

SWEDEN – A BIG SURPRISE FOR US

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Today, I couldn't say when we first dreamed of having a Linssen.

Sabine thinks it was during our holiday on the Maas in the late 1990s. Our Lab bitch Santa was just a year old and we'd been motoring through Belgium and France. One day, we were sitting in a café with the Maas below us and two or three Linssen boats tied up at the jetties. We didn't have anything to do and watched how the boaters moored up, helped each other, had a drink on the jetty and then changed for a walk through town. Exactly what it was that inspired us, I can't now recall. I guess it was that tremendous sense of freedom you get if you can live like that.

*Sven, Sabine and Lotta
Heinrich*

After many years of chartering, we bought "Santa", our first Linssen Grand Sturdy 380 Sedan, in 2011. What a great feeling it was to have a dream come true. We spent many happy hours on Santa, the three of us, or with friends but it wasn't suitable for extended stays. By a lucky coincidence, we found our dream yacht in 2014 at Alexander Jonkers in Zeeland. Since then, apart from short breaks because of work, we have been travelling on "Arche", our Linssen Grand Sturdy 430 Sedan.





In 2021, we cruised around Sweden. It's a cruising area recommended to us by people and by its natural beauty. We report on our trip below:

April 2021

This year, planning our travel arrangements was very exciting. Because of the various travel restrictions in place, we decided to travel direct to Sweden from our starting point in Kiel. Our crossing route passed Lolland on the way to Kalvehave. We made good progress thanks to a wind speed of around 2-3 on the Beaufort scale and calm seas.

At lunchtime, we made a short stop at Vejrø, a very isolated, idyllic island, where Lotta, our Labrador, stretched her legs, as did we. Unfortunately, we couldn't stay as we had to sail into Sweden the following evening.

May 2021

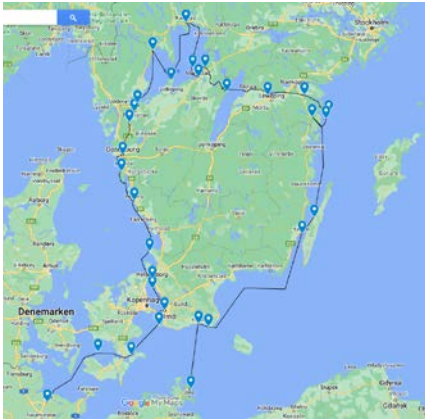
On 1 May 2021, we were on our way to Skanör. The onward journey in the Bøgestrøm strait between Møn and Nyord had required our full attention. We landed in Skanör, Sweden, at about 4.30pm.

We liked Skanör. You can walk around, there are a lot of beautiful villas to admire and we were able to buy fresh fish in the harbour. There we learned that Swedish people "swish" to pay, using a Swedish system similar to Apple Pay. Anywhere – whether it's a restaurant, fish counter or flea market – people pay by Swish. However, you need to have a Swedish bank account to use the system so we always had to have some cash on us.

We actually wanted to stay a bit longer but high winds were forecast for the next few days. So we escaped to Malmö, to the Dockan Marina, where

we found a very nice berth (at the very end) in which to weather the storm. Although it rained hard for three days, we were able to explore Malmö on our city walks and found it to be green and modern with an open waterfront. When the weather improved, we travelled a further 20 nm to the idyllic island of Ven. This island has much to offer the traveller. Lotta's interest was mostly aroused by pheasants and hares. But those who enjoy a tippie aren't left out either, because this is the home of the famous Spirit of Hven whisky distillery.

From Ven we proceeded to the modern city of Helsingborg, where a large number of green city parks link up to form a "Green Ribbon". Our cruise took us to Mölle, a small town, both picturesque and atmospheric. We strolled up the 188 m "high" Kullaberg to enjoy the view.



In Torekov, we came across an excellent fish merchant, right there in the harbour. Scenic walking tours are also available.

Varberg is dominated by its 13th-century fortress. Seafarers are spoiled with a large marina, where shops and restaurants tempt you to stay awhile.

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Our next stop in Sandö Hamn gave us our first taste of what lay ahead in the archipelago. In the Vallda Sandö nature reserve we enjoyed the views of the island worlds beneath our feet. The marina was built to accommodate 350 boats. There was usually nothing much happening in the marinas as it was early in the season. This would not change until the brief high season from midsummer to mid-August. Sweden provides an excellent infrastructure for us boaters.

We reached Gothenburg on 22 May and had no problems finding a berth in the Lilla Bommen marina right in the city centre. It would certainly be advisable to book ahead during the season. The city can be easily explored on foot. Our highlight was the market hall, where there were all kinds of treats for on-board meals.

After three days, we continued our journey, as we wanted to get to the Göta Canal. Although we imagined that the Göta Canal had to start

in Gothenburg, it was actually the Trollhättan Canal. This canal first passes through an industrial landscape towards Lilla Edet, which is then followed by the Trollhättan lock system at Åkersvass. We were quite alone in the lock. The staff there didn't take payment of the EUR 100 canal fees as the computer system was down and they didn't accept cash. That was fine with us.

We moored in a pleasant spot above the lock system. During our walks we saw the old canal works, which began with the first passageway in 1800. Everything was properly explained for visitors and it was exciting to read about how the locks are constructed and operated.

The Trollhättan Canal ends in Vänersborg, where we stopped as the ancient table mountains, Halleberg and Hunneberg, lay 5 km to the east. Besides pine forests, moors and lakes, we were told we could see elk there. We embarked on a very long walk but didn't see any elk. It would have been better to book an expert guided tour with "guaranteed elk".

June 2021

Lake Vänern now lay ahead of us. It would be better described as an inland sea. Measuring 75 km wide, 140 km long and containing about 22,000 islands, this lake was our

biggest surprise and a blessing for our cruise.

We now had a "Scandinavian high" over us, which would drive out the month of May, which had been somewhat too cool and rainy. The water temperatures were approaching 20°C, tempting us to indulge in some fresh water swimming. We were still on a northerly course. During the day, we encountered one or two boats at most. We had Lake Vänern almost entirely to ourselves.

We explored the lake with the aid of Hamnguiden (Harbour Guide) No. 9, which describes every mooring or anchorage in detail. First, we headed up the west side towards Åmål. In Köpmannebro we moored at the outlet of the Dalsland Canal, but it didn't open until midsummer night and is also better suited to smaller boats.

There were so many delightful places, often with basic moorings or anchorages, and there was always enough space available. You pay by leaving a "donation" in the jetty operator's honesty box. Most jetties have barbecue areas, waste disposal facilities and basic toilets. We didn't attempt the "Swedish mooring technique" with the bow moored to rocks as we felt it would be too unsafe to keep our 23-tonne yacht head-up to the rocks. It's usually significantly lighter GFK boats that use this mooring technique. A stern anchor winch and bow ladder would also be definitely required. The

dinghy was very useful on this trip. The electric motor meant that we could glide almost silently through the archipelago – experiencing nature at its best.

We moored alone in Floghall, Säfte Sandö. It started raining at midday. Eventually, we also found a sauna on a "rock". The stove heated up quickly and we sweated in the bastu (sauna), cooled off in the lake and listened to nature. This is more or less how we had imagined Sweden. By evening the clouds had cleared and we were treated to a wonderful evening ambience. Barbecued lamb and a bottle of red wine did the rest.

As more wind from the SW had been forecast for the next few days, we changed sides of the lake and headed for the larger island of Kålandsö and

the offshore archipelago, where we found a nice spot in the fishing village of Spiken. Alternatively, Läckö Castle (the White Castle) would have been another atmospheric spot. The Sjoboden restaurant in Spiken, where we had a wonderful meal, is what made the difference.

After this detour to the south, we headed north again. Vithall remains etched into our memories. Here, too, we moored at a small jetty in the middle of the archipelago. The water was so clear that we could see the rocks underneath us.

Karlstad has a very beautiful marina, the best ice cream in Sweden (up to this point in our trip) and a pleasant atmosphere. Time was slipping away and we were relaxed, which was also due to the long northern days. On 20

June 2021, the sun rose at 3.47 am and set at 10.23 pm.

Midsummer night, that great Swedish festival, was approaching. We decided to head for Fallholmarna. We celebrated the longest day with our own camp fire and barbecue. Swedish people usually celebrate the following weekend. Everywhere there are folk festivals, concerts and everyone is out and about. To join in the celebrations, we called at Mariestad, but there were no major events there either due to the virus.

After experiencing the very quiet midsummer festival in Mariestad, we continued on our way to Brommö. We covered the 20 km to circle the island. Then, an hour later, we rested up in Lindökroken, a very beautiful bay, in wonderful evening light.





In Skeberga, we met up with friends from Germany who were travelling in Sweden in their motor home with three dogs. We had a pleasant evening.

July 2021

We had now been in Lake Vänern for four weeks. There were so many beautiful places that we could easily have stayed another four weeks. But now it was finally time to enter the Göta Canal. We sailed in at Sjötorp and worked our way up the locks. This took a lot more effort but was simple:

One person is dropped off in front of the lock, goes with the fore and aft lines to the lock chamber, pulls the lines through the rings and feeds them back. The stern line is tied and the fore line is let go. This takes until about four boats are in the 30 m-long chamber. Usually, there are groups of locks, each containing two or more locks. On several occasions, we had to wait as the Swedish holiday season had started and the proportion of "tourists" was increasing, so you should take your time and relax. Most Swedish people can apparently do this, as everything passed off "peacefully". And there were fresh rolls available from the lock café – what more do you want...

Our enthusiasm increased with each kilometre. The canal had beautiful stretches in store for us, some of them a bit narrow, so you should concentrate when steering. Our reward was a

unique cruising area between Sjötorp and Karlsborg.

And now we were already on the next lake, not quite so big this time – Lake Vättern. We sailed the northern section as far as picturesque Vadstena. In Medevi, we moored at a bridge for a few days. From there it was a pleasant walk into "Sweden's Baden-Baden", as the locals introduced their ancient spa town to us. It has a pump room, spa park with café and concerts – everything from another age. To us, it was a magical place and we celebrated the climax of our journey

The next section of the Göta Canal took us as far as Mem but before that we had to "conquer" the flight of locks at Berg. Carl Johans Lock system lowered us 18.8 m through seven locks. At the foot of the last lock, we found a mooring, watched the "lock theatre" for a day and went for walks. We cruised along the Göta canal for 5 km. Generally, boating was a relaxed affair around there. Most people were in control of their boats and everything went slowly and carefully. The infrastructure in the canal was excellent. The 6 Amp fuses were a minor niggle, but they were sufficient to charge the batteries. Sufficient water, waste disposal facilities and sometimes washing machines and driers were available. There are good restaurants, but you have to look for them.

Söderköping is a bustling tourist town with the best ice cream parlour in Sweden which opens at 10.00 am every day. By that time, a 50 - 100 m queue of ice cream lovers is already waiting outside. The number of customers does not diminish during the course of the day.

And the best thing was the Scandinavian High which had accompanied us since May. It's quite strange – we used our on-board air conditioning for the first time and were glad to have it. And in Sweden too!

August 2021

We had now actually been sailing in Sweden for nine weeks. We had sailed into the Trollhätten Canal near Gothenburg at the end of May and now, at the end of July, we were leaving the Göta Canal in Mem.

On that day we were at a lonely anchorage in a bay off Harstena harbour. The harbour and the "trendy" bays were full. So we sailed from our anchorage in the dinghy to the town, went for a walk, ate ice cream and bought rolls for the next morning. That evening we had freshly smoked shrimps, caught locally, smoked and sold while still warm. Incidentally, Lotta loved Swedish ice cream (blueberry, melon, mango).

It's worth making a detour to Valdemarsvik, where there's a club that restores historic fishing boats and a very fine restaurant twenty minutes outside the town. We went to eat there with our new-found friends Silke and Holger from Warnemünde and had a pleasant evening.

And again we discovered a completely different cruising area and ventured into the East Swedish archipelago. Over three weeks we roamed through the maze of islands. Now we were anchoring a lot. We stayed several days in Trollholmen. Sabine went kayaking and I went on trips in the dinghy so we were able to observe colonies of sea eagles.

The archipelago was slowly coming to an end. We longed for open some "open water" and crossed over to Öland. There, we anchored in the northernmost bay and waited for the wind to subside. There was plenty to do as we could go on walks in a wonderful nature reserve. Our next destination was Kalmarsund.

Our visit to Borgholm on Öland held several surprises in store for us. First of all, a classic car rally is held there every year. The Swedish royal couple take part in the event in a vintage Volvo. The cars can be admired and there are monarchs within touching distance.

Then, on Friday evening, we had a nasty surprise. When checking the engines, I discovered the V-belt on the port engine had been damaged. The Steyr network wasn't accessi-

ble but Stefan Jansson from the local boat service centre came on board at 9.00 am (!!!) on a Sunday and changed the belt.

Our next stop was Kalmar in Kalmar Sound. The castle gardens and the market square with the cathedral and the many historic buildings are worth a visit.

Hanö is situated to the north of Hanö Bay. With its enchanted landscape, very trusting deer and stags and welcoming harbour, this small island is a dream destination.

Kåseberga and its "Ales stenar" standing stones are a must to visit and are very popular with the Swedes. In the fish shop you'll find everything your heart desires. And the hiking trail to the largest stone ship burial site in Sweden is not far away.

It felt like the end of our adventure in Sweden, because there, too, the season was drawing to a close and the weather was showing signs that autumn was approaching.

September 2021

At the beginning of September we enjoyed a beautiful crossing from Ystad to Sassnitz Rügen in sunny weather. Our season ended with a four-week round trip around Rügen and the German Baltic coast with its beautiful seaside resorts.

We said goodbye to Sweden, having fallen in love with the country and its friendly people. The Swedes we met were very friendly, approachable and helpful. We had never experienced the contrast between cruising the sea and



inland waterways before. Many destinations will have to wait until we can arrange further trips to this country. Stockholm with its archipelago and Lake Mälaren are further reasons for travelling north.

Sometimes our thoughts return to the Maas, where a unique journey began that would change our lives. We have learnt a lot about seafaring and our yacht on the joint cruises we made with many international Linssen owners and from Alexander Jonkers. That's why we have confidence in ourselves and our "Arche" and we can experience adventures like these. We're already looking forward to next season...◆

TRAVEL DETAILS:

Boat Linssen Grand Sturdy 430 Sedan

Duration 5 months

Distance 1,500 nm

Engine hours 280 hrs

Generator 113 h

Plotter 90 individual routes