



ELFIN COVE 2017

FROSTY DREAM TRIP ACROSS SWEDEN

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10 May 2017 – we were really excited as we flew to Maasbracht, where a freshly cleaned Linssen 45.9 was awaiting its new owner with a welcome drink. Our ultimate destination, one that Udo had long dreamt of and longed for, was the Swedish archipelago.

First we had to tidy up and rearrange things, however – it's almost unbelievable the amount of stuff from our last boat, a 40.9, we had to stow away – plus loads of solid food and 150 bottles of Austrian wine. After all, we didn't want to go thirsty in the parched North! But after three days everything was in its place, the systems had been tested, the river trial had been completed and, after enjoying an exquisite dinner at Restaurant Da Vinci as our reward, we finally departed on 13 May.

First stop: t Leuken with its wonderful evening atmosphere, then on to Nijmegen, where Fortune smiled on us by providing a centrally located and indeed perfect mooring, which was also free of charge due to conversion work. It's a nice town, where an enchanting food market was being held that day. After a good portion of spare ribs, we even sipped a delicious Scropino (a lemon vodka sorbet) and enjoyed the perfect evening after a sunny day. The weather remained calm, the Wesel-Datteln Canal was extremely friendly and the day ended at a peace-

ful leafy mooring in front of the Hünxe lock. The only cloud on the horizon was when the generator displayed an oil pressure warning and promptly went on strike. So we phoned for help and made an appointment with a technician the next day in Münster.

We passed through the next few locks as if we had trained for it, but we were still happy to then find a lock-free route through the Dortmund-Ems Canal. The repair of our generator (a capacitor burst!!) allowed us to spend a whole day in Münster. The city harbour is surrounded by bars and restaurants and full of cheerful people, and the city itself is appealing and well worth a visit. Although we weren't exactly "legally" moored there, the kind officers of the water police quickly realised that we were simply unable to move away because of a technical problem and we eventually left the marina with a police security badge.

Everything went very smoothly for the next two days. It kept raining on and off and we quickly sailed to Wolfsburg via Hannover. It then became really

exhausting. Although we had cast off from our mooring at the Elbe bridge by 7:30 am, we were held up for quite a long time at the Hohenwarth Lock (18.5 m rise!). And we wanted to reach Potsdam the same day! It got dark and it was quite a challenge to orientate ourselves and navigate to the marina "Am Tiefen See", but by 10.30 pm we were "Roman Catholic" (Austrian expression for mooring bow before stern) at a jetty behind a bridge.

On 23 May we met a friend from Berlin who was a knowledgeable and willing guide through the parks around Sanssouci Palace - it was sunny and quite hot and we were in good spirits, not least because the day ended with an excellent meal in a delightful Italian restaurant.

In Berlin we brought Udo's son and daughter-in-law, Lutz and Tanja, on board - they are experienced sailors and were a valuable addition to the crew - and sailed to the Niederfinow boat lift, which we passed through the next day - very impressed by the engineering of the giant structure. We did 50 miles a day to Gartz and another 43 miles a day took us to Schwinemünde, where the adventure actually began. We had intended to take another long walk, but a heavy downpour dampened our enthusiasm for walking and we ended up at the harbour pub, where we ate hearty but good-quality food. We then went to bed at a respectable

hour because we were starting very early the next day, with 76 miles to cover. Destination: Bornholm. Although we knew the Windfinder reports and all the other forecasts by heart, we did have to try very hard to make sense of the metres per second. We considered the options. So we decided, let's go.

We cast off at 4:45 am on a calm lake with the sun rising. Great. We could still observe the sunrise for a little longer, but that was it for a pleasant crossing: dense clouds, weather turning cool, water at 14.5°C, poor visibility and a highly disagreeable wave coming right at us from the side.

Not every stomach could cope with the rolling of the boat and we also noted that the stowage in the ship was still clearly in need of improvement for a sea journey, though we had thought that everything was secure - chaos reigned. Even the handsome armchair next to the helmsman's seat sped smoothly through the area, with Hilde sitting on it, despite an almost Gordian tangle of knots. (This situation has now been remedied. We are now the proud owners of a second helmsman's seat and the lady skipper is not only more safely seated but can also see out without standing up!) We navigated perfectly, even though the "Auto-Joschi" (the GPS automatic control system) behaved very unconventionally due to the side wave and occasionally started a rapid 360 degree turn - a rather

Gothenburg's opera house



St. Anna archipelago



Slottsholmen



Söderköping



unpleasant manoeuvre on this wave. Shipping routes were nicely crossed. After about 11 hours, everything suggested that Bornholm was only 2 miles away. The only thing was - we couldn't see it. We were beginning to have our doubts when, thankfully, the coast appeared in front of us before a collision occurred. The very pretty Norrekas marina was also quickly found, where we actually observed some Vikings walking (not swimming!) into the water, which was by now a full 13°C! Our dear guests then cooked a delicious goulash and we fell into bed early and dead tired. After all our exertions, we deserved a day off. We took an extraordinarily beautiful bus trip to the ruined castle of Hammershus, where we very steadfastly braved a violent storm and watched Danish children playing a kind of game of knights. We then undertook another charming short walk to Allinge, where we had a delicious meal.

Weather conditions turned one day off into three, but Rønne is a charming little town and in its streets, shielded from the wind, you can also spend time in the sun and have a good time, which we certainly did.

Sweden. The Promised Land

We had 2 June in mind for an orderly continuation of the journey and so we set off for the Promised Land, Sweden. We covered 30 miles that day and reached Simringshamn, where I had my first Swedish fish soup and it was delicious! Of course we wanted to get on our way quickly, with Karlskrona as our destination, but again highly unpleasant waves accompanied by high winds forced us to change our plans - we cut short our route and called in at the island of Hanö. We moored there safe and sound, but it could actually have been November rather than June. It was horrible, cold, rainy and grey as grey could be. But Lutz had

planned to have a barbecue, so that's what he did. It was a wet and chilly experience! Well, anyone can cook up a barbecue in summer!

After fitting in another day off for foul weather, we finally passed through the desired archipelago landscape, where we were soon grateful that we also had electronic nautical charts - navigation was really demanding. But these archipelagos were also incredibly attractive, and that day the weather played along. It was sunny at about force 4 on the Beaufort scale. In the afternoon we arrived at the Ekenäs Marina in Ronneby and found a wonderful, picturesque spot. Next to us were some Swedish motorboats on which the Swedish national holiday was being celebrated. The barbecued sausages next door smelt so wonderful that Tanja went on a shopping tour with the dinghy and the bicycle, while Udo and I went for a walk to explore the surrounding area. Consequently, we had barbecued sausages with rosemary potatoes and salad in the evening.

The next day we cheerfully left for Karlskrona in the morning but, regrettably, the starboard engine had no cooling water. What a relief it was that we had two engines, as the port engine on its own took us safely to our destination. We tested the engine again before calling a technician and to our great joy it was running again. We had probably got rid of the green stuff that had apparently clogged up the intake during the journey. And the impeller survived!

Lutz and Tanja had to return home on 9 June as duty was calling. So we spent two very pleasant days in Karlskrona, the visit to the shipping museum being especially charming, and enjoyed really delicious food at the marina's "Fish and Vinj" restaurant.

Trollhättan Canal



Sjötorp, Göta Canal



And then we were alone again. We set off for Öland: first we had a beautifully dreamlike, exciting and rather tortuous trip through the archipelago - which meant we had to watch out like a "Haftlmacher"! (it just means very attentively!)

We then crossed over to Öland and moored in Grönhögen, an absolutely enchanting, dreamy harbour. It was a beautiful place, if a bit chilly! Elfin Cove was now calling, for some maintenance first and a pile of washing had also built up in the meantime. But we also ventured out on a cycle tour to the beautiful bird sanctuary and nature reserve of Ottenby, pure nature, wonderful. However, the headwind also made cycling quite difficult.

We continued to Borgholm, and we again experienced strong winds, unfortunately also at the berth. We were even rocking violently back and forth. Actually, it should all have been going on in Borgholm, in the sunny part of Sweden, where the Swedish royal family also has their summer palace, Solliden. That's just a story, though. It was pretty dead. Most of the restaurants were closed (schools had been on holiday since

the day before, so it was theoretically high season), and the food we were served during our one visit to a restaurant was simply bad. However, we had very nice walks through the nature reserve to the palace and Borgholm castle, which was a ruin. We also increasingly experienced the "white nights" there - it didn't get properly dark any more. We covered our hatches in the aft cabin with cardboard under the curtains, otherwise it would have been simply too bright to sleep. Something highly unusual happened on the morning of 14 June: bright sunshine. You might almost believe that summer actually existed there. We opened the roof on the aft section. It was lovely. The way to Oskarshamn was still quite pleasant, but there was another heavy shower while we were refuelling and mooring. It's so Nordic.

And we continued in a northerly direction. After 42 miles with quite pleasant weather and wind only force 3 on the Beaufort scale (yes, really) from the south, it quite soon it got chilly again and once more started to rain. We anchored for the first time off Loftahammar and it was wonderful. We stayed one day, ignoring the rain, sipping Prosecco and eating well, and just lazed around.

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Now we wanted to go to the St. Anna Archipelago, which had been described to us by locals as being particularly beautiful. In the morning it was foggy, but soon the sun was shining in the sky, the archipelago really was fantastic, just like in the brochure. Once again, navigating was a real challenge but all in all it was just how we dreamed it would be. Fyrudden, which we were actually aiming for, proved to be completely unsuitable for our big, beautiful Elfin Cove, so we sailed on, finally anchoring in the dream bay par excellence, in the Lusholm-Linders Fjords. It was picture-perfect!

It was so beautiful there that we wanted to stay longer, but for the weather....the wind was steadily rising, so we really wanted to get into a marina. We had changed our original travel plans. We would neither be heading for Stockholm, nor turning around and sailing back, we would be continuing our journey through the Göta Canal across Sweden to Gothenburg and then sailing back. So we headed for Mem, where the canal begins. There wasn't a suitable mooring place on our route and we had a force 6 gale with gusts up to 37 knots, so we headed straight for Mem, where a small miracle happened: it was suddenly calm, peaceful, fine and sunny and we were moored in fantastic surroundings. We could even - wonder of wonders - spend a long evening outdoors.

Sweden's Construction of the Millennium

The formalities were quickly completed. We received our "Pickerl" (=adhesive label), which constituted payment not only for the passage, but also for the use of all the locks and all 21 marinas.

The Göta Canal (190 km), together with the Trollhätte Canal, is 390 km long and contains 58 locks, 50 bridges, 2 trough bridges and 5 lakes, rising 91.5 metres. It's a truly impressive construction, crowned Sweden's Construction of the Millennium: from 1810 to 1832, a total of 58,000 people were involved in digging a stretch of almost 90 km by hand, with shovels and spades.

We received information material about the route, were instructed about the correct locks, downloaded the Göta Canal App, bought a long line - after which we got started with the first lock. On the journey through the romantic canal you are supposed to relax and take a break - and so after achieving the "considerable" daily target of 2.3 miles, we moored at another dream spot, in Söderköping. It was warm and the town was enchanting, with a long, empty jetty and a tapas bar next to it. This cheered our hearts: we climbed the local mountain, walked through the village, did a little shopping and finally ended up in a

nice restaurant where we could once again sit outside and eat fish soup.

We set off in the morning and 6 hours, 12 locks and 3 encounters with other boats and several bridges later (the timing of the opening of the bridges was usually excellent!), we landed up in Norsholm in front of Lake Roxen.

Norsholm actually had nothing to offer, and the weather was windy and chilly. So we cooked a nice meal and looked forward to the next day, when we would be crossing Lake Roxen. The landscape was simply wonderful, completely isolated, and it was very windy. We then ascended the Carl Johan Locks, a flight of locks rising 38.8 m, to the Berg Marina. And - we were completely alone. When we asked about this, we were told that only one single other boat had passed through that day. The generously proportioned Berg Marina provides space for 40 boats, but there were only seven of us in total.

The next day's stretch as far as Borensberg was another typical canal journey: the obligatory rain, quite a lot of locks, 8 bridges, a leisurely cruise through the countryside past horses, sheep and cows, with hardly a house in sight. Beautiful.

And the next day, after crossing Lake Boren, we were confronted with the next lock stairs which carried us through at quite a pace, which could even be described as rapid. That day was the summer solstice, one of the biggest festivals in Sweden. For once we were therefore hoping for a little life and maybe even some fun. The nice student at the lock recommended Motala, where she said there was a particularly fine celebration – so that's where we went! On the canal, we actually passed a meadow full of lively activity and festive atmosphere. However, the mooring in Motala was more suitable for toy boats, but we managed to find a reasonable mooring and looked forward to the evening. So off we went to downtown Motala. There was no sign of life. It was dead. No shops, no restau-

rants open, no people. But we had seen the lively celebration on the way in, so we simply walked there along the canal. However, we had underestimated the distance – it was quite a trek! And then, to our bitter disappointment, we found that everything was already over and the people had all gone. The last stall sold us a shrimp sandwich before locking up. It was a long walk back. The rain set in and then got heavier. It was cold. We made ourselves at home on the boat – what a blessing that we've got decadent underfloor heating! – and watched a couple of episodes of Downton Abbey. Happy Midsummer!

We were woken at 7.30 the next morning by an unplanned alarm from my mobile phone and it was a good thing too. Windfinder was predicting force 5 to 7 gales for the next two days, our mooring was neither comfortable nor safe and we were facing the prospect of crossing Lake Vättern, the second largest lake in Sweden, which can be quite treacherous and is likened to the open sea. So we left in a mad rush and were confronted with strong winds and high waves. Of course, the wind came at an angle of about 90° and had a water surface area of about 100 km to build up the waves, but we had by then mastered the art of stowing so our stuff wasn't flying about any more. We arrived rather shaken in a pretty little Gästhamn (harbour): Forsvik. Somehow, time had stood still there. I had been there 28 years before and completed the trip on the Juno, the oldest canal boat, which we met three times, and since then practically nothing had changed. Many of the photos I took at the time could have been taken now. In the evening we visited the much feared 3.5 m lock with uneven rock walls, which we would have to get through the following day, which, by the way, we actually mastered brilliantly and then found ourselves on Lake Viken, the highest point on the Göta Canal, at 91.8 m. Our mooring in Hajstorp was wonderful, in the countryside, isolated, only one boat apart from us. The facilities including toilets, showers, washing machine and kitchen were, like everywhere else, well equipped and spotlessly clean. We had a

Scandinavian nights



cleaning, washing and shopping day (the latter by bike) and a lazy dinner and evening in front of the TV. We watched the final episode of Downton Abbey!

June 27th was our last day on the Göta Canal and that day it showed us its sweet side: the weather was glorious and the landscape was picture-perfect, ... and there were a lot of locks! We stayed overnight in front of the last lock on the Göta Canal, in Sjötorp on Lake Vänern. First we had a light lunch with a glass of white wine and took a walk through the village and to the lake. Because we liked the restaurant so much we went there again in the evening and had a wonderful dinner of zander (also known as pike-perch) with asparagus and potatoes.

We then continued our journey, along the banks of Lake Vänern, heading south to Mariestad, where we took on another guest. Mariestad has a beautiful cathedral, in which there was a fascinating exhibition "Icons in Transition". There is also a very nice old town and a lot of shops and restaurants. In one of them, on the shore of the lake, we were entertained by an accordion orchestra, and we also had an excellent meal there.

Lake Vänern

On 1 July we crossed Sweden's largest lake, Lake Vänern. We had chosen an absolutely perfect day for the crossing. It was still a bit rough to start with, which triggered slight seasickness in our guest in the form of lethargy. Then the sun started shining, a light breeze got up, the roof was lowered and we downed a couple of glasses of Prosecco, enjoying every minute of the 53 miles we covered that day. In Vänersborg we tied up at moorings, very pleasantly situated at the edge of this very nice town - but there doesn't seem to be any nightlife in Sweden. During our walk after dinner the streets were actually deserted.

Trollhätte Canal

We set the alarm for 7 am the next day as we wanted to get to Lilla Edet and faced the prospect of several bridges and, above all, a demanding flight of locks on

the Trollhätte Canal. However, an extremely strong wind was still blowing and we first had to solve the problem of how to get out of the narrow moorings unscathed. We postponed our departure, did some more shopping, thought about it some more and finally, after some detailed consultation, plucked up the courage to leave. Pure stress! But we managed it and shipped out, mightily relieved. The locks were large and a bit heavy, but everything went OK.

However, our destination, Lilla Edet, which had been described as being very scenic, proved to be a bitter disappointment: it was tiny, we could hardly manoeuvre into it and there were no suitable mooring places, so we proceeded to the next waiting quay, moored, cooked a meal and had a nice time. And now we only had one more stage to go to reach Gothenburg. Lilla Bommen Harbour is located in the centre of this beautiful, bustling city in front of its modern, impressive opera house. However, several moorings reserved for boats of our size were damaged or not available but, after consulting with our neighbours, we managed to squeeze in and moored reasonably safely. It was a relief to finally experience a lively city with many fine restaurants, cafés, shops and - actually - people, and we enjoyed our afternoon and evening there.

The second part of our tour, via Marstrand, Helsingör, Copenhagen, Barther Bodden, Stralsund, Wolgast, Stettin, Berlin, Wolfsburg and back to our home port is a story in its own right. At any rate, our journey ended in Maasbracht after 2,021 nautical miles - a wonderful trip, even though we later learned from a Swede that it had been the coldest summer in Sweden for 158 years - yes, it was a poor choice! But the memory is mostly wonderful, with many dreamlike impressions, tempered by a good dash of sadness that this journey is over.



Hildegard Frank and Udo Ehmsen



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