

# Scandinavian Smörgåsbord

Story and photography  
by Paula Cullison

## Danes, Swedes and Norwegians

Copenhagen, Denmark: Nyhavn Harbor

**T**he land of Hans Christian Anderson, Tivoli Gardens, cheese danish, Ingmar Bergman, Nobel Peace Prizes, Swedish pancakes, IKEA, Orrefors crystal, Edvard Greig, Henrik Ibsen, the Vikings, wooden stave churches and the Kon Tiki, although close to the Arctic Circle, is literally a hop, skip and jump away. Copenhagen, with its famous Mermaid, can be a gateway to the rest of Scandinavia.

Traveling through Scandinavia was easier than one would have imagined: The trains are always on time, and all seats are assigned as reservations are required. The distances between the capitals—Copenhagen, Denmark; Stockholm, Sweden; and Oslo, Norway—are great, thus necessitating six-hour—albeit—scenic train rides. To explore the fjords between Oslo and the west coast city of Bergen, the Norwegian rail system



Copenhagen, Denmark: Internationally famous Little Mermaid bronze statue commemorating Hans Christian Anderson's lovelorn creation.



Copenhagen, Denmark: Preschoolers at a bus stop.



Copenhagen, Denmark: Rosenborg Castle



Copenhagen, Denmark: Young star plays on sidewalk for passers by.

has arranged for a trip termed Norway in a Nutshell. The 12-hour, not-to-be-missed, perfectly timed adventure involves a rail train from Oslo to Myrdal, cogwheel train from Myrdal to Flam, boat ride from Flam to Gudvangen, coach bus ride from Gudvangen to Voss (with a stop in Stalheim), and then rail train from Voss to Bergen. Depending on the

amount of planned train travel, the ScanRail Pass, which can be purchased in the US, may be a real value.

Copenhagen, Stockholm and Oslo are among the great cities of Europe. Each has



Copenhagen, Denmark: Naval Band



Copenhagen, Denmark: Tivoli Gardens

Each country is holding onto its own kroner, worth about sixteen cents in US currency. Danish kroner, Swedish kroner and Norwegian kroner, although of almost equal value, cannot be interchanged. The easiest way to calculate the approximate dollar equivalent is to divide by six.

By our standard, just about everything is more expensive in Scandinavia. For example, a woman's haircut averaged about \$75 and a glass of beer was \$8. ATM machines are everywhere, so obtaining local currency is not a problem. However, it is always a good idea to have about \$100 in each local currency before leaving the US. Surprisingly, Seven-Eleven mini-marts, which abound throughout Scandinavia, offer mini-bank machines and sell international calling cards in varying denominations. Internet is available at most hotels and Internet cafes are everywhere. So it is very easy to stay in touch, if need be. Interestingly enough, hotel TVs carry CNN, Larry King, Dr. Phil and David Letterman, to name a few familiar programs.

The Danes, Swedes and Norwegians are proud of their respective royal families. Moreover, history has shown that they often intermarry. Centrally located, the royal palace in each capital city is within reach of the public. Sections are open for tours,

beautiful, expansive city parks, fine museums, great public transportation, many restaurants and an extensive offering of concerts, theater, jazz, ballet and opera as well as popular music. Situated near bodies of water, each of the Scandinavian capitals offers the traveler an opportunity to explore the environs by boat as well. The combination of public bus and boats makes for a most enjoyable trip.

Each city has public transport cards that can be purchased for predetermined amounts (some also include museum admissions). Everyone speaks English, a required subject in all elementary and high schools. So, communicating is no problem. As with many European cities, there are no skyscrapers in any of these three capitals, and billboards, as we know them, are virtually non-existent.



Copenhagen, Denmark: Radhuset City Hall...performance art piece is titled, "Glove at First Sight."



Stockholm, Sweden: Stadshuset Doorway to Nobel Peace Prize Banquet



Stockholm, Sweden: Harbor



Stockholm, Sweden: Young entrepreneur - no wonder Bob Hope said, "I'll take Sweden!"



Stockholm, Sweden: Nordic Sea Hotel's Absolut Ice Bar at 28°F using glasses made of ice requires patrons to wear insulated capes and mittens.



Stockholm, Sweden: Kyaking on Lake Malaren

thus allowing visitors glimpses into these regal digs. In Stockholm, the changing of the palace guards is orchestrated with much fanfare. The palace is located in the old cobblestoned section of the city, known as Gamla Stan, which is near the harbor. In Oslo, the royal palace is situated near the university, on top of the hill and adjacent to the city park. Here, the friendly palace guards act as tourist information guides. By contrast, in Copenhagen the palace guards seemed very serious about their responsibilities.

One can easily arrange an enjoyable trip through Scandinavia by using the Internet and assorted travel books. Booking hotels through sites like [www.expedia.com](http://www.expedia.com), [www.hotels.com](http://www.hotels.com) and [www.travelocity.com](http://www.travelocity.com) is very easy. These sites are secure, hotel selections are rather extensive in each price category and cancellation policies are reasonable. In

Scandinavia, as in most European cities, an elaborate breakfast buffet is almost always included in the room rate. This is important, as restaurant meals are generally rather pricey. However, with the influx of immigrants, reasonably priced ethnic restaurants are available in all cities. Many bakeries offer take-away service for sandwiches, salads and wonderful pastries, not to mention delicious coffee.

Packing light and thinking about layering clothing makes for a one-carry-on suitcase-and-over-the-shoulder-tote-bag trip. Comfortable walking shoes are a must, as walking for hours-on-end is the best part of exploring the dynamic cities of Scandinavia. Always pack a folding umbrella for that unexpected occasional shower. Being so close to the Arctic Circle during the summer means about 18 hours of daylight. Keep your

sunglasses handy.

Not-to-be-missed sights in Copenhagen include Tivoli Garden (go twice—when it first opens and again in the evening for the entertainment and nightlife); a boat ride from Nyhaven, the old harbor which has been revitalized; the city parks; Rosenborg Castle and gardens; Radhuset City Hall Square in the heart of the city; Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek Museum; Rundetarn, with a 600-foot spiral in its round tower which, built in 1642 as an observatory, affords the climber an excellent view of the city; Storget, a pedestrian shopping area where everyone seems to congregate; the Little Mermaid which commemorates Hans Christian Anderson's lovelorn creation; and, if possible, a performance of the Royal Danish Ballet.

In Stockholm, the hop-on-hop-off buses and boats make touring around mighty



Oslo, Norway: Harbor



Oslo, Norway: Folk museum weaver

easy. Not only is it fun to cruise around the waterways of this fine city, but it also gets you where you want to go. Skansen, founded in 1891 and located on Djurgarden, is the world's first open air museum, and the expansive park around it houses examples

of early Swedish architecture, crafts, a zoo, aquarium and cafes. The Radhaus, located in the center of the city, hosts the annual dinner and dance for the Nobel Peace Prize winners. The Absolut Ice Bar at the Nordic Sea Hotel is a must: Being in a room set at 28° F, wearing mittens and an insulated cape while drinking from a glass made of ice, can be a real kick.

Oslo has one of the most spectacular sculpture gardens in the world: Frogner Park. Gustav Vigeland created 212

life-sized bronze, granite and wrought-iron sculptures, which are housed here, as is his Monolith Plateau, 56-foot granite column of 121 figures. On the Bygdoy peninsula is the Kon Tiki Museum as well as the Norsk Folk Museum, an open-air museum featuring folk art, old farmhouses and a wooden stave church. Also on display was Thor Heyerdahl's RA II, which sailed from Morocco to the Caribbean in 1970. This followed his famous 1947 voyage from Peru, which proved the Polynesian islands were first settled by South Americans. Heyerdahl, who had constructed the Kon Tiki raft of



Oslo, Norway: Stave Church's architecture summons glimpses of its Viking heritage



Oslo, Norway: Old farm house



Bergen, Norway; Torgalmenningen



Bergen, Norway: Fish market where they proudly display whale meet.



Bergen, Norway; white house

multi-media display of the Noble Peace Prize winners, with commentary in English and Norwegian.

Bergen, once the capital and now the second largest city in Norway, is the gateway to the Norwegian fjords. Located on the west coast, Bergen was designated a UNESCO site because of its importance in the Hanseatic League, a conglomerate of merchant trading cities during the Middle Ages. Huge cruise ships now dot its expansive harbor. Most homes are built on the city's cobblestoned hillside, thus giving many inhabitants a harbor view. At the daily open-air market, one can purchase a variety of fish and specialty items, such as whale meat, as well as local crafts and flowers. Rain or shine, the market is open for business.

There are several one-hour flights between Bergen and Copenhagen departing daily from a very modern airport. Surprisingly, it is cheaper to purchase a roundtrip ticket (and discard the return flight) than to buy the one-way leg. And so our circle was complete: Copenhagen to Stockholm to Oslo to Bergen and back to Copenhagen. We salute the Scandinavians with a friendly Sköl! ■

balsa wood for this voyage, received an Oscar in 1951 for the documentary of the Kon Tiki expedition. The National Museum, located in the center of the city near the

university, houses Edvard Munch's famous painting "Shriek" and works by a host of Impressionist notables. The newly opened Nobel Peace Center showcases an impressive