

*Stockholm* September 2007

Class 13 – the final year before the Abitur (our A-level) – visited our partner school in Stockholm at the beginning of September, Gymnasium Järfälla (Järfälla is a suburb of Sweden's capital city).

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> September the Ryan Air flight left Hahn at 9:25 a.m., so that the pupils and the two teachers Michael Bösser and Wilhelm Göbel had to take the 4:30 a.m. train to Frankfurt. The coaches to Hahn and to Stockholm and the flight were punctual, so that we reached our hotel at mid-day and could go on a city sightseeing tour that Saturday – the youth hotel Fridhemsplan is no distance from the city centre.

Stockholm is not called Venice of the North in vain, a beautiful city surrounded by water, built on countless islands, in Europe only comparable to Petersburg and Venice. Fridhemsplan is on the island Kungsholmen, south the islands Langholmen and Södermalm, east Ridarholmen and Gamla Stan – the true old town centre of the city -, and further east Skeppsholmen, Kastellholmen and Djurgården.

The Activities with our partner school left us enough time to see some important sights of the city. We visited the busy shopping streets Drottninggatan, Kungsgatan and Hamngatan as well as Sturegallerie and the huge department store Ahlens-City. More sombre themes here were the infamous murders of Anna Lind in the shopping mall NK and Olof Palme in the town centre.

Following Drottninggatan we saw the Riksdag (Parliament), the King's Castle, Storkyrkan (the royal wedding and coronation church), Tyska Kyrka (German Church), and the beautiful lanes through Gamla Stan down to the harbour. From there we took a ferry through the picturesque harbour areas and around the islands Skeppsholmen and Kastellholmen to Djurgården and the Vasa Museum.

In the Vasamuseet you can visit the old warship "The Vasa", a fanatically well-kept ship, built 1628. The Swedish king ordered a new and larger warship, but his ambition led to disaster: the double row of guns and ports did not allow enough ballast (necessary for stability) and the unseaworthy vessel went down with all hands during her maiden voyage. That explains the unbelievably good condition of the ship with everything that belongs to it. The museum includes exhibitions on all the handicrafts necessary to shipbuilding like pit sawing or drilling trees to produce pipes. A really worthwhile museum!

Another highlight of our journey: Skansen, the first open air museum of the world. In this park in Djurgården hundreds of nordic houses have been saved and set up again, including complete farms with steadings, windmills, churches and buildings of the Sami people (previously called Lap, north Sweden). Skansen is also a zoo for nordic animals like bears, wolves, reindeer, wolverines, beaver, otter, birds etc.

The weather was kind to us that week, so that our trip to the TV Tower was really worthwhile: From this high vantage point you can see the islands of Stockholm even better, including the hundreds of islands towards and in the Baltic ocean, dwarfed by the huge ships passing through the shipping passage on their way to places like Helsinki, Åland, Tallinn and Petersburg.

We combined this outing to the TV Tower with a visit of the Technical Museum en route. For our vocational school this museum is a fascinating place, covering every field of technology imaginable, including a mine with a reconstructed tunnel, a functioning short wave radio station, special exhibitions on robots and on racing cars. The museum also has a hands-on part for children to experiment and play, an area our scholars were very interested in as well!

## Our *partner school* Gymnasium Järfälla

We had a ticket for all trains and buses of Stockholm for the whole period of our stay. So we could visit our partner school with the “Tunnelbanna” whenever we wanted to.

For our arrival on Monday morning the German flag was flying on one of the school flagpoles. We were welcomed by the headmistress and then Christina Eggegardh (Tina for all the Swedish teachers and pupils – they all just use the Christian names) showed us the school and the canteen. Since Sweden has school all day the pupils are offered a warm meal at midday, an offer we gladly accepted on various days.

In general there was a very friendly atmosphere in the school, teachers and pupils were very informal with each other. Of our lessons together we most enjoyed a German lesson with Monika, a sports lesson with Björn and survival training in the woods.

In the German lesson we were surprised by the language ability of the pupils. We had already noticed that most Swedish people speak English very well and found the reason for this in their television programmes: the foreign films were not dubbed, but were broadcast in the original language, sometimes with Swedish subtitles. What a pity this is hardly ever the case in Germany, but perhaps better international TV broadcasting and reception will improve things for us too.

In the last part of the German lesson the pupils could get to know each other better and exchange experiences. This was also the case in Sports – they played football – and in the survival training (s. report) in the woods.

On the whole the class trip passed much too quickly, there was so much to see and do, our sightseeing programme and the school programme showed us how much Sweden has to offer and made us all resolve to be back for more.