

Taylor's Informal Guide to Stockholm



I had the great fortune to live in Sweden for two years while serving as a missionary for my church. These years of seeking ways to help people while also having opportunities to share my beliefs were possibly the biggest catalyst to making me who I am today. The way my worldview shifted, matured and developed while living in Sweden ultimately led me to where I am professionally, academically and in my family life (story for a different time, I'm happy to share). For about a third of that time, I lived in or around Stockholm and really grew to love the city and I'm so excited that you're going to have the opportunity to experience during its best season, Summer. Swedish people are typically introverted and like to be left alone. They



Missionary Taylor (on the left) with companion, Thomas Cleere, May 2008. Stadhuset (City Hall) is in the background

avoid all forms of social interaction with people they don't know, with rare occurrences of courtesy "hellos". These social norms get significantly relaxed during the summer months and everyone is usually really happy, mostly because the days are long and the weather is nice. Something we in New England can appreciate after a long, dark and cold winter.

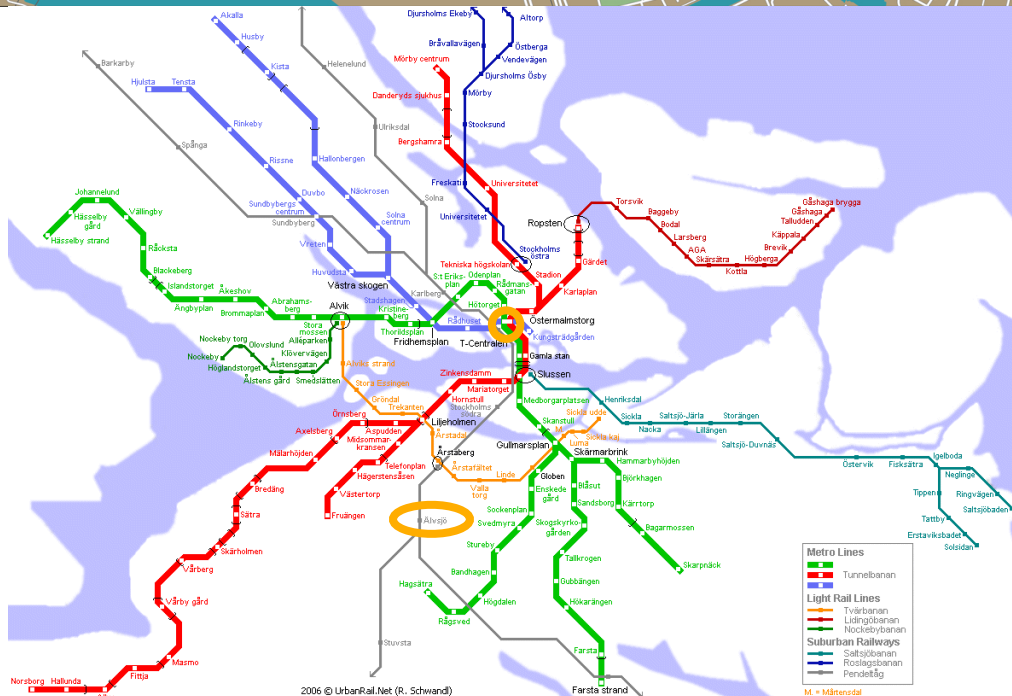
We didn't have the money or time to eat out or go into many museums / other attractions. So my guide is largely based on walking through and exploring different parts of the city. This is also keeping in mind that you'll be plenty busy at the conference venue in Älvsjö. While sizable, Stockholm is pretty walkable and there's the added efficiency of the metro system to get you really any other place you'd want to go whether by bus, train, tram or subway. I've tried to organize my walking guide to exploring the city by the kinds of things you may want to see: skyline views, architecture, green spaces, history, etc. I've included a map below with numbered highlights in hopes that it'll help you navigate to these places easily. My understanding is that most people are staying near to the central train station (T-Central), most of the places I highlight are an easy walk or subway ride away from there.

Stockholm proper is built on top of 14 islands that are part of a much larger and more expansive archipelago connecting the Baltic Sea and Lake Mälaren



SKYLINE VIEWS

The best views of the city come from either the bridges between islands or a few overlooks at the edge of the water. My personal favorite is on the steps down from Stadshuset (number 1 on the map). There's a nice garden area with some interesting sculptures toward the water from the building. At the edge of this garden are steps leading down to the water. From these steps you have unobstructed views of Riddarholmen, Gamla Stan, Södermalm and parts of Norrmalm. This place is quiet and pretty far removed from the main tourist hustle-bustle. The view is especially nice on sunny, clear days.



The other top places to see the city are on Södermalm. Either at Slussen (number 2, on the Green or Red subway lines) or along Katrinavägen (number 3). You can get other good overviews of the city from the top of the Nordiska museet (number 4, on Djurgården) but they aren't as wide sweeping as in the other places.

Architecture

While I am not well versed in the specific architectural styles of Central and Western Europe, I've long felt that Scandinavian architecture carries enough unique variations to be astounding in its own right. Gamla Stan (Old town, number 5) gets its own section, detailed below. My favorite places to walk to take in the sights of the buildings are, again, the bridges as well as along the wide tree-lined streets Strandvägen (number 6), Narvavägen (number 7) and Karlavägen (number 8) with Strandvägen being my favorite by far. Winding around the neighborhoods between these major streets may remind you of some combination of Beacon Hill and Back Bay in Boston. People watching at Karlaplan (a huge geyser-like fountain, between 7 and 8) is an added bonus to wandering around Östermalm. Heading over to Östermalmstorg (Ö-malm square, number 9) is a good way to complete a longer stroll through this area of the city.



Green Space

There are several beautiful parks throughout Stockholm with a major portion of the city serving as a nature preserve (Djurgården). My favorite places to go and enjoy being outside, people watching or taking a relaxed evening walk are in Kungsträdgården (King's garden, number 10), Humlegården (number 11), Berzelii Park (number 12), Nobelparken (number 13) as well as Vitabergsparken (White Mountain Park, number 14).



Kungsträdgården is a central hub among a lot of the commercial and business sector of Stockholm and usually hosts large public events. This is likely where they will be broadcasting any World Cup matches if Sweden is still in. Humlegården is nicely tucked away from a lot of the city hustle and bustle. Berzelii often has art installations. Nobelparken hosts a large sculpture garden and Vitabergsparken where you'll find a lot of the young, millennial population hanging out.

Shopping

At the front of Kungsträdgården (number 10) is Nordiska Kompaniet (NK). This is a huge department store a la Macy's, Harrod's or Nordstrom's. High-end Scandinavian and European labels are sold here. These labels can also be found in their own boutiques throughout Östermalm, along Birgerjarlsgatan and Stureplan (which incidentally is where I've been told the best nightlife is, number 15).

There are produce markets at Hötorget (Hay Square, number 16) and Östermalmstorg (number 9).

Also, many tourist shops as well as your token H&M (and other similar stores) can be found along Drottninggatan (Queen street) which stretches from Hötorget (number 10) all the way to Gamla stan (number 5). This is a pedestrian thoroughfare that is crowded and noisy. There's always a bunch going on along this street and down into Sergelstorg (seagull square) which is centrally located along Drottninggatan. Other shopping streets are Sveavägen and Olof Palmes Gata.



Gamla Stan

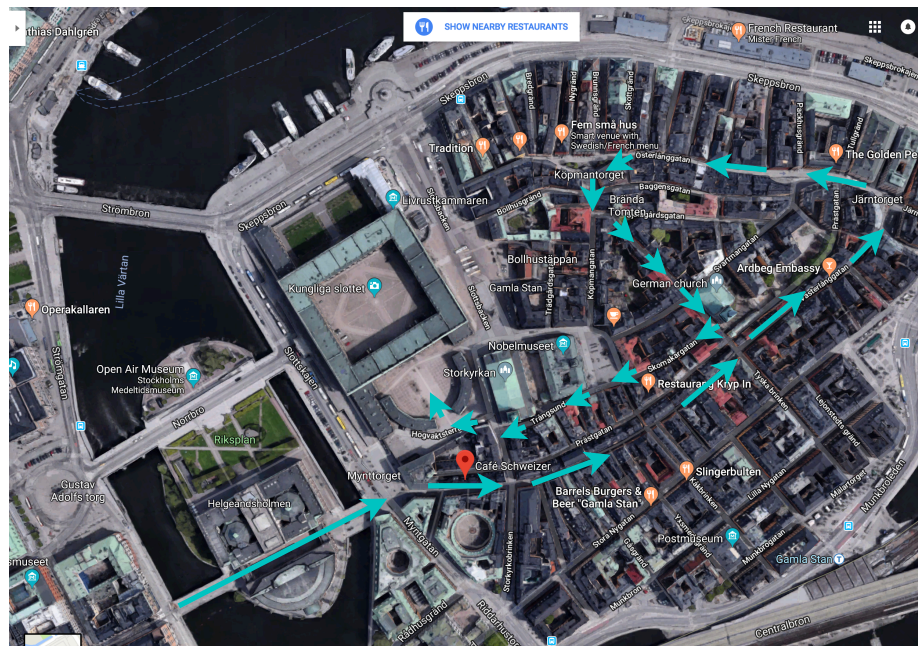
Possibly the best part of Stockholm is it's historic quarter, Gamla Stan. I have fond memories of walking along the main road (coming off of Drottninggatan, see the inset map below) where there is a ice cream parlor that makes waffle cones in a window front with a basket filled with shards for sampling. The whole area carries the sweet smell of freshly baked waffles. This smell and the sound of church bells are the fondest memories I have of the time I spent in this area of Stockholm. Here there are alleyways that are so narrow that you can barely fit through them and odd courtyards and small squares where local shopkeepers and residents catch up. The buildings are all kind of thrown up against each other and there are little quiet nooks here and there with really neat architecture. The central nodes of Gamla Stan are the Royal Palace, Storkyrkan (Big church) and Tyskkyrkan (The German Church) with a smattering of squares throughout.

I don't want to belabor every detail of why I find Gamla Stan to be magical out of fear of biasing your experience. Here are my three highlights:

- 1- Get waffle cone shards from Kåkbrinken (if not a full cone itself)
- 2- See the changing of the guard at the Royal Palace
- 3- Visit Brända Tomten (A tucked away square where Själagårdsgatan and Kindstugatan cross)

My favorite walk through Gamla Stan is as outlined on this map:

- From Drottninggatan, cross through Riksdagen (Parliament) to Västerlånggatan
- Go all the way down Västerlånggatan to Järntorget (Iron square)
- From Järntorget take Österlånggatan to Köpmanstorg [There's a statue of Saint George battling a dragon here, it is a bronze replica of a larger statue housed in Storkyrkan (costs to go in but is free on Sundays)]
- Take Kindstugatan past Tyskakyrkan and then turn on Skomakargatan
- Take Skomakargatan to Stortorget
- From Stortorget take Trångsund over to the Palace
- Zig-zag back through it all exploring different alleyways



Museums

If you have time and extra money—there are student (largely anyone between 19 and 30) rates—there are a few museums that you may consider visiting on Djurgården:

1- Skansen This is by far my favorite touristy thing I did while living in Stockholm. It's expensive relative to other museums and you'll want a few hours to do it justice. Skansen is an open-air museum that highlights Sweden's heritage from pastoral farmhouses to the industrial revolution. The purveyors of the museum purchased historic buildings and homes from across the country and hire people to live and act according to the time period of the structure as well as the regional culture. In a few hours you can see and learn about the diversity of people, cultures and wildlife across Sweden. I fear that a lot of that impact



may come through speaking to the people in Swedish hearing their dialects and having lived in those different areas.

2- Vasamuseet This museum is built around a huge warship that was built in the 1700s that has the unfortunate history of never making it out of port. Shortly after embarking on its maiden departure, it sank in the harbor. The museum highlights the history of the day as well as how the ship was recovered in the late 80s and has been restored and preserved. You wouldn't think that you'd enjoy a museum all about a huge ship, but this one is really cool.



3- Nordiska Museet This museum features the cultural tradition of Sweden. There are rotating exhibits that highlight different decades of Swedish life (similar to the Smithsonian Museum of American History).

4- Nobel Museum (This is in Gamla Stan): As the name may signify, this museum is all about the Nobel prize, its history and highlights those who have been awarded the honor and how their achievements have impact the world positively.

If you have an extra day or two for sightseeing

Visit Drottningholm This is the official residence of the Royal Family. You can take a ferry from downtown to the inner archipelago where this Palace is built. It was fashioned after Versailles (while beautiful it doesn't match its French counterpart in grandeur) and has expansive grounds.



Wander around KTH KTH (number 17) is Sweden's version of MIT/Harvard. It's campus is beautiful and is close to the Olympic stadium that was built when Stockholm hosted the 1920 Summer Olympics.



Take an Archipelago cruise It is possible to take day trips out in the outer archipelago where you can see elements of Stockholm's fishing economy as well as breathtaking natural landscapes



Visit Uppsala Uppsala University is one of the oldest Universities in the world. The town it is in, Uppsala, is this quaint and picturesque college town. I spent the first two and a half months of my time in Sweden in Uppsala at the beginning of summer and it was magnificent



Have a great time in Sweden.

I wish that I was able to join you there. The conferences and workshops should be fantastic. I hope that this simple guide will help you get a sense of how great a place Stockholm (and Sweden in general) is. I am aware that this is a very limited view with limited explanations of all that you can do and see in the city and is by no means presented as a complete guide. This doesn't even begin to scratch at the surface of everything that I'd want to do if I had time and money to spend.

Be sure to get a snack or two from the Pressbyrå (Sweden's 7-11). Stop in all the bakeries you can. Try some salted licorice. Brave some of the local seafood traditions. If someplace offers strawberries on anything, order it. Ask the locals for directions. They may be introverted but they are kind and helpful. The great majority of Swedes I met would go out of their way to help a stranger find their way through the city. Don't be shy to use English, everyone speaks it fluently and eloquently.

Most of all, enjoy the sun and the beautiful long days you'll have. They couldn't have picked a better location for a summer conference.

Ha det bra och lycka till,

Taylor