

Stockholm– the city of the water.

Beauty on Water

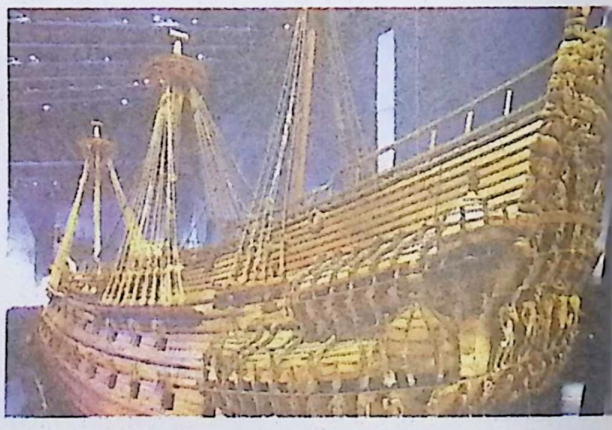
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Stockholm is bubbling in the World's largest archipelago in the Baltic Sea. It does not need great imagination to fully savour the uniqueness of a beautiful city consisting of a large number of islands joined by bridges and having communication by ferries. Boats are plentiful on the waterways-they are the most comfortable and efficient way for travel in the city and its suburbs. You can go wherever you wish but the sea would not be very far. It is called the Venice of the North but larger, cleaner and greener due to the public parks everywhere and Silver Linden trees lining the roads and trees of other varieties, many of them flowering in the summer and autumn months. You can swim in the Baltic waters and drink the water in the adjoining Lake Malaren that supplies water to the Stockholm area. In mid-August, 2013, the weather in Stockholm is fine-mild and sunny, though in the mornings and evenings one would needed a light jacket or a sweater.

As one walks the sidewalks of this finely maintained, clean and disciplined city, which is the capital of Sweden, one encounters no pollution, no urban chaos. Traffic is heavy during rush hours but nothing close to the traffic jam one often confronts in Dhaka. People widely use public transports-buses, underground, trains and boats, which are reasonably priced, clean and plentiful. Taxis here are expensive and though there are meters, the price has to be negotiated in advance, so there would not be any surprise.

We took the usual bus tour of the city, which gave us a bird's eye view of the main features of the city and its architectural distinctions. The city buildings were massive, mainly of red-brick construction instead of stone but the pink and yellow exterior of the buildings were also – attractive. Our first hotel was in the outskirts of the town and communication was most difficult and expensive. So we moved to a downtown hotel near a park, shopping mall and a metro station. The History Museum was nearby and we could walk to it. There was a special exhibition of the Viking period (750-1060 AD) with an archeologist giving us the history. The Swedish Vikings went east to Russia and further to the Muslim Empire. In the East, the Viking activity mainly centred on peaceful trade instead of pillage like in Western Europe.

The royal ship, Vasa, the largest ship built in Sweden, was inaugurated in 1628 with a lot of pomp and ceremony but it sank due to its excessive weight and height after proceeding only a very short distance. It lay under the water in the Baltic until 1961 when it was salvaged, fully restored and housed in its own Vasa Museum, which we also visited. The ABBA Museum was close to Vasa. A visit to it was obligatory as one of my granddaughters had requested that we buy from there a little doll of the band's blond singer, Agnetha Faltskog. ABBA is a Swedish musical group, very popular in the late nineteen-seventies for their songs, including the famous "Dancing Queen."



The ancient salvaged ship– Vasa.

For obvious reasons, the Nobel Museum in the former stock exchange building was of special interest to us. It was opened in 2001 on the occasion of the centenary of the Nobel Prize. Of course, we looked for everything the museum had on Dr. Yunus, Bangladesh's only Nobel Prize recipient and on Tagore, the other Bengali and first Asian to get the Nobel Literature Prize in 1913. Located in an ancient square, Stortorget, in the heart of the old town called Gamla Stan, which had narrow