



Includes an overview by bus and sightseeing by boat,

Gothenburg – A City for All

Gothenburg in Sweden has become a popular destination for a long weekend break. Described as 'a city for all' it was awarded the annual prize in 2014 for the European city 'that has done the most to improve its accessibility for less able residents. Surrounded by water and countless islands it is elegant and sophisticated with museums, boutique hotels and gourmet restaurants but for those who want to dig deeper it has plenty of humour and a quirky feel that makes you smile.



TOUCH DOWN

The flight from London to touchdown was no more than an hour and thirty five minutes. The air was pristine, the countryside a mass of rocky outcrops, pine trees and endless water. There was a feeling of space and the city's half a million residents made the most of its parks, cafes restaurants and open spaces. It had a warm welcoming feel and felt unhurried; no doubt because In Swedish culture, fika is a must. It is simply part of everyday life and means a coffee and cake break with friends. We

used the bus to take a tour of the city as it included a good commentary and provided a great overview. On the top deck giant trees full of blossom leaned over the main boulevard and scented the clear air. We learnt that Gothenburg was originally built during the 1600s by the Dutch and they were responsible for the city centre's famous canals. The original city was built inside a large zigzag shaped city wall but little of it remains. Years later, following a fire, King Gusav Adolphus is said to have pointed to



Avalon Hotel with its roof top swimming pool

The painting outside our room

the ground and declared the current main square as the site of the new Gothenburg and a bronze statue commemorating the event has become an important landmark.

During the 1700s Gothenburg grew. The port became a major trading and shipping town and many new neighbourhoods were built. Today touches of modern art pop up all over town amongst the traditional buildings. These include three cream white figures crouched on three tall poles. Based on the three wise monkeys they illustrate 'see no evil, hear no evil speak no evil.' At night they change colour, each alternating between blue, green, purple and red.

Another statue worth mentioning is by Carl Milles. It shows a naked Poseidon which caused quite a stir when it was unveiled in 1931. The Greek god's nether regions were determined too prominent and some reshaping ordered. When we visited he was enjoying a bubble bath courtesy no doubt of a local. Perhaps still concerned about his 'lunch box'

SIGHT SEEING BY BOAT

The sightseeing tour aboard the Padden boat gives a completely different overview of the city. It takes you through the old moat and canals, under countless bridges and into the very heart of the city. It continues into the harbour with glimpses of the shipyards, fishing harbour and the maritime museum. Our guide provided more historical information but



A classic car

Statue of King Gusav Adolphus

The Science Museum



Out on the water

peppered it with humour and more obscure facts such as 'did you know the Swedes eat more bananas than any other nation.' Visible from the boat are more of those quirky statues like the one of Prometheus who features a triangular pyramid for a head. It is said to symbolise his enlightenment.

A MARITIME TRADITION

Gothenburg is a busy port but it also has an Archipelago which stretches out like a string of pearls along the shoreline. Here it is anything but quirky. It is nature at its

best. We were the guests of Stromma on an evening cruise. As we set sail we drank champagne and as we made our way out of port the prow of the ship sent giant undulating ripples of deep blue and bright green towards rocky islets and reefs. Tiny fishing villages lined the rocky shore and lighthouses warned of unexpected dangers. Live music accompanied an awesome salmon and shrimp buffet and as the sun set we returned to a harbour of twinkling lights and the striking outline of an old sailing ship which is now a busy hotel.

They say Gothenburg is a city for all which is very true. The evening cruise is excellent but it is possible to get the same enjoyment for a very small sum by taking one of the ferries which visit the islands in the archipelago. Many islands do not allow cars and for those who do not wish to go ashore staying on board is just like cruising. The ferries have comfortable seats, outside areas, food and even free books to read and toys for children to play with.

CULINARY DELIGHTS

The city is full of gourmet Michelin starred restaurants and open air seating has overhead heating and blankets for when there is a chill in the air. Everything seems to come with style and elegance. Even traditional meatballs came served with mash potato furlled like a sail in a sea of gravy with lingonberries at the 'shoreline.'

Gothenburg's location means that fish dishes are abundant and the fish church is a striking building and well worth a visit. Here



The Botanical Gardens

Old Tram

Classic car

Volvo Museum

fish and shellfish are 'worshipped' and can be both bought and eaten. It is not however the only place where fish is treated with reverence and praised for most restaurants feature it prominently.

With so many great places to sit and enjoy the scenery picnicking is popular. In town Slottsskogen is a favourite place. Here there are children's rides set amongst flower beds and walking trails. There are also zoo animals, penguins, seals and even moose! All here is free.

Festivities include great spreads of traditional food. Mid-Summer Eve is one of the country's favourites and the day has become a national holiday. 'Gobbling' crayfish is another old Swedish tradition and August is a

month when crayfish parties come to the fore. Mountains of crayfish are eaten accompanied by schnapps, party hats and traditional drinking songs.

If you want to put another smile on your face then a meal in the Moon Thai kitchen is a must. It plunges you into a world where you could be forgiven for thinking that you were taking a trip on LSD. It is a sycadelic wonderland of the weird and bizarre but full of good vibes and surprisingly authentic Thai cuisine. Around every corner another assault on the senses sets you reeling in amazement and disbelief.

CONCLUSION

So whatever your inclination you will not be disappointed. Gothenburg is truly a 'city for all.' Few cities can boast that they have an up to date

accessibility inventory listing 3,000 public buildings which are up to scratch at all times. Even a visit to a public swimming area will have alterations made to improve accessibility with ramps, toilets and changing rooms. This is even true in some swimming areas on the rocky archipelago. Enjoy your stay.

ATTRACTIONS

Just some of the city's highlights

LISEBER

This is Scandinavia's largest amusement park. It has rides which produce adrenalin rushes to equal any other in any of the worlds theme parks but it also has another side It is ideal for those who just want to enjoy the charming landscaped grounds studded with impressive sculptures- some of which have



Out on the water and around town

that oddness about them that make you smile again. There are carousels, fairy-tale castles, an outdoor dance floor, adventure playgrounds, and shows and concerts. Here too you can enjoy good meals including a comprehensive vegetarian restaurant. There is a basic price to enter but you pay separately for the awesome mega rides.

THE BOTANIC GARDENS

This is one of Europe's leading Botanical Gardens and was opened in 1923 in celebration of Gothenburg's 300 year anniversary. It reminded us of a similar version of Kew gardens. We especially enjoyed the palm houses but there was plenty more to see as well - from American insect eaters to Him-

alayan plants. The symbol of the garden is a white wood anemone. These flowers we saw carpeting the green woodland spaces everywhere. The gardens have a packed itinerary of events throughout the year

MUSEUMS

There are many excellent museums to visit in the city but on a weekend break there will only be enough time to visit one or two. Our choice was the science museum and the home of Volvo.

The latter traces the history of Volvo engines from 1927 and is a must for Volvo owners. Exhibits include early cars to ground breaking prototypes of electric self-driving cars and bus-

ses. I was also fascinated by the commercial vehicles which included old fire engines and heavy trucks. There is also a whole display of ocean yachts and marine engines.

The Science museum extends over seven floors which are connected by lifts and ramps. You begin your journey at the top of the building and slowly descend. There is something for everyone and much of it is hands on. I especially loved the space exhibits where it was possible, amongst other things, to hang in the sleeping restraints aboard the space station. The life size animatronic mammoth exhibition was very realistic, except for the cotton wool snow! Others found the rain forest safari and the aquarium their favourites.

Words : Janet Myers

Photography : Jonathan Myers