



## One young scholar's journey through Sweden

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This is my story on how I spent Spring Semester exploring every corner of Sweden as an SCA Swedish Language Scholar. Not only was it the most eye-opening experience I have had in my young life, but it also gave me a chance to connect with my Swedish lineage.

When I landed in Sweden on January 9th, I was not prepared for how dark it was so far up in the northern hemisphere. I was with a group of eleven other students from Gustavus Adolphus College and we spent our first three weeks in Mora brushing up on our Swedish language skills.

My group headed fifteen hours north from Mora to Jokkmokk for the 412th annual Winter Market, an incredible experience! There we met with a number of Sami people and immersed ourselves in their

culture. We even spent a day up in the mountains with a Sami family and their reindeer. After Jokkmokk, we furthered our studies of Sami culture for ten days at Umeå University.

Then came a week at the Birka Folk School in Östersund where we learned about Swedish folk music and handicrafts. It was an interesting contrast with the Sami culture.

Over spring break, I spent time with a high school exchange student friend of mine who lives in Oskarshamn, then with my father's cousin who lives in Stockholm. My father's cousin is a retired literature/Scandinavian studies professor, so I learned all about the city of Stockholm and its relics. It was good to make this connection with my Swedish relatives.

I returned to Mora after spring break, this time to learn about the Swedish political system. All I will say is that it is a very different system from ours.

From Mora, we headed down to Gothenburg for ten days to learn about that city's rich history and to meet up with a former Gustavus geology professor who led us on excursions



Karl enjoying his first semla.

throughout southwest Sweden to learn about the geological history of the region. After this we trekked across Sweden and ferried to Visby, the medieval city on the island of Gotland. The architecture there is astounding!

After visiting Visby, we spent a week in Uppsala for the celebration of Valborg. There was something about so many silly traditions in such an old college town that made the experience so remarkable. Our final two weeks were in Stockholm. There wasn't a dull moment with it being such a big city. In addition to attending several lectures at Stockholm University, we toured the Royal Palace as well as the Cathedral, and were guided through the Nobel museum by none other than the former Marshall of the Realm!

Thank you, Swedish Council, for this wonderful opportunity, and for all you do to help young people learn more about Sweden and its incredible people.

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Jokkmokk's winter market. Photo: Fredrik Sandberg/TT