

A Day in Skåne

Sweden's southern county unveils a different idea of **Scandinavia** to Amrita Das.

ON AN OVERCAST DAY, we took the Scandlines ferry from Helsingør, Denmark to Helsingborg, Sweden. The geographies of the two countries were as different as the names of their connecting towns were similar.

No sooner did I arrive at Skåne (also called Scania), the southernmost county of Sweden, that the low-hanging clouds lifted. The landscape changed dramatically; I was surrounded by water on all sides beyond the idyllic countryside. The houses were a mix of National Romantic style of architecture—made of brick and wood with inverted V-roofs—and contemporary

design like ornamental windows and bright colours including reds, yellows, and oranges.

The sights changed to forest trails as we drove up to the peninsular Kullaberg Nature Reserve. Surrounded by the Øresund (The Sound) and Kattegat straits, I panned my head, gluing a pair of binoculars to my eyes, to take in the spectacular panorama from Kullaberg Lighthouse. This, I thought, is not how I had imagined Skåne to be. After all, Scandinavia is assumed to be gloomy and grey. But I saw shimmering blue waters with numerous sailboats, under a crisp, azure sky.

Clockwise from far left:
The Kullaberg Lighthouse
offers spectacular panoramas
tinted azure blue; many
sailboats can be spotted on
the surrounding straits; the
Swedish ritual of *fika* sees
families and friends come
together to enjoy coffee
and pastries.



We walked a few metres down for an exciting adventure—porpoise safari. After a few minutes of anxiety on a rather buoyant ridge-inflatable boat (RIB), I tried to ease into my seat and spot the small-toothed aquatic mammals. Our hopes started to dwindle in a matter of minutes. Whether that was a result of no porpoise in sight or the overbearing sun, I was not sure. But an hour later, when our boat parked back at the bay, we felt victorious having spotted two porpoises and a few seals.

On my way up to the Visitor's Centre, naturum Kullaberg, I saw chiselled cliffs rise symmetrically from the sea. Some cliffs were interrupted with green shrubs, and hikers could be seen on those trails. There were also secluded coves for picnickers. Driving away from Kullaberg Nature Reserve, I waved at mountain bikers who arduously pedalled on the incline.

Next, we made our way to Höganäs Saluhall. This market hall is only six years old and a modern place to shop for locally produced groceries, meat, and food products. Open through the year, it is frequented by locals who purchase Swedish food produce like freshly caught herring, new potatoes, cheese, jams and oils, and other ingredients. I walked around looking at the larger-than-life asparagus, the kitsch-bottled raspberry jams, and locally grown vegetables like red, yellow, and green tomatoes. Further inside the market, I swiftly walked across the bakery towards local ceramics. The municipal of Höganäs is known for its well established ceramic industry. Höganäs Keramik dates back to 1909, and these salt-glazed earthenware were one of my primary motivators to visit Skåne.

The display in front of me included the characteristic brown Höganäs jugs (in many sizes), glasses and modern monochrome and abstract artefacts, crockery, and a full range of home-decor items. I walked around a couple of stores for some time, trying to pick the perfect souvenir and eventually arriving at a colourful ceramic trivet from Höganäsgruppen store—one of the many local manufacturers.

My aimless wandering in the market was interrupted when a fellow traveller informed me of a local microbrewery in the vicinity. Höganäs Bryggeri started operations in 2013 with the Höganäs Lager, but

soon expanded with Höganäs APA (American Pale Ale), African Pale Ale High Nose, and Miss Behave IPA. They now sell all over Scandinavia, Germany, USA, and Dubai. Magnus Einarsen in the brewery poured me a sample of their famous APA and studied my reaction with his curious eyes. After a few seconds of silence, I answered his silent questions. I loved the APA's hoppy yet delicious flavour, though the malty IPA did not suit my taste. He cheerfully responded to my feedback, when I realised his big and intimidating stature was in complete contradiction to his lively personality.



AMRITA DAS (2)



In Flickorna Lundgren, in Skäret, I met even more friendly and cheerful Swedes, if that was possible. Flickorna Lundgren is a charming house immersed in history. Mats and his wife, Ann-Lie, are the second generation who run this cottage, which has been serving coffee and cakes since 1938. Mats tried to convince me that it was the tranquillity of the place that brought people there. "When you're passing through the chestnut tree (at the entrance), you just relax."

I, on the other hand, am quite certain that it is the traditional experience of *fika* that makes their guests revisit. *Fika*, a Swedish ritual where the entire family and friends come together to enjoy a cup (or more) of coffee along with pastries, in the outdoors of this thatched red house is truly comforting. Flickorna Lundgren's homemade 'vanilla hearts' are a favourite with everyone. Though I also loved the freshly baked Scania ring with cardamom and sweet chimney sweepers (a crusty bite made with eggs, nuts, and chocolate). We whiled away our time under the late afternoon sun with copious amounts of caffeine and delicious cakes—keeping the spirit of *fika* alive.

Since we were in the county, a quick 40-minute detour to the capital, Malmö, was mandatory. My personal interests vested in the unique Ohboy Hotell (ohboy.se), where guests are encouraged to stay with their cycles on long- or short-term basis. It is a fully sustainable hotel with apartments, and practises sustainability by promoting bikes as a mode of transport, growing vegetation on roofs and courtyards,



From left: The 190-metre 'Turning Torso' skyscraper soars above Västra Mamnen; a kayaker rows towards the Øresund Bridge.

and using solar energy for heating and electricity. Towards the end of the road from Ohboy Hotell, the landmark Turning Torso jutted out. This 54-storeyed residential skyscraper has a 90° twist from the base to the top. Capturing it in one frame proved to be a bit of a challenge. Next, we walked to Sundspromenaden where local Swedes came out to enjoy the sun. Most sat by the Øresund, while others swum in it. I noticed a few skateboarders and many cyclists, and a group of young girls who danced to music from their own stereo.

At a distance, across the glistening sea, I saw the edgy Øresund Bridge, blurred by the golden evening sun. This bridge would take me back to Denmark, with the new idea of Scandinavia that I now had. A Scandinavia where the sun shines at night, where people communicate with their smiles, and where blue is the warmest colour. ✕

THE DETAILS

GETTING THERE

Many airlines like Lufthansa, Emirates, and Swiss offer one-stop flights to Copenhagen Airport (CPH) from Delhi and Mumbai. From there, take the 20-minute train ride to Malmö.

STAY

Clarion Hotel and Congress Malmö Live (from ₹8,500; nordicchoicehotels.com) is centrally located and a few steps away from Malmö Central Station, with sea and city views. Choose **The Lodge** (from ₹26,000; the-lodge.se) between Malmö and Lund, for an indulgent spa stay. Experience royalty in the modern **Örenäs Castle**

(from ₹13,296; orenasslott.com), 15 kilometres from Helsingborg.

EAT

In confectionery, try *spettekaka* (pyramid cake) or *äggkakaga* (egg cake). In main course, preparations of goose and eel constitute traditional cuisine.

SHOP

Try Höganäs Saluhall or Malmö Saluhall for a market hall experience. Formargruppen on Engelbrektsgratan, Malmö; and Wallåkra Stenkarlsfabrik on Drejarestigen, Vallåkra, are good for local crafts including ceramics. Stores like Marimekko on Skomakaregatan and Norrgavel on Engelbrektsgratan, Malmö house Scandinavian designs.