it. And he confirmed that he'd gotten his key for room 3 from that same return box.

Ah, things were becoming clearer.

So, I suggested that they should stay on in 3; since they were already partially settled in. And that we'd now take 17. This was also communicated to the manager on the phone.

Smiles passed all around and we went and got the key from the Return Key Box for room 17 and went and claimed the room.

Note now that there's been no explanation as why we were told to look in the empty key box.

Nor was there any explanation as to why the other couple took the key for 3 rather than 17 from the "Return Keys Here" box.

But, at this point, we didn't care.

We dumped our stuff in room 17 and went down to a nearby bar and I had a beer and Colette had a wine by way of clearing all this weird fun from our heads and then we went up and slept. The bed was comfortable, which was nice.

Our train the next day, on Sunday, wasn't until noon, so we had a morning to fill.

Most hotels supply the necessities for making coffee in the morning in your room. But not this one.

So, we got up and went out looking for coffee. There were two McDonald's in town but they seemed too far away to walk to. And, in walking around the downtown area, we could see that everything was closed. And looked like it was going to remain closed until at least 10 am.

Hmmm. So then we remember that we'd seen a 'common room' in our hotel and maybe it would have the makings for a morning coffee. So, we returned and had a look. Nope. No such luck.

Finally, I thought about going to one of the better hotels in town; which would surely have a breakfast service for its guests. And we discovered that the **Galaxan Hotel** was not very far away.

See: <https://galaxen.com/hotell/>

Hoo-ya! So we walked over. We talked to the fellow at the reception desk who explained that for 175 SEK each, we too could join the breakfast service at their fine hotel. And we thought that was a great idea.

We'd already checked out of the Saga Hotel by now. All that was required to check out was to drop our room key into the "Return Key Here" box and walk out.

I did write the Saga Hotel an IM note saying that we'd checked out at 8:45 am and that their directions were pretty confusing.

The Galaxan was great. We enjoyed a nice Scandinavian Smorgasbord style breakfast. And I snuffled my way through not less than three cups of coffee whilst making small happy grunting noises.

Finally, it was time to depart to the train station – to which Joakim had given us good, clear directions the previous day.

We walked over, waited a bit, got on our train. We found that we had window seats facing each other across a table; which was quite nice. And then we just dozed or watched the Swedish countryside roll by for 2 hours and 15 minutes until we arrived back at Stockholm.

Once we were home at the apartment, we enjoyed the big storm that rolled in with thunder and lightening.

And that's the story of July 29th & 30th here in Sweden.

And I'd like to say, again, a **big thanks** to our hosts, Joakim and Jannika, in Borlänge; who gave us an entire day of their lives to show us around their area and to share with us many things we would have never seen otherwise.

Thank you!

Day 20 - s16 - Mon - 31Jul23 - My mother's birthday

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

Big thunder and lightening storm here this morning in Stockholm. Exciting to watch out over the water. Makes it look like it'll be quite wet to go out adventuring, however.

Day 20 – s16 – Mon – 31Jul23 – Pens and pens – part 2

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

After the morning's storm, when we thought it 'might' be safe to go out, we two small mice scurried out again to launch ourselves onto Stockholm's Metro System; secure in the knowledge that one can only get just so wet. Colette had a new art store/pen shop she wanted to take a look at for art supplies. It sounded like a good reason to go out. And, truthfully, we don't really need much of an excuse to go out 😊.

The place we were looking for sounded big when Colette found it on-line. But, once we located it, it was actually quite small and seemed to be a very niche-type shop mostly given over to plastic models and most of those seemed to be focused on German WWII tanks, ships and planes. She looked around for a bit, bought a small paint brush (I think this was in case she found the need to paint a small tank) and we moved on.

We realized at this point that we were within walking distance of what I think of as Stockholm's downtown and the Central train and bus stations. So, we took off to see if my theories were right.

And they were. And soon we were in the midst of downtown and close to a beloved Espresso House Coffee shop. We sat out in the big square for a bit and noodled on what to do next. And then Colette thought she'd like to revisit the first Pen shop, in Södermalm, where we'd been to several days ago.

It was easily done, given that we were just beside Central. So, after another Metro ride, we were in the correct neighborhood.

And, it was just like déjà vu.

First time we were there, it was raining.. And when we came up from the Metro this time – yup, it was raining. But this time Colette had a raincoat and I had an umbrella. Ha!

Well, we made it to the shop and it was as sweet the second time as it had been the first.

And then we came home, stopping at the ICA Market at Liljeholmen for a few supplies – and that was our day.

Note, that on this day I shot only one photo.

And it was of a Stockholm Manhole cover.

So, if you were looking for photos (other than manhole covers) – you are out of luck (smile).

Day 21 – S17 – Tue – 01Aug23 – Two Islands and a Laboratory

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

We've been curious about the two islands just north of us. One of them is what we look at all day; just across the water from our building.

So, I did some research on how to get there and we were off.

You can see from how this story begins, how little it actually takes to entertain us?

If you've ever had a dog, then you'll know that merely saying the phrase, "Go for a ride", will bring them to their feet immediately with tails a-wagging. I suspect (but I don't know if Colette will agree) that we're a bit like that.

"Would you like to go to " (sentence is, at this point, not even finished) and your partner (Colette, in this case), is at the door – packed and ready to depart!

Ah, but dementia (or something) makes me digress.

We went via the trusty 133 bus to Liljeholmen and then, after some confusion on my part about how to get where we were going, Colette got us onto the 30B bus.

The two islands we wanted to see were Stora Essingen (the larger Island) and Lilla Essingen (the smaller). Stora Essingen is the one we look at all day from our balcony.

In fact, we'd noted that occasionally from our balcony you can see one of the Stockholm City buses running just behind the houses which we can see on the other side of the water. I thought it would be fun if we could ride that bus and look back.

After a bit of research, I determined that the 56 bus was very likely to be the one we were seeing over there. So, we're on the 30B heading over the big bridge, which we can see out to the right from our balcony, and we know the faithful 30B bus will deposit us somewhere on the east side of Stora Essingen. But we do not know exactly where. Nor do we know if where it drops us will allow us to connect with the 56 bus. But, unafraid and trusting in luck, we get on the 30B and depart.

The trip across the bridge was fun. It was our first time over. I shot a photo of our apartment looking back from the bridge.

Then the 30B took us to a bus stop on Stora Essingen where we noted that the 56 bus also stopped there. So, we got off to transfer onto the 56.

When the 56 came, it took us on a good tour of Stora Essingen; including the bit where you could see our apartment on the other side. But, unfortunately, I missed getting a picture looking back.

The 56 bus doesn't just run on Stora Essingen. It also crosses over to Lilla Essingen as well. And then continues onto Kungsholmen Island; where we've been before.

We decided to just ride the 56 to the end, where ever that was and see what we'd see.

But, once it got onto Kungsholmen, we could see that it was passing quite close to 'The Street Food Labs' where we'd eaten a few days ago and really liked it.

So, our plan changed. We decided to ride the 56 to the end and then stay on it until it passed by 'The Street Food Lab' again. And then we'd hop off and have lunch.

And so it was. And lunch was good again. We both ordered the same stuff we had last time. We even sat at the same table.

Ah, then the idea of coming home and having a nap began to sound good to me. The maps came out and the nearest Metro Station was located three blocks away and the rest, as they say, was history.

And that's why today's adventure is called 'Two Island and a Laboratory'.

Day 22 – s18 – Wed – 02Aug23 – Södermalm second visit

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

Today, we decided to revisit Södermalm again. We'd been there before but I wasn't all that impressed the first time.

But, when I reviewed areas that are recommended to visit in Stockholm, Södermalm came up as a strong recommendation. So, I decided to take a closer look. And I zeroed in on some specific areas that promised to be interesting.

Off the 133 to Liljeholmen, a coffee and a cookie at our favorite Espresso House in the Liljeholmen Mall and then a quick hop on the metro over to Mariatorget Station and off onto Södermalm.

This time we walked north from the metro station to Hornsgatan and then looked at street numbers. I knew that there were a collection of art galleries in the 32 to 40 range. And soon we found them.

We strolled along the street looking in windows and went into one or two of them for a closer look.

In one of them, the **Mari Pääkkönen Artist Galley**, the people were particularly nice. And, when we past back that way again, I stepped in and asked them if I might take a picture of them. They were very sweet about it and even asked me which piece of Mari's art I like the best. And then they posed for me in front of that piece; along with their dog.

Mari is from Helsinki, Finland, and her husband is Swedish. On this particular day, Mari's mother and her friend were visiting from Helsinki and had just arrived and I was introduced to them as well. As I said, very nice people. See: <https://www.konst.se/marip>

After we were done touring the art galleries, the next thing I had on my list to do was to go to the shore, just north of the art galleries, where I'd read that there was a spectacular view over to Gamla stan and Kungsholmen from there.

We walked up a narrow, cobblestoned street to get there and when we arrived it was, indeed, pretty spectacular. It was quite high with the land dropping away steeply below us. And all along the ridge was a walkway that had some great views.

We took some shots and then turned to the east and began walking along the walkway. Ahead of us was a very dark, almost black, building that looked like a church. It was fascinating. But as we got closer, it seemed to get harder and harder to get a clear view of it. It was called "**Maria Hissen**".

See: <https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mariahissen>

In the end, we walked towards it, and then behind it, then past it and down to ground level at the far eastern end of Södermalm. And then we turned back and began to walk west along the northern shoreline. And all this time, we were trying to get a nice, clear view of this interesting building.

By the time we could get a good view, we were looking up at it from on the shoreline high above us and it no longer looked a lot like a church.

Ah, well. But none of this was in vain, however. Because after looking at the view across to Gamla stan, my intent had always been to walk along the northern shore of Södermalm from the east to the west.

So, we were already down there and we just kept going west. I'm not at all sure of what I expected to find along that shore. But it turned out to be boats tied up along the shore the entire way along.

Hotel boats, restaurant boats, house boats, private boats and boats that were undergoing repairs. It was, in fact, a bit of everything; so far as boats go.

It was a long walk. And at some point the idea of lunch and coffee began to loom in our minds. At one point, we sat on a park bench and rested for a bit.

One of my favorite boats I saw was a faux-pirate ship that was advertising lobster meals. But it didn't look like lobster was on offer at mid-day, so after some photos, we pressed on.

See: <https://www.patriciastockholm.se/.../patricia-restaurant.../>

One goal in walking the length of Södermalm's north shore from east to west was that there was a small island named **Langholmen** at its western end. And Colette and I are rather into 'collecting' islands while we're here. So the idea that we could cross over onto Langholmen Island and add another notch onto our island count stick was enticing. And, I had an intuition that somewhere on that little island was a place where we could get lunch. The bright red hunger light was flashing.

And, after walking through a fairly large parkland on the island, we did, indeed, come to a cluster of buildings along with one that advertised 'food'; what a great idea!

Turns out that Langholmen Island used to be a **prison island** of some sort and now these facilities have been turned into a hotel, resort and convention center.

See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%C3%A5ngholmen>

It was all pretty quiet when we arrived because I think many Swedes are off on their own vacations just now. So conventions are probably pretty few and far between.. But still, the facility was open and serving lunch.

I had a shrimp open sandwich and Colette has Swedish Meatballs; which she's been wanting to try. All good stuff.

We sat outside in a large patio area with only two other tables occupied. But it didn't take much imagination to visualize this place booming in certain seasons of the year.

Ha! As we left, I decided I wanted to use the toilet, so I walked back inside to where I'd seen a 'toilets' sign.

I followed the signs and came to three doors. And just as I arrived, a man walked out of the center door. I began to walk into that door and then I noticed that it had a picture of a woman on it. I quickly looked at the doors on either side but they both looked locked and had nothing on them. I glanced behind me but I saw nothing obvious. So, I shrugged my shoulders and went in; carefully locking the door behind me.

My goodness, women have a lot of mirrors in their restrooms (smile).

I got my business done and then I walked out to find two elderly ladies just approaching the door.

They looked at me and then looked at the door. I gave them a foolish smile, and shrugged my shoulders while smiling. They smiled at me in a confused but friendly way and I departed – keen to tell Colette that I'd almost created an international incident and had only escaped by the skin of my teeth.

I didn't mention the mirrors – I thought it might be too much.

Well, by now most of the wind was out of our sails and home and a nap was sounding pretty good. That is home for both of us and a nap for me, I should clarify. **I think the received wisdom is that only 'old men' take naps; not sprightly energizer bunny types.**

So, we walked for a bit to get to the Hornstull Metro station and rode it one stop to our at Liljeholmen, bought a few groceries and then took the 133 bus home.

And that, international incidents and all, is all that happened today - and I am prepared to swear to that. 😊

Day 23 – s19 – Thu - 03Aug23 – Bus 747 – a ride

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

Today dawned with rain, rain, rain in the Stockholm forecast. Way too much rain to contemplate doing anything which would involve being outside much.

I suggested that we do something easy and go into Liljeholmen and then simply catch the 747 bus to where ever it goes and back. The buses with larger numbers, like 747, go further out into the rural districts.

Given that all we had to do was look out the bus windows and not fall over, it didn't seem like it would be too taxing on us.

We hoped that there might be someplace interesting at the other end. Or, perhaps, at one of the bus' intermediate stops. Something which might inspire us to get off and go inside. Something like, say, a giant shopping mall with flashing lights you could see from miles off.

But alas, the only thing we passed which was of interest, retrospectively, was a place we passed in the town of Södertälje called “**Tom Tit Experiment**”. I looked at the name in amazement as we rolled through. And, later, I asked the AI, Bard, what it was.

Bard says it is Sweden's largest Science Center. A hand-on museum with over 500 experiments you can interact with. That sounded pretty sweet and I wished later that I'd have talked Colette into jumping off the bus then and giving it a look. But I waited too long to look it up.

In the end, we rode to the end of the line, where there was a lot of nothing inspiring. And then we sat 10 minutes while a driver handover occurred. And then we drove back to Liljeholmen.

We picked up some Spaghetti Carbonara for a 'stay in' afternoon.

And that's very much what our day has been like here.

Along the way, I shot a fair number of photos and videos to capture the countryside and etc.

So, if you are into seeing what a cross-country trip might look like in Southern Sweden in a rainy day – then you are going to be in luck!

Day 24 – s20 – Fri – 04Aug23 – A walk to City Hall

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

It was threatening rain again today. But not nearly as badly as yesterday. So we thought we'd go out and give it a try.

Our plan was to go today to go see the **Stockholm City Hall**; which is apparently quite fabulous.

We could have taken a fairly direct route to get over there but I thought it might be fun to mix things up.

So, we took the metro to the Slussen stop on Söderholm Island and got out there.

That put us just south of Gamla stan; which is Stockholm's 'Old Town' area and always fun to walk through. And we certainly haven't seen all of it yet.

We walked north from Slussen and over a long bridge, with a bit of spitting rain on and off, and arrived at the southern end of Gamla stan. And from there, we began to meander our way north through the island.

We were heading for a small island that sits between the island Gamla stan is on, which is called Stadsholmen, and the mainland where Central Station is located.

The small island we were aiming for is where the Swedish Parliament buildings are located. And it is called, **Riddarholmen Island.**

The plan was to walk north through Gamla stan across Stadsholmen Island, and then over and through Riddarholmen Island; passing right through the Swedish Parliament's buildings.

And all that happened pretty much as planned. I took lots of photos as we went along.

We got massively distracted as we were walking through Gamla stan however because we came again to the Royal Palace and, once again, things were happening there and crowds were gathered. Soldiers were marching and a military band was playing.

We took photos of some of this and then we tried to press on.

But soon we found ourselves in a square in the midst of a forest of displays about the history of Sweden's Royal Family. And those were quite interesting as well. So, well distracted now, I took a number of photos there too.

Finally, we continued over a small bridge onto the Parliament Island, Riddarholmen. And that was distracting as well; because we had to slow down and admire the buildings there.

Then we we passed over another small bridge and onto the mainland.

Once on the mainland, the view we saw ahead of us stretched for a long ways along a straight street that was bedecked with flags all along it.

It took us a moment to realize what we were looking at.

In fact, when we were still back on Gamla stan's island looking north, the view ahead of us had been through several massive arches that framed a road in the distance. Those arches had been the parliament buildings and the road in the distance had been Drottninggaten; which we'd very much enjoyed walking up and down on the other day.

We hadn't realized that it was all connected up like this.

Well, now that we were back on the mainland, our intended mission was to continue along and see Stockholm's City Hall; which was, at that point, immediately to the east of where we were standing.

But the idea of walking up lovely Drottninggaten was just too enticing. And we were beginning to get hungry. So, a diversion ensued.

We walked north along **Drottninggaten** for awhile and we found a place that looked like it would be fun to eat there and to watch the crowds walk by.

And, it was true. The food was good and our people watching was great.

Once we'd accomplished that important side mission, we did finally work our way over to the City Hall by crossing the Stadhusbron Bridge which put us on the very eastern edge of Kungsholmen Island; which we've previously been to several times.

If you find all of these island names confusing – fear not!

Colette is keeping a list of islands we've been to. And we checking as many of them off as we can! (smile). Stockholm is, after all, largely composed of islands.

The City Hall was huge and beautiful all at once. A real center piece of the city; which already has many such center pieces.

We wandered around looking, taking pictures of it, taking pictures of the surrounding scenery, of the statues, and sitting here and there.

Finally, we'd seen enough and taken enough pictures. So, we headed home by walking back over to Central Station, catching the Metro to Liljeholmen and then the 133 bus to our neighborhood.

All in all it was a good day and things worked out well for us. We only got spattered with a little rain and we saw a lot of cool things.

I'm getting the feeling that I'm "getting" this part of Stockholm. I think, most of the time now, I know where I am in relation to the larger picture of the city.

Day 25 – s21 – Sat – 05Aug23 – Meeting folks in downtown Stockholm

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

Yesterday (I'm writing on the morning of the 6th), was planned to be an easy day.

We went into Liljeholmen for coffee and a small shopping expedition in the morning.

And in the afternoon, we rode the Metro into Central and walked over to a hotel where some friends, Lyn and Brian, were staying for a few days. The plan was to meet them in the afternoon for a drink and a chat.

I'd say that the day unfolded much as we'd expected it to except for the fact that downtown Stockholm was having an enormous **Gay Pride and (I think) a Pro-Socialism Parade that afternoon.**

I'm quite clear that it was a Gay Pride parade (smile).

But if I seem less sure about the Pro-Socialism' part – well all I could judge by was what I saw on the banners they were carrying.

See: <https://www.stockholmpride.org/en/>

In any case, we arrived early in the area by intent – planning to just have a look around. But we had no idea that a massive parade was on! So, it was quite a fun thing to stumble into. Big and loud it was!

We walked about and I shot several video clips of various parts of it.

Then, we still had some time to kill and I'd happened to look down a walkway that led into the interior space of one of the city blocks.

Many big city blocks seem to have interior courtyards. And I could see people seated in there drinking coffee. So I suggested to Colette that we go and investigate.

It was a sweet little place – probably quite well known to the locals. The shop itself and the interior courtyard, were both deep within the block's interior. And the two of them were connected to each other by a long nondescript hallway. Most curious.

The place was well insulated so the noise of the parade seemed far away.

We had a small snack, enjoyed the people and the ambiance and watched the eager birds ravage the tables folks had left. And I decided, after that, that I quite liked Turkish Yogurt (smile). So I did not leave any for the birds.

When we went out again, the parade was still in progress but the theme seems to have changed to issues around Socialism.

We still had a bit of time to kill and Colette wanted to go into some of the stores on Drottninggatan. So, I sat on and bench and watched people just stream by. At one point, I shot a video of their passing.

Then we walked over to Lyn and Brian's hotel and found them and sat for probably an hour and a half trading travel stories and such.

Lyn and Brian are actually friends of Colette's long-time friend, Anne. So when Anne heard that we were going to be in Stockholm at the same time as her friends, she suggested we all meetup for a chat.

And we did and it was great fun. Lyn and Brian told us some of their adventures and that they'd done some house swaps and it was all quite interesting. I hope we'll cross paths with them again. After that, we had a quick bite at the Espresso House by Central and then came home. Another interesting and fun day done here in Scandinavia's largest city.

Day 26 – s22 – Sun – 06Aug23 – Just a wander about in town

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

Today? What to say about today – a Sunday.

We went downtown without much of a plan because rain was strongly predicted. And we wandered and enjoyed wandering. And then we came home. And then it rained.

I'll share the photos and they can tell the story.

Day 28 – s24 – Mon – 07Aug23 – Tom Tits Experiment

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

Well, with a title like that, how could we go wrong? 😊

Yesterday, in the afternoon, I decided to go and revisit a place we saw a few days ago when we rode the 747 bus to the end and back. It was called “Tom Tits Experiment” and it was in a town named, “Södertälje”.

Colette opted to stay home and work on art projects; so I went alone.

It was a fun place; a theme park based on Science and loads of parents and the kids of all ages were there.

I wanted to see it and I'd decided that I wanted to make a photo essay out of my visit for our grandkids.

It didn't occur to me that an older male at an amusement park, alone, pointing his camera at a lot of kids can be a cause for concern among parents. But once I was there and began take photos, it dawned on me.

It definitely slowed my photography efforts down bit. I tended to stay more in the background and to be sensitive to whether anyone seemed concerned or worried about my efforts.

In the end, I captured a lot of what I wanted but I definitely could have done better without that strange concern wafting about in my head.

Yesterday morning, Colette noticed that a tram, which has been discontinued for repairs since we've been here, had started running again. It was easy to notice as it runs right over the bridge which we see off our balcony to the right. So, we decided to go and catch it and see where it went – just for fun. And we did.

It went north across Stora Essingen Island and then continued quite a ways north and then east to a place called Solna. We rode it out, sat at Solna for 15 minutes and then rode it back. It was fun and we got a good shot of our apartment building as we crossed over the bridge.

We're getting into quite a period of rain here at the moment. News tells us that Norway and Southern Sweden are in for a bigger storm than they've perhaps seen in a few decades.

Day 29 – s25 – Tue – 08Aug23 – A Tram to Sickla

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

Today, we took the newly resurrected Tram, Tram 30, that is, going other way. You'll recall that we went north on it yesterday to Solna.

Well, today we got on it and we went south and then mostly east to Sickla; where there's a nice mall that we wanted to explore.

See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sickla_K%C3%B6pkvarter

It was a nice ride out and a nice destination.

Today is quite overcast and rain is possible at any point. But we managed to do the entire journey out and back without a single errant drop hitting us.

I could tell you about our efforts, Colette and I, to gain a Nobel Peace Prize by establishing camaraderie with Swedish people all in and around Stockholm.

Or I could tell you about how we two are nearly single-handedly keeping coffee shops like Wayne's Coffee and Espresso House in business in this city.

See: <https://www.waynescoffee.se/>

See: <https://espressohouse.com/>

But, I don't want to brag too much ... so let's just move onto the photos then, shall we?

Day 29 – s25 – Wed – 09Aug23 – Farsta and an English Language Meeting

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

We took the bus back out to Farsta; where we've been before. Today, we went because there's a Meetup Group which is focused on people improving their English skills. And it looked like a good way to meet people.

The bus ride out was a bit confusing for reasons we still haven't understood.

I checked several times that the 165 bus from Liljeholmen went to Farsta Centrum. So, we went to Liljeholmen and took the 165 bus.

The bus took us to Högdalen. And, for that particular 165 bus, Högdalen was the end of the line. At Högdalen, the bus driver, when I asked about Farsta Centrum, pointed us over to where another 165 bus was boarding; which was going to Farsta Centrum. So we got on that 165 bus and it did, indeed, take us to Farsta Centrum. Not at all sure what that weirdness was about; but we still arrived in plenty of time.

We had a coffee at Espresso House and looked around again at the Farsta Centrum shopping center. And then we made our way to the Farsta Library; where the meeting, which started at 10:30 am, was being held.

The meeting was fun but low-key. The leader, **Dongran Su** (he was substituting as leader this week and next) was Chinese fellow who told us that he'd accompanied his wife, a doctor, from China. There was also a lady, Päeve, who has lived here for a long time; but she's originally from Finland. And then, finally, there was a lady, Rema, from Russia who said she's been here for 28 years.

Colette and I enjoyed talking with all of these folks. However, I was quite lame and failed to take pictures.

We talked about a lot of stuff. And the discussions flowed well; except for the Russian lady; whose English was slow and hard to understand though she was quite engaged in the process.

The Finish/Swedish lady left us early for an appointment.

At the end, I gave my card to both the Russian lady and the Chinese fellow.

I particularly hope the Chinese fellow will follow up and contact me; as I found him quite intelligent and interesting.

After the meeting, which ended at noon, Colette and I went back into the mall and then down to the lower food court level and we shared a Sushi lunch.

Then we took the 165 bus (a well-behaved 165 bus that actually went where it said it was going) back to Liljeholmen where we did some shopping and then came home. It's been spitting rain on and off ever since we came out of the meeting in Farsta so I imagine we'll stay in now. But that won't be too difficult as **today is my 76th birthday** and Colette is cooking me a special meal tonight. So that will make the evening sweet. Cheers from Stockholm.

Day 30 – s26 – Thu – 10Aug23 – Meeting Dongran and Flâneur time

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

Yesterday, when we went to Farsta, we met Dongran, the Chinese fellow who was running the English Conversational Group. I really liked him and thought I'd like to talk with him some more.

So, this morning, I wrote and asked if he might have some free time today and he agreed to meet me near the Central Station downtown. Cool!

Colette and I had another project down there to check out where we were going to be catching the bus to Goteborg on the 25th. We wanted to make sure we knew exactly where the pickup point was because it is a huge station and we'd be dragging our luggage with us.

Once we found it, we walked over to the Espresso House by the big square on Drottninggatan and met Dongran there. Colette took off back home to our apartment then and **Dongran and I went in search of a good place to sit and talk.**

After walking along Drottninggatan for a bit, we found the Kebab House Hotorget at Gamla Brogatan 11 just a half block off from Drottninggatan. They had coffee and free outside tables so we settled in.

See: <https://kebabhousestockholm.se/>

I can't possibly recall all the topics we talked about but there were many. And I was grateful for Dongran's tenacity because all this was conducted in his second language, English, which always hard work unless you are 100% fluent.

History, who gets to write the history, what may happen with China and Taiwan, Russia's current adventures, how the U.S. Has gotten poorer in recent decades and on and on.

At some point, we shifted inside as the wind was a bit chill and when we did we talked a bit with the owner who asked us where we were from. And we asked him, in turn. And he was from Azerbaijan. So, that precipitated a short mention of the Azerbaijan vs. Armenia conflicts. It's a very international world sometimes.

Finally, about 12:30, Dongran had to go and so we returned to the Central Station and parted.

I took the metro to the Gamla stan old-town area then. My original plan for the day, before I made a plan to get together with Dongran, had been to have a **Flâneur day** of just sitting in coffee shops and watching the life of the city flow past.

I love to do that at least once on any international trip.

In Gamla stan, I walked around for a long time just enjoying things and looking for a good place to have lunch. I finally settled on Cafe Cronan.

See: <https://cafecronan.se/>

They had a Spaghetti Carbonara at a good price and a bottle of Guinness. So I sat and had a leisurely lunch at an outside table and watched people go by.

Then, when I was done, I decided to return to Central Station and go to my favorite Espresso House which is on Drottninggatan just by the huge Sergels Torg Square.

See: <https://www.visitnordic.com/.../drottninggatan-shopping...>

See: <https://www.expedia.se/Sergels-Torg-Central-Stockholm...>

And, once there, equipped with a new cup of Flat White coffee and another big, round chocolate chip cookie, I proceeded to supervise the neighborhood and everyone who walked by for at least an hour.

It was, on and off, spitting rain but it was light and I didn't care.

It would be hard to find a better place in the city for people watching. Finally, coffee and cookie gone and the city all in good order, I departed for home. Flâneur duties done for the day.

Day 31 – s27 – Fri – 11Aug23 – A trip to Drottningholm Palace

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

A really nice day. I felt quite pleased with it by the time we got home.

Our intent was to go out and see **The Royal Palace** where Sweden's King and Queen live. It is called Drottningholm and it is on the Island of Lovön about 11 km (or 7 miles) west of Stockholm.

See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drottningholm_Palace

The day began, as many of ours do, with a 133 bus ride into Liljeholmen Mall, a coffee and a snack and then the actual departure. One *does* have priorities, you know. 😊

The journey to Drottningholm, as suggested to us by the Moovit App, was that we should take the 30 Tram north from Liljeholmen and then get off at Norra Ulvsunda and switch over onto the 177 bus; which would take us right to Drottningholm. Easy-peasy, we said, as we departed. Easy-peasy.

Well, the first part was. We knew about how to catch the 30 Tram. We've become friends with it these last few days. But that transfer at Norra Ulvsunda? That had a bit less 'peasy' in it than one might have wanted.

So, when you get off the 30, it says that the bus stop for the 177 is a mere 450 meters away. 450 meters a significant distance. And they give you only the most rudimentary idea of how to traverse that 450 meters. A diagram indicates that you go left or east from the 30 drop off for a ways. And then you turn right and go south for a fairly long ways. And then you turn right again, so you are now facing east, and then, wha-la! – there you are.

Yeah right. There were industrial buildings around us and very little idea of exactly how to proceed. But, we struck out and plugged away and finally, we began to get a sense we were going in the right direction. This was after a number of industrial buildings and a very large parking lot associated with a big Bauhaus Store.

I could see on the map provided that the bus stop was one a street called Norrby Vagën and I could see that a street by that name was indeed south of us, so if we just kept heading that way....

Eventually, after what felt like a serious amount of guess work, a bus stop appeared along with an indication that a bus named 177 did indeed stop there.

And just 5 minutes later, such a bus appeared. Sweet. And it was nearly empty.

But just two more stops down the road, and that all changed. There was a very large crowd of folks wanting to get on at that stop. And we all continued on until we reached Drottningholm and alighted.

We could see the palace and the grounds and they were very pretty.

The long and the short of it is that we walked for quite a while looking and snapping pictures.

The grounds are very well kept and much of them are off-limits. But, most of what one would want to see was easily visible. And we understood that parts of it were private and reserved for the royal family.

Then, a bit tired, we returned to close to where the bus dropped us off and near where ferries run from and we found a cafe with nice outside tables.

See: <https://www.drottningholm.org/english>

We had a treat (everyone needs treats, right?) and then we wandered over to the ferry area. And, lo and behold, in the distance we could see a ferry approaching.

It was an old ferry but functional. It had two levels and we sat on the upper level inside where we had a nice view.

The ride back was long and **it went right past our apartment** so that was extra fun. Lots of pictures were taken.

Our arrival at the downtown ferry docks was made in a heavy rain. So, once off the ferry, we had to run for shelter under a bridge overpass. After about ten minutes, it cleared and we were able to walk on.

And before long we came to the Central Station and the Sergels Torg Square which I wrote about yesterday. We were in search of lunch and I remembered all the stuff I'd seen in the large building just beside the square. So, I introduced Colette to it all and we had a nice lunch on the third floor looking out over the square with a beautiful view.

See: <https://teaterbarenstockholm.se/en/>

Colette had seen **an item on sale at Muji in a building on the other side of the square**. So, after lunch we went over there and my sweetie gave herself a nice treat. A sweet linen shirt for 50% off in a quality store. Cool.

Then? Onto the metro at Central, some quick shopping at Liljeholmen and then home. A very sweet day indeed.

Day 32 – s28 – Sat – 12Aug23 – The Vasa Museum

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

The Vasa Museum has been on our list from the beginning. And finally, today was the day.

So, what is the Vasa and why does it have a museum here in Stockholm?

Well, that's a very fun and interesting story. And it is one that I could write about for a long time and never do it justice.

So, today, I'm going to post some links to the Vasa story and to the museum itself and then I'm just going to go directly to the pictures – of which I shot a bunch.

If the Vasa story intrigues you, then you'll enjoy the pictures.

The Vasa story:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vasa_\(ship\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vasa_(ship))

The Vasa Museum's Vasa story:

<https://www.vasamuseet.se/en/explore/vasa-history>

And the Vasa Museum itself:

<https://www.vasamuseet.se/en>

There's a lot more stuff on-line if you go looking. Enjoy!

Day 33 – s29 – Sun – 13Aug23 – A romp about town

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

A quiet Sunday romp about town to nice malls and upscale neighborhoods and stores. And an Italian lunch and then home again. What's to not like?

First, we took the 30 Tram up to **Solna Centrum** and had a good look around. That is one huge mall. It goes on and on forever.

See: <https://solnacentrum.se/>

We located an Espresso House following a long walk through the place. And after we took out our credit cards and waved them about to let everyone know that we were serious, a nice Chocolate Chip Cookie and a Flat White coffee were offered up on the tray of commerce for me. And Colette had a similar success oppressing the local financial system with her fearsome financial clout and she came away with a Cardamon Bun and an Americano Coffee.

Mmmmmm, nice.

We walked a bit more, took a picture or two here and there and then asked ourselves, "What next?"

And the answer was **Östermalm**, where else?

We'd just seen one of the best malls in Stockholm, so now let's go see one of the more up-scale neighborhoods as well. I mean, that's the kind of people we are – right?

See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%96stermalm>

Bim-Boom-Bam, Metro Cards waved, tunnelbanas tunneled through and our favorite Uncle Bob and ourselves were soon there - where Gucci, Prada and quite a number of similar stores have been waiting, languishing and hoping for our arrival.

It takes a certain kind of strut to enter a neighborhood like that. And we were distinctly up for it. The sun was shining and our various cards had positive balances. Hoo-ya ... take cover, Baby!

Östermalm is, in truth, quite a nice and upscale area. We walked into one furniture store there and I shot quite a few pictures while I was thinking to myself just how cool some of the Scandinavian room layouts looked.

Well, after a fair amount of looking back and forth at what was on offer in the furniture store and what was actually in our credit card accounts, we decided that we weren't actually scaring anybody; but ourselves. And so we decided to think about lunch as a safer activity.

We found an **Eataly Restaurant** and it recalled for us eating at one of their restaurants when we were in Rome in 2017. And that memory was good enough for us.

See: <https://www.eataly.se/en/>

And their menu:

<https://www.thefork.se/.../il-ristorante-di-eataly.../meny>

It was a classy two story place. Though the upstairs balcony dining wasn't active for a Sunday lunch, I could easily imagine that there are times when the place is full and quite intense.

I had Spaghetti alle vongole and Colette had the Arancini al tartufo and we were both quite happy with our choices.

I asked the waiter, who took a picture of us at my request, where he was from and he said he was from Albania. And I explained that we were from New Zealand.

I told him that it was winter there now. And he asked how cold it was. I told him that it had been -3 C the other night. He said that it will get to -33 C here in Stockholm this winter. And we all smiled.

Well pleased with ourselves and, in my case, having lost all sight of my shoes, we wandered back out into the lovely Swedish sunshine and made our way home after another sweet day.

Day 34 - s30 – Mon – 14Aug23 – A nothing day

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

Yep, we did nothing. Please see the pictures to get the full idea of what we're talking about here.

Day 35 – s31 – Tue – 15Aug23 – A trip to Uppsala

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

A nice trip up to Uppsala and back today. A few mis-starts at the Central Station to get to the right place to catch the right train, but we did. And after an hour's train ride, we were there.

See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uppsala>

A nice university town with a good vibe. Lot of young people and intelligent faces filling the avenues.

We had a leisurely lunch at an outside table at the local Espresso House that was just by an intersections of two car-less streets. So there was lots of good people watching.

Then we went walking in search of the **Uppsala Cathedral**. We found it and it was huge. Apparently, it is the biggest church in the Nordic Countries.

See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uppsala_Cathedral

See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reformation_in_Sweden

I took a lot of photos inside which I'll just let them speak for themselves. I spent a long time inside.

After that, we began a slow walk back to the train station to catch a train home.

And that's the story of a great day here. Weather was good. Mostly sunny and up to 24 C.
I'm continuing to be impressed by Sweden and the Swedish people. I see organization, respect, kindness and common sense everywhere I look. It is no wonder to me that people want to come here.

Day 36 – s32 – Wed – 16Aug23 - The Mall of Scandinavia and a surprise

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

Well, the first thing to say about these travels is that I haven't written a thing in five days.

We've had friends and family show up here in Stockholm. And we've been having a great time with them. But it has been just too busy to sit down in the evenings and write.

So, we're in catchup mode now. 😊

On **Wednesday**, Colette and I set out to see The Westfield Mall of Scandinavia which we'd seen as we passed by earlier. It looked huge and, in fact, it was huge.

See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westfield_Mall_of_Scandinavia

We wandered around the place, had the obligatory coffee (for me) and then we wandered some more. I took a photo of the overall three-level floor plan. I think it has 178 stores.

After more wandering, we found one of the food courts for lunch and were pretty overwhelmed for choice. There was a big outside dining area and we sat out there.

After a very good look around, we headed home thinking we'd be in for a quite evening.

But, we'd miscalculated a date on our calendar!

We'd thought Colette's sister, Jo-Anne, and her husband, Kevin, were coming in tomorrow evening. But, in fact, they they'd arrived this evening; which we discovered not long after we arrived home. Ha!

So, we quickly reorganized ourselves and zoomed back into town to meet them at the **Scandic Hotel** where they were staying.

See: https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scandic_Hotels

In spite of surprising ourselves like that, getting together with them was great fun. They are wonderful people and great company. And, truth be told, **I think maybe we'd been longing for someone to show around this wonderful city we've been exploring.**

And so we walked with them down Drottninggatan (perhaps Stockholm's main street) to the Central Square (Sergels Torg) which is just by the T-Centralen Station Complex. Zillions of people and stores to see along the way.

And we walked some more and finally ended up at **Pickwicks Pub** on Drottninggatan where we had some good beers and a great catch up.

See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergels_torg

See: <https://www.visitstockholm.com/o/t-centralen/>

Day 37 – s33 – Thu – 17Aug23 - A very busy and social day

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

Today, Colette and I met Jo-Anne & Kevin at the Scandic and we all took the Metro over to Gamla stan and walked around the busy Medieval streets for an hour or so.

About 1130 AM

we split up at the Nobel Prize Museum in Gamla Stan.

Colette, Jo-Anne & Kevin headed away for the ABBA Museum, over on Djurgården Island, while I waited to meet my friends, Bill Shaw and his Wife, Marina, in the Nobel Prize Museum Square.

I heard that Colette, Kevin and Jo-Anne all sang Karaoke ABBA songs over there - but I tried to not ask too many questions (smile).

It was a fairly complex day for us with two sets of friends in town. But, in the end, it all worked out quite well.

My friend, Bill, whom I hadn't seen for 30+ years was in Stockholm today just for the day with his wife, Marina.

The story of how I know Bill is a good one.

Back in 1987, 36 years ago, he'd led a peace group into the, then, Soviet Union and I'd gone along as a member of his group. We spent three weeks touring meeting people there and it was quite an intense experience. Those were the years in the USSR of Gorbachev and the words 'Glasnost' and 'Perestroika' were in the air.

This next link takes you to Bill's organization in the USA which is still doing active peace work. See: <https://crosscurrentsinstitute.org/>

I'd gotten in touch with Bill, after all these years, because I'd finished converting my personal written journal from the USSR trip into a shareable electronic version and I wanted to share it with him.

This next link will take you to a copy of my journal, if you are at all interested.

See: <https://samadhisoft.com/wp.../uploads/2022/12/USSRcomp.pdf>

My reconnection with Bill led to various discussions and we found out that he had been invited to speak at a peace conference in Uppsala, Sweden, during the same period that Colette and I were going to be in Stockholm.

Bill's talk at the Uppsala peace conference was at 0900 on 15 Aug23. See the program that follows:

<https://uppsala2023.se/.../Programme-for-the-11th-INMP...>

So, we agreed to meet on their one day here; Thursday; the 17th.

It turned out that we were all interested in the Nobel Prize Museum. So we met in the Museum's Square and we had a nice walk about Gamla stan and a lunch before touring the museum.

And I was pleased to meet and talk with Bill's wife, Marina, whom he met in Moscow in 1988; the year after I was there with him.

After lunch, we toured the museum and it was excellent - I highly recommend it.

After the museum tour, Colette contacted us and told us that she was free and she came and joined us in the Museum Square. That was nice because she got to meet Bill and Marina.

We played tour guides then and took them on a bit of an impromptu tour over to the Central Station and then onto the #7 Tram and out and back to Djurgården Island. I'm afraid the tour was not as good as I would have hoped because at that time of the day, the #7 Tram was packed. So it was hard to sit with them and point out the sights.

After that, we returned to Central and they wanted to catch an Uber back to their Hotel out by the Airport (they were flying out to Oslo the next morning). I thought that Co-ordinating a Uber pickup in the craziness of the T-Centralen area seemed risky. So, we walked them over to a big hotel a few blocks away and then they called from there so the Uber driver could locate them easily.

And that ended a very busy day for us. But one which I think we both very much enjoyed.

Not many pictures today – it was toooooo busy.

Day 38 – s34 – Fri – 18Aug23 - Out to Vaxholm Island

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

Today was a sweet day. We took a long bus trip out to Vaxholm Island and a ferry back into the city. The bus ride out was long but nice. We got to see a lot of the Swedish countryside. We were in a double-decker bus and we sat near to the front so we had an excellent view. Once arrived in Vaxholm, Colette took us to the same pastry shop that she and I had enjoyed and we partook again! And it was good ... again. Swedish pastries are hard to beat. Then we took a nice leisurely walk about the town investigating the back streets and the little coves where people rent kayaks. At one point there was a little shop that everyone, but me, went in and looked at. I was content to just sit on a bench and watch. After we'd been exploring away from the harbor, we came back to it to discover that **a large two-masted sailing ship** had just come in. So, we walked out onto the pier to have a better look. The ship had been out on a run taking kids with developmental problems out for sailing adventure. But, as I looked at the people crewing the ship, I realized that very few of them were over their mid-twenties and they were all very likely having a wonderful sailing adventure themselves during this Swedish summer learning how to sail this beautiful ship. We stood on the pier watching the activities on-board for quite awhile and then, not long after we came ashore, they cast off and moved away under power. We got some good photos of all of this. We went to lunch at the same place Colette and I had visited a week or two ago when we visited Vaxholm and it was a good choice again. Vaxholm is a sweet little town. And I'm sure a lot of Stockholm folks come out here for a minor 'get-away' vacation; whether for an afternoon or for a day or two at one of the local hotels. We took the ferry that runs from Vaxholm back into the Central City. It stops at perhaps a dozen small places along the way. Typically, the ferry noses up to the dock and spends literally 30 to 60 seconds touching like that as people jump on or off - and then she's away again. I really love the ferries here. I think it would take me a long while to get tired of them. The ferry dropped us off at the docks on the eastern side of Gamla stan and from there, we walked up the eastern Gamla stan shore through all the boats until we turned and cut west through the Royal Palace area. And then we turned north and went through through the arches of the Parliament buildings on little Riksplatan Island. After that, we were on Drottninggatan; which is the main street. A bit of wandering and we ended up at the **Pickwick Pub** where we sat outside on a collection of white chairs and had some great beers. After that, I think (it is a bit blurry) we walked Kevin and Jo-Anne up towards their hotel and then we went home. Another good day.

Day 39 – s35 – Sat – 19Aug23 - Sodermalm, two islands and beer fun

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

Today, we met Kevin and Jo-Anne and took them to some interesting places around Stockholm. First, we took the metro to the **Mariatorget Station**. This put us on Södermalm Island; quite near to Hornsgatan which is a major east-west road there. Colette and I had been there previously several times looking for pencil shops and art galleries. We also got rained on pretty badly here once.

But today, we wanted to walk north from Hornsgaten and up to the northern shore of Södermalm Island. There's a view area there that is quite renowned. It is up high and from it, you can see many of the sights of central Stockholm.

From there, we headed towards the Slussen Metro station. The walk was a bit complicated because the streets twist and turn and much of the area is under construction. But we found it.

Then we metro'd to Central and switched lines to the one which would take us to the Kungsträdgården Station. This is the deepest station in the Stockholm Metro system and it is fun to see the decorations down below. But our main goal was to pass through it and then up into the neighborhoods above from which we could walk south and out onto **two small but interesting islands called Skeppsholmen and Kastellholmen**.

These two small islands have a lot of Stockholm's military history gathered upon them and they are interesting to walk.

Just to the east of these islands lies Djurgården Island and it is where the Vasa Museum as well as several others are located.

And, this island is also where Stockholm's big entertainment park is located. In fact, when you've come around the southern end of Kastellholmen Island, you are looking straight across the water at it – and it is pretty amazing.

We climbed a small hill and sat on on some glacier-smooth rocky outcroppings there and watched the events in the entertainment park for a bit.

'Entertainment' – if you consider being taken several hundred feet up in the air and then dropped to be good 'entertainment'. Or being strapped into a roller coaster car that not only goes up and down wildly but also spins sideways as you go along so that you are upside down at times; as it rockets along. We could hear the screams across the water easily.

When it was time to walk back off the islands, we discovered a nice bus waiting for us just as we crossed from Kastellholmen back to Skeppsholmen. That was nice. So we all whipped out our 'ride-all-day' cards and we were quickly on-board and riding back into the city.

Once back in the city we wandered and, at some point, found ourselves having a bite to eat in Drottninggatan when a group of **Hare Krishnas** came by singing and chanting. That was fun and they tried to get several of us to sing and chant with them. In the end, they smiled and their leader gave me a small booklet which I believe was encouraging me to give up my mundane life and wander off and to sing and chant with them.

Then we got up and wandered along **Drottninggatan** again and soon we found ourselves at our now favorite pub, the Mr. Pickwick. We liked it yesterday and we could not imagine that we wouldn't like it again, so Whoop, in we went!

A few minutes later, the same Hare Krishnas group came by the Mr. Pickwick Pub. But they didn't notice us this time.

But this time, a woman, whom I assume was an **'influencer'**, jumped out into the middle of the Hare Krishna group and began singing and dancing with them while her male partner videoed her doing so. And then, in just a minute or so, with the video 'in the can', as they say, they simply walked away.

I've seen influencers now a couple of times. And I'm not really sure just how I feel about them.

They seem to be explicitly creating an image or a persona around themselves to attract followers on-line. And then many of them use the fact that they've gathered a lot of followers to solicit free products for themselves by advertising those same products to their followers.

They create the impression of having very 'glamorous' lives – as if every moment of their day is filled with beautiful experiences like dancing spontaneously with the Hare Krishnas - but it is all quite manufactured.

So, when I see them jump out into the middle of a public place, like I saw a lady do at the Nobel Prize Museum Square and then again here on Drottninggatan with the Hare Krishnas, I admit I feel a bit put off.

Regardless, that was by far the least significant part of our time at the **Mr. Pickwick Pub**. We, Kevin and Jo-Anne had an excellent time talking and quaffing beers.

What a great thing to do on the main street of a beautiful city on a day with good weather. "Sweet as", as the Kiwis say.

Day 43– s39 – Wed – 23Aug23 – finishing up

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

We're finishing up now in Stockholm so I'm not going to do anymore detailed reports of our travels.

But, we have been out the last few days. Mostly off to big shopping centers to see all the flash stuff. Today was our last day for fun adventuring.

Tomorrow, the 24th, will be a cleanup and pack day and then the next morning, on the **25th**, we'll make our way to the central station and then to the bus departure area where we'll catch a bus that will, in about 6 hours, take us over to **Gothenburg** on Sweden's west coast.

On the 20th, Kevin and Jo-Anne's last full day here, they came over and we watched the women's championship game between Spain and the UK. Notably, that was the one and only time that we've actually fired up the TV here in our apartment. The game was excellent!

On Monday, the 21st, I met Dongran Su again. This time at Liljeholmen, and we had another great talk together.

Afterwards, I decided to take a long slow walk home to see all the things along the way that we normally only see from the bus. That was sweet.

And during this time, Colette went off to one of the big malls to have a look-around romp around on her own.

Yesterday, the 22nd, we indulged ourselves and went back out to the very flash Westfield Mall of Scandinavia and had a big, fun look-around romp again.

Today, the 23rd, I looked up the best 10 malls in Stockholm to see if we'd missed any and discovered that we'd missed two of them

Both were over the the Ostermalm area so we metro'd to the Ostermalmtorg Station and then walked to each of them for a good look around.

The first was called 'Sturegallerian' and it is considered to be the most 'upmarket' mall in the city. And, indeed, it looked very much that way to us.

See: <https://sturegallerian.se/en/home>

After that, we walked to the second mall of note which is called MOOD.

See: <https://www.moodstockholm.se/>

It was pretty nice as well. And, by now it was getting far enough along in the day that we were getting interested in lunch. So, we sat among the packed lunch crowds and shared a small pizza.

Both of these malls, I would strongly suspect, will be packed at mid-day on any work day with local office workers. It certainly seemed that way to us when we had lunch in the MOOD Center.

Then, just for fun, we returned to the Central Station and walked down Drottninggatan to the Pickwick; where we'd spent two enjoyable afternoons with Jo-Anne, Colette's sister, and Kevin, Jo-Anne's husband.

We even sat at the same table we'd sat at with them and I asked the waiter to take a picture of us sitting there; with a Falcon Beer and an Aperol Spritz in hand.

Then, I sent them the picture and told them that we'd come and sat at the same table for nostalgic reasons.

And that we'd carved their names into the table - along with their phone number - and then left without paying the bill! (smile)

None of that is true, of course, but I was just having some fun with them.

And that's been our day. Home now for a nap and some relaxation time. Tomorrow, we begin to gear up for traveling.

Day 45– s41 – Fri – 25Aug23 - Departing

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

We've cleared from our Stockholm apartment and we're enroute by bus to Gothenberg in the western side of Sweden. Two nights there and then onwards south towards Helsingborg; where we'll cross into Denmark via ferry.

Day 47 – Sunday– 27Aug23 - Göteborg

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

After a day and two nights in Göteborg, we're away to Helsingborg on the southwestern Swedish coast. Not much to say about Göteborg. It rained almost all day so we just scurried like mice from the hotel to the train station to the mall and back.

Day 48 – Sunday– 27Aug23 - Helsingborg

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

A good day walking around Helsingborg. Must say I'm more drawn to this town than I was to Göteborg. A nice side light was that we met a local writer, **Jan Blomquist**, last night out at our evening meal and I went and had another excellent chat with him for an hour this afternoon at his place here in Helsingborg. We had a very interesting conversation.

See: https://www.bokus.com/cgi-bin/product_search.cgi?authors=Jan%20Blomquist

Colette and I are up early tomorrow to catch the ferry that crosses from **Helsingborg, Sweden** over to **Helsingor, Denmark**. From there we'll find our way down to Copenhagen

Day 49 – Tuesday– 29Aug23 – Helsingborg to Helsingor to Copenhagen

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

Up early and off to catch a ferry over to Denmark. A sweet but short ferry ride over to the other side. And then a train from Helsingor down to Copenhagen.

A bit of a wander about in the Copenhagen Train Station and then off on the Metro to places we're familiar with from our last visit here a month and a half ago.

A quiet afternoon in and then an evening meal with friends here at the huge **Fields Shopping** Center.

Tomorrow morning, we're off on Air France to **Paris, France**, where we'll settle in for five nights.

And then it all wraps up and we're away back to New Zealand and home.

Day 49 - Aug 29th, 30th & 31st – Copenhagen, Copenhagen to Paris and Paris day 1

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

Last time I left off, we had arrived in Copenhagen and were going to have dinner with friends there. We did – and it was great fun.

We met **Elsebet Barner** and **Alain Joly**; both of whom are Facebook friends. Elsebet is a Dane and Alain is French and they have been a couple now for about 10 years.

We had a great meal and talked about a thousand things. Far, far too many to try to recall here. But suffice to say that one of the most special things that can happen for you, when you are traveling, is to fall in with locals and **to be able to see the world, for a few moments, through their eyes** and to be able to tell them what you see, or think you see, about their world And to get their confirmations or corrections.

I would like to share, as well, that Alain has a beautiful web site and you can find it here:

See: thedawnwithin.com

30 August 2023

The next day, the 30th, was a travel day for us. **Copenhagen to Paris** on Air France.

The flight was about 30 minutes late departing and the crew explained that their flight had come in quite late the night before and that mandatory crew-rest rules had come into play.

Charles de Gaulle Airport. A very big airport and a fair distance from the city of Paris.

We'd decided to try Uber again for their slightly lower prices. Last time it had been a hassle but we thought we'd give it another go. Big mistake!

We were never sure what the issue was but, I'd fired up the Uber app, requested a ride to the city, we were quoted 46 Euros as the price and that our potential driver was four minutes away. They specified where we should be and we were there and I committed.

The app then showed that he was 13 minutes away and six kilometers distant. OK, that was slightly different that what they'd first claimed ... but OK.

But it wasn't because 20 minutes later, we was still 13 minutes and six kilometers away. I'd messaged him several times with no replies and even tried to call and got no answer.

I was loath to cancel least they'd take the 46 Euros and a big struggle to get it back would ensue. But, finally, I did. And I cited his 'no show'. Later, I did see that they'd refunded my 46 Euros.

After that waste of time, we went to the taxi ranks and found that they had a fixed rate of 55 Euros into the city, We took it.

It's a long ride in. But the fun still wasn't over. Upon arrival, **the cab driver brashly requested 'cash'**. And rather insinuated that we'd been told that the 55 Euros was to be in cash.

Well, he was out of luck as between us we had not a shred of cash. So, eventually, he managed to produce a credit card device and the 55 Euros were paid.

Paris can be a tough place for scams and such. I suspect that if we'd have had 55 Euros in cash, he'd have put the lot into his pocket, unreported, and would have felt a lucky man.

I also suspect (but don't know) that there's a battle on between the Paris cabbies and Uber. The cabbies are defending their territory and what ever they can do to block the Uber drivers, I think they will do. Especially around a big profit hub like CDG Airport.

Was our Uber driver 'real' or was he just a troll acting as an Uber driver but never intending to show up? I suspect a lot goes on under the covers here.

But, we'd been delivered to our Hotel. **The Hotel Batignolles, in Batignolles.**

See: <https://www.batignolles.com/>

It is an older hotel; but nice. And they'd given us room 110 which is one of their larger rooms and it has its own little outside private patio with chairs and a table. Sweet!

One of the prime reasons we come to Paris, when we visit Europe, is to see **our friend, Gerry**. And this trip is certainly no exception.

We had been due to meet Gerry at his apartment at 5 pm for a 'welcome to Paris' glass of wine. But, it was a bit later than that before we arrived after all the Uber and Cab fun.

Gerry lives quite near Parc Monceau and it is one of the prettier areas of Paris. It was about a 20 minute walk from our hotel.

See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parc_Monceau

A visit ensued, a bottle good white wine disappeared, catchup stories were told and we found ourselves invited to two nice dinners out on the town, These to occur over the next few days of our visit. And all of that was sweet. Gerry is 91 now and has lived in this same beautifully appointed building since 1974. Indeed, I first visited him there in 1987; when he hosted me to come to Paris for a week and to give a speech on a particular computer technology that both he and I worked on in those days. All ancient hieroglyphics now 🙄

A walk home, an impromptu visit to a passed pizza parlor and then the end of another day in our adventures.
31 August 2023

The 31st dawned and like energizer bunnies we wanted to go out and explore.

We've been to Paris a number of times but the lure is still there. Interestingly, it is not because Paris is the most well-behaved city by any means. Traffic is chaotic, there's graffiti, there's trash and most of the city is old and looks it.

But, as I said to Colette at one point today, it almost isn't worth taking photos. Because everything you look at is simply photogenic. It is unrelenting that way in spite of its roughness.

Perhaps it is that you can feel all the dreams and mysteries people have had for so very long about the 'City of Light'. The writers, the artists and the histories that have happened here. They seem to inhabit the place just behind every physical thing you see.

We had no social engagements today until evening so we decided to go off adventuring.

What adventures, you say?

Well, how about hunting for a small hole-in-the-wall shop that we'd last seen in 2019? On that day, in 2019, we'd decided to go and see as many of the 'Covered Passages' as we could.

So, what's a covered passage? It is, typically, a long corridor through an entire block. And on both sides are shops. Sometimes, quite interesting speciality shops. There are quite a number of these 'Passages' spread through certain areas of Paris.

In 2019, we'd found one and Colette had bought some decorative hooks there. And, at the time, I'd taken photos of quite a few of the passage shops we'd wandered into. And I'd taken a photo of the shop wherein she'd bought the hooks.

So, on Apple iPhones, you can look at a photo and see where it was taken and in this way, we zeroed in on where the shop was that we were going to go and try to find again.

Off we went. First stop was a **Metro Station near our hotel called 'Pont Cardinet'**.

See: [https://en.wikipedia.org/.../Pont_Cardinet_station_\(Paris...](https://en.wikipedia.org/.../Pont_Cardinet_station_(Paris...))

Once there, the 'How' of buying tickets on the Paris Metro System become the question.

Lucky for me, Colette remembered the secrets codes and dances required to establish communications between Antipodeans and Parisians and soon we had TICKETS and we were ready to ride.

Pont Cardinet is on the 14 line.

See: <https://www.ratp.fr/en/plans-lignes/metro/14>

And on that line, the nearest station to where we were going, the 'Passage du Grand Cerf', was Châtelet.

See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ch%C3%A2telet_station

See: <https://www.solosophie.com/passage-du-grand-cerf/>

The Chatelet station let us out quite a distance from the Passage so once on the street, we began a long walk north towards the passage. But, that's no problem because walking in Paris (except in the rain) is always a pleasure.

Eventually, we located the passage and took a walk through it. But all the shops were closed. It was, after all, only 9 am and this is Paris! Paris, where no one eats an evening meal before 8 pm at night.

Ah, the perils of traveling with an Energizer Bunny 🙄

At the far end of the passage was a small nondescript park with public benches in it. So, we went and had a 'sit-down' there.

Public benches can be rare in Paris and pressing your bottom upon one, when seen, is a great pastime for those of us, like me, who have little idea of what else to do with our bottoms most times.

A few minutes of enjoying this pleasure were soon over and as we stood to walk back through the passage, an elderly man on the next bench over spoke to me. Colette strolled over to the end of the passage to wait for me.

He said, "I saw you at Francois the other night just for a moment, didn't I?"

Curious. I asked him for more information. After a couple of passes, I asked what day this was and he said, "Two days ago.", and I said, "Impossible – I was in Copenhagen, then."

He seemed nice enough. Said he was from Manchester. And after he said it, then I could hear his 'Manchester' accent. Not sure what this was all about, but not sensing any threat or subterfuge in it, I bid him a pleasant good bye and passed him one of my cards; in case he wanted to follow up.

Rejoining Colette, **we did the sensible, Parisian thing, next and sat in a nice sidewalk cafe close by and had a pastry and a coffee and watched the neighborhood.**

But, when we were done, it was still a fair amount of time until the passage stores were due to open at 11:00 am.

I had another mission I was interested in accomplishing that day and that was to pay a visit to the offices of the **"Paris Institute for Critical Thinking"**.

See: <https://parisinstitute.org/>

I'd recently become aware of them through facebook and, as they sounded quite interesting, I thought I'd drop in and say, "Hello".

They were about a 20 minute walk south from where we were and, given that we were just waiting around anyway, we took off to go visit them and then to return to the Passage afterwards.

Well, finding them, even with the aid of my iPhone map's directions, was not easy. And, when we were finally standing in front of their supposed address at 5 Rue Parrée, the result was less than enlightening.

We were looking at a metal roller door that was down and locked and there was no information about anything disclosed upon it. Nada, zip, nothing; just the number "5" confirming that we were indeed at the address we were seeking.

Well, that was a pretty poor result.

After thinking about it some, I've come to the conclusion that these folks have made a good splash for themselves on-line and PR-wise. But that they are very much in the "All Hat and no Cattle" mode; with respect to owning up to the fact that they really don't have a physical presence. A bit like an Internet "Influencer" in which appearance is all and reality isn't rated much.

I wrote them later, on-line, and shared some of these thoughts.

Well, we turned around and hiked back to the Passage, which was open now, and were richly rewarded by exactly what Colette was seeking. And what a fun shop it was.

See: <https://www.rickshaw.fr/en/>

Well, that was a LOT of walking. Before this day was done, we'd set a personal best record for us of over 22,000 steps in a day. But, it wasn't over yet.

We grabbed a metro home to Pont Cardinet and then both had a long nap.

We still had plans to join our friend Gerry for a nice evening meal at 7:30 pm.

Up again, we walked over to Gerry's and then **he took us to a wonderful restaurant called, "Caves Petrissans"**. Apparently it is a place that Gerry has enjoyed for many years. And it has been in the same family for over 200 years. On one of our earlier visits to Paris, as well, he took us there.

See: <https://www.cavespetrissans.fr/fr,1,13689.html>

It was wonderful. Very French, very correct and very professional and yet the staff made us feel very at home. It was **a deeply enjoyable experience**. Wonderful wine, excellent food and lovely conversation. Gerry is always a pleasure.

Gerry returned us to his place in his car and we saw him up to his apartment and then we had a nice, enjoyable walk back to our place.

All in all a sweet and adventurous day. Would we expect anything else of Paris?

Day 50 - Paris Day 2 – 01 Sep 23 – Friday - Massimo Dutti high-life and the Stalingrad Metro

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

It was Friday morning and Colette had ideas of where to go. And I was happy just to follow along and let her figure out the how, why and where – so long as I got to eat a pastry along the way (smile).

The goal, I had been told, was a **Massimo Dutti store**.

See: <https://www.massimodutti.com/fr/company>

We began the day by walking three blocks north from our hotel, along Rue de Batignolles, and having coffee and a pan-a-raison at 'Dose Batignolles'; a nice coffee shop in the area.

See: <https://www.dose.paris/content/8-nos-cafes-de-quartier>

After coffee, it was a nice morning and so we set off to our destination - walking.

Our route wasn't in a straight line because we had it in mind to walk over to near Gerry's place and then to cut south through Parc Monceau.

This park is such a beautiful place and a true landmark for generations of Parisians. Gerry told us, years ago, about how his mother (remember, Gerry is 91 now) had been wheeled about in this very park when she was just a small child.

Ten years ago, when we stayed in Gerry's little upstairs maid's quarters for three months (as a gift from Gerry!), we used to walk from his building, across Parc Monceau and then we'd buy pastries to bring home.

As we walked across the park today, we debated, in a fun way, about how many times each of us had gone out and gotten the pastries while the other one lay back home in bed waiting for their treat.

After crossing the park, we walked south along Avenue de Messine until it came to Boulevard Haussmann where we continued east until it came to Boulevard Malesherbes.

Once we were on Malesherbes, it would lead us directly south to our goal in the Madeleine area. That is - to the erstwhile Massimo Dutti store.

However, along the way on Haussmann, I stopped and did something I haven't done since we were in Rome back in 2017. I stopped for five minutes and had a **stand-up cup of espresso** at a coffee bar we were passing.

See: <https://fr.restaurantguru.com/Tabac-Haussman-Paris>

That made me feel very European (smile). And the little energy boost I got wasn't bad either; as we'd been walking for some time.

Eventually, our goal came into sight. Colette pointed off into the distance where we could see an immense church looming over the nearby buildings. It was the **La Madeleine Church**. I, of course, took a picture.

See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Madeleine,_Paris

We walked further, until Massimo Dutti and other high-end stores became visible on the southern end of the church. It was a pretty flash area.

Now, you might be wondering why we're walking half way across Paris to go to a Massimo Dutti?

Well, Colette is a very careful and thoughtful shopper. And earlier (I'm not sure when), she'd seen a top in a Massimo Dutti store and had been thinking about it ever since. And she'd finally decided she wanted it.

So that was the reason for our walk. And the fact that, being in Paris, we wanted a good excuse to go out walking and seeing things. It was a masterful blend of fun and retail therapy (smile).

Now, my usual thing, when we go into shops like this (which is not all that often) is that I go off and find a member of the staff and ask if they have a seating area for abandoned male partners of the shopper? And, they usually find me a nice place to sit and then send over a security guard to watch me.

Colette decided to forgo all that fun and she left me out on the sideway with instructions to be within sight when she came back out.

That wasn't too bad.

It was an interesting block to walk up and down. At one point, a security guard from Massimo Dutti, who had no idea I was with one of their shoppers, came out and gave me an evaluative look and decided that if I was as old and abandoned as I looked, then I couldn't be much threat to the Massimo Dutti chain of international stores and he went back inside.

Colette's new top can be seen in the photos of our Russian evening meal with Gerry on September 2nd. And I have to say, it looks pretty nice.

After the Massimo Dutti adventure, we walked around the neighborhood a bit and also had a look up at the massive La Madeleine Church. Whew, it is big.

From there, we walked to the nearby Madeleine Metro Station and rode back to the Pont Cardinet Metro station in our own neighborhood.

And that was our morning. I can't recall now what we did with the early afternoon but I suspect a sidewalk cafe beer and some people watching followed by a short nap.

In the afternoon, somewhere about 4:30 pm, I initiated a plan for us to jump on the metro again and ride down to the River Seine **where we could check out the Notre Dame repairs and the booksellers.**

Booksellers? Well, it is big news in Paris just now that the French Government wants to clear all the booksellers and their stalls away from the sides of the river in favor of putting up grandstands for the upcoming Paris Olympics.

See: <https://olympics.com/en/olympic-games/paris-2024>

See: <https://edition.cnn.com/.../paris-booksellers.../index.html>

The booksellers and their stands are a Paris tradition of very long standing so there is big resistance gathering. Petitions are being circulated and a lot of controversy is arising.

As an interesting side light on all this, Paris has tried to hold several preliminary events where swimmers are in the river and they've had to be cancelled. Embarrassingly, because the city just cannot get the river clean enough to avoid the swimmers from getting sick. It is all a bit of a mess.

But all of that was quite a different mess than the one we found ourselves in when we attempted to take the Metro down to the river that afternoon.

Yep, it was a disaster.

I'd worked out that I wanted to make this just a one-transfer trip. That suggested that we catch Metro Line 2 at the Rome station (quite close to us) and ride it to the Stalingrad Metro station. At Stalingrad, we would switch over to Metro Line 7 going south and jump off at the Châtete station; which is an easy walk down to the Seine. Well, being naive about parts of Paris, this all seemed quite reasonable.

We took the Metro, as planned from Rome, and got off at **Stalingrad**. Then we began to follow the signs to Metro Line 7; which intersects there.

The first thing we noticed was that the people around us, in general, looked quite rough.

The second thing we noticed, from a distance, was what appeared to be a large number of people sleeping rough in a part of the station off the the side.

The third thing we noticed, as we descended a long tunnel down to Metro Line 7, was that literally hundreds of people were coming back the other way.

I remember remarking to Colette that this was an awful lot of people to have just gotten off one train.

We got to where we could catch the 7 going south and there seemed to be a normal number of people standing about waiting to catch it. But among them were also perhaps a half dozen tough looking fellows wearing metro security staff uniforms as well.

The south bound 7 pulled in and we, and the rest, got onboard. But just a few moments later, **an announcement in French ordered everyone off the train** and the half dozen security men came aboard to make sure we did.

Well, that was pretty amazing! And it probably explained why we'd seen all those folks coming back up the tunnel as we headed down earlier. They'd been tossed off as well.

And, as I said, almost everyone around us looked pretty rough and the whole thing felt 'off'.

We decided in quick order that we had no idea what was going on but that our best course of action was to abandon our plans to go to the river and just to head back the way we'd come to safer and more predictable parts of Paris.

And we did.

And we never did find out what was going in at Stalingrad station that day.

But, here's a story about the homeless problems out there. Apparently they are severe and repeating.

And Gerry told us later that the next few station going east, after Stalingrad, are even worse.

See: <https://www.latimes.com/.../la-fg-paris-refugee-camp...>

Well, we got back to near where our hotel is and we were happy campers to be there. Maybe, we'll try the river again tomorrow on bright Saturday morning using a different routing.

We walked down to **Le Courcelles**, which is, again, near Gerry's place and we had ourselves two nice Caesar Salads and a beer and a wine. This is another favorite place of our from 10 years ago. And it was a very nice haven to retreat too today after our amazing adventure at Stalingrad.

See: <https://fr.restaurantguru.com/Le-Courcelles-Paris>

In my mind's eye, I can still see the people walking by Le Courcelles that evening and seeing the Paris traffic flowing by.

Day 51 - Paris Day 3 – 02 Sep 23 – The Seine and Russian Meal

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

Our third day on Paris.

We began by walking up to the Pret a Manger near the Cardinet Metro Station north of us. It is a nice walk, not too far, into a pretty neighborhood and the food is good.

See: <https://www.pretamanger.fr/.../39-rue-mstislav.../10716>

This area is so new looking that we were curious how and why it was here. The neighborhoods all around it are filled in with older buildings. And yet, here, there's quite a collection of beautiful new hi-rises.

I asked the Bard AI "Why does the area of Paris around the Cardinet Metro Station look so new?". And I got this back:

"The area around the Cardinet Metro Station in Paris looks so new because it was recently redeveloped. The redevelopment project, which was completed in 2018, transformed the area into a modern mixed-use district with office buildings, residential towers, shops, and restaurants. The new buildings are all designed in a contemporary style, and the public spaces have been landscaped with trees and greenery.

The redevelopment of the Cardinet area was part of a larger effort to revitalize the 17th arrondissement of Paris. The arrondissement is home to a number of important cultural institutions, such as the Parc des Buttes-Chaumont and the Musée Marmottan Monet, but it had also become somewhat neglected in recent years. The redevelopment of the Cardinet area is seen as a way to attract new investment and businesses to the arrondissement, and to make it a more attractive place to live and work."

Well, AI does seem to have its uses at times. But I've seen a few of its answers that have been obviously bogus. In any case, I shot a few photos of the area so that you can see the differences in this part of Paris from most of the rest.

But, other than for a light breakfast, Cardinet was not our central interest for the day. **The Seine River, Notre Dame and the Booksellers along the river were in our sights.** Same plan we had yesterday before we wandered into the wilds of the Stalingrad Metro Station and had to abandon it.

After breakfast, we walked back to the Rome Metro station and rode down to the Seine via a different metro route than I'd taken us by yesterday. And this time we actually got there. Yay!

At this point, we turned into full-fledged tourists and fell in with the crowds that swarm along the Seine, its book sellers and around Notre Dame. Yep, we were gawking and camera snapping right along with the best of them. Notre Dame's repairs are coming along. And the Book Sellers are still there; though the dark clouds of the coming Olympics are gathering. It was all fun and I'll let the photos speak for themselves.

At one point, we went into Cafe Panis on the south (left) side of the river, not far from Notre Dame, and had a coffee and just watched the people passing by out the window.

See: <https://www.cafepanis.com/>

Highly touristed parts of a city always feel a bit different to me than the rest; and that was certainly true in this area.

When we sat, the waiter made a point of telling us that if we left a tip, we should leave it on the table as cash. Perhaps, the management vacuums it up if you add in into what you pay on the bill? I don't know.

But, the point of this small story is that when we left, I expressed to the waiter that I was sorry that I did not have any cash. And he turned and gave me a most sincere smile and said that was OK. And I thought that was quite nice and genuine in the midst of such high volume tourist anonymity.

After that, we decided to walk up to **Les Halles**. It is a huge shopping center complex with a lot of history.

See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_Halles

We'd been there before, some years ago, but I'd forgotten how just immense it was.

We wandered in and looked at the maps of how to find things and it still took us nearly 15 minutes to get to the complex's Starbucks.

We didn't really have a reason for going to Les Halles; other than that it is huge, flash and it was close.

As for Starbucks, I seem to remember that a Vanilla Latte and a yummy something from the cabinet passed under my nose and disappeared – but I couldn't tell you any more than that. 🙄

After that, we didn't have a lot on our schedule before we were to meet Gerry for a meal that evening. So, we took the metro back to the Batignolles area and we went and sat in **a nice sidewalk cafe called**

Augustin and did some nice people watching.

See: <https://augustin-paris.eatbu.com/?lang=en>

One thing I saw, when we were there, that really caught my attention was a sort of a go-cart some kids had made. In front of this cafe is an open space and beyond that lies the City Hall for the 17th. And kids like to play out in this open space with everyone in the cafe watching them.

They had taken a stand-on self balancing scooter and put a front wheel on it and a seat. On each side, they had attached a rod about a foot long that you could pull up or down to tilt that half of the scooter and thus make the wheel on that side go forward or backwards.

See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-balancing_scooter

I thought the entire thing was brilliant and it made me want to make one.

Well, we still had some time before meeting Gerry, so we decided to go and enjoy **Parc Monceau**; which is quite near his place. We walked around a bit and then sat on a bench and watched people go by and reflected on how beautiful and special a place it is.

Then we walked over to Gerry's and he took us out for a second fabulous evening meal in the short few days we've been here. He really is a very generous man.

Tonight his choice was a small Russian restaurant, L'Epicierie Russe, which he had taken us to before; some years ago. It is quite a special place and Gerry had preordered a special meal for us. It was called 'Koulibiac de saumon' and it was very good. Some vodka also passed our lips as well as some wine. All-in-all, it was a very nice evening.

See: <https://www.thefork.com/restaurant/l-epicierie-russe-r21929>

We saw Gerry back to his apartment, had a nice walk home to Batignolles and another of our few short days in Paris was over.

Day 52 - Paris Day 4 – 03 Sep 23 – Montmartre & big shopping

[<To Facebook Post>](#)

Our last full day here and then we begin the epic trip home to New Zealand.

Today, we've set our sights on going to see Montmartre again. It is a lovely church and community that sits on a hill above Paris. It is an iconic Paris location.

See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montmartre>

We walked over to our local Rome station and rode the metro's line 2 east to the Anvers Station; which sits just south of Montmartre.

We've been here in years before - and interesting things have happened.

Once, as we tried to board a very crowded metro train to depart from the area, people conspired to separate Colette and I by crowding between us and delaying her and, hopefully, preventing her from getting aboard. I think the idea was that I would have been so obsessed with her getting left behind, that I would have been a good, distracted pick-pocket candidate. Luckily, Colette shouted and pushed her way on-board and the little scheme was defeated.

On another more recent visit, we were climbing up the long central steps to the Cathedral and I was suddenly surrounded by a group of African fellows. And one of them tried to tie something onto my wrist; probably hoping that if I seemed to accept it, he might be able to be charge me for it. I got rather angry and words were passed and it all got close to being ugly. So this time, we decided to go up the side stairs rather than up the central steps to avoid the potential tourist trappers and harassers.

We wandered up and we never did go to the flash Montmartre city overlook spot that most tourists flock to to see the city below. We thought to ourselves, "We've been there and we've done that - Ha!"

Instead, we explored along the cathedral's west side and then ventured into a lot of the little side streets around. We found small squares full of tourists and artists of every stripe wanting to paint your picture, make a drawing of you or sell you jewelry. It was quite busy and fun.

At one point, we sat in a busy sidewalk cafe in a small square. And another couple, who came and sat just beside us, asked us if we could shift seats so they could sit exactly where they wanted to be for a photo. And then if we'd take a picture of them with their camera. The answer, of course, was 'yes' to both requests.

It turned out that they were in those exact chairs three years ago to the day and were celebrating their return. We talked a bit and then kidded that we should all agree to return here in yet another three years and take the next round of memory making photos. We had a good laugh and everyone was doubtful of our plan, I'm sure.

We continued to walk around in the Montmartre area until we'd worked our way around the entire thing and back down the hill again.

Our next goal for the day was another shopping center. The So Ouest center, to be specific.

A quick perusal of the Paris Metro system revealed that if we got back on Line 2 at Anvers and

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See: <https://www.westfield.com/france/soouest>

The walk from the Louise Michel Metro Station to the center seemed long. But perhaps part of that was because it was hot and we were not 100% sure of our directions. And those factors always make a journey seem longer.

But, we found it and it was a large and interesting shopping center.

I recall getting into the center for its air conditioning was a relief.

Once in, we walked about and looked at things, people and shops. And then we found a Pret-A-Manger and I had a bowl of yogurt and muesli (a favorite of mine).

As I said, it was hot outside and I was wanting a cooler shirt than the one I was wearing; which was a Merino Wool tee-shirt. So, we went into an H&M store at So Ouest and I found a white

cotton tee-shirt for 10 euros and changed into that. Much better!

The walk back to the Metro station seemed much quicker on our return. Funny how that works.

The only other thing on our schedule for the day was to drop by Gerry's at 5 pm and share a glass of wine with him. He appreciates good wines and he had some nice ones to share with us. Ah, the benefits of following along behind people who know what they are doing (smile). Tomorrow is our departure on Emirates for Dubai, Sydney and then Christchurch. The morning will be for packing and very probably we'll have time to go out for coffees and pan-a-raisons. Then, this sweet adventure comes to a close.

This will be my last travel posting for this trip. I may write up something later about my many and diverse insights into Sweden. We'll see.

Thanks for reading along.

X

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