

A Stockholm Walkabout Tour, in the area of Hornsgatan in the South Hills.

Put on your walking shoes and discovery hat and join me on an informative walkabout tour in the less known west side of the Stockholm South Hills (Södermalm) at Hornsgatan. The street, Hornsgatan, was the street that took you to the Horn (Årsta Strand), which is the name of Södermalm's western point at Lake Mälaren. Prior to early city planning it was a crooked street passing close by Church of Maria Magdalene and all the way to the Horn. The street is 2300 meter (ca1.6 miles) long, it got its name during the 1600's, and have many interesting side streets to explore. I will not walk the entire street, only 50% or so, and along the walk I will learn more about the "Hornsgatspuckeln", Maria Magdalena Church, Carl Michael Bellman among many other interesting subjects.



Mälarpalatsen on the west side of Södermalm as seen from the Old Town

Standing at Kornhamns Torg (Grain Square), in the Old Town, looking south I see a very imposing building, that everybody in Stockholm knows, high up on the Maria Hill, and it is the Laurinska Huset, more known to us as Mälarpalatset. The building got its name from its first tenant, the art historian Carl Gustav Laurin. He lived in this house from 1892 to his death in 1942. His apartment in the corner tower had a magnificent view over Riddarfjärden and the Old Town, and was under the first part of 1900's a popular place for the Stockholm culture elite. Among his neighbors was his artists friends Hanna and Georg Pauli. Hanna Pauli's famous painting of Ellen Key (famous Swedish author and feminist activist) was painted in the couple's apartment.

On my way I'm passing Slussen (The Locks), an area of central Stockholm, connecting the Gamla Stan (Old Town) and Södermalm (South Hills). The area is named after the locks between Lake Mälaren and the Baltic Sea. The locks themselves allow passage between these two bodies of water (of different levels). Slussen also refers to the important traffic-node created in 1935. There is, and has been, an angry, loud and intensive debate for how the future of Slussen should look like pitting common people against politicians and some city elite groups.

Just below "Ryssgården" (The Russian Yard) at Slussen, I met an old man sitting on a bench by the quay slowly shaking his head pondering...



Åhh...så de kämpar alla mina medborgare... överallt i min stad kämpar invånarna för att få behålla sin hemtama miljö... Varför arbetar stadens folkvalda så förfärligt mycket mot medborgarna istället för att samarbeta med dem? Men vi måste hålla modet uppe kära medborgare...dumhet kan aldrig få segra!!!

Ohh ... so they fight all my fellow citizens ... everywhere in my city residents struggling to keep their domesticated environment ... Why do the city elected struggle against a vast amount of citizens rather than to work with them? But we must keep up the spirits dear citizens ... stupidity can never win!!!

We shared a cup of coffee from the man's thermos and he shares a little bit of history with regards to the Locks with me. "You need to understand that the very soul of Stockholm is changing with all the new and crazy ideas the politicians are coming up with in an endless stream of disagreeable studies". Unfortunate, this is very much true across the town. Leaving the old man behind I'm quickly reaching Södermalms Torg and the beginning of Hornsgatan.

Immediately I see a very interesting phenomena called the Hornsgatspuckeln (Hump) which is an apparell, an elevation to a higher parallel street level of 10 m (ca 33ft). The "Hump" is the remains of the original Hornsgatan which was very narrow in the past. The trams could not handle the steep hills and in 1901 they blasted their way through the hump for the new and wider street.

At the same time disappeared the birth place, the Dauererska Malmgården, of Carl Michael Bellman also called "the Swedish Shakespeare", as well as a part of Mary Magdalene Church cemetery as and as all buildings on the south side of the street.

All building on the north side was saved. As I am walking over the "hump" I see a very interesting artwork "Dårarnas båt" (the lunatics' boat) by artist Sture Collin. Maybe, just maybe, this is the image of the modern man, or..?

Across the street I see a beautiful church, the Maria Magdalena Kyrka (Mary Magdalene Church). The church's history dates back to the 1350's when King Magnus Eriksson with the permission of Pope Clement VI had a funeral chapel built on the location and dedicated it to Mary Magdalene. When Gustav Vasa liberated Stockholm in the early 1520s, his troops led by Peder Fredag encamped in the chapel and suffered severe losses when the troops of Christian II of Denmark attacked from the city. This might have been one of the good reasons Gustav Vasa had all churches, monasteries, and chapels on the ridges surrounding the city destroyed after the introduction of Protestantism in 1527, including the chapel of Mary Magdalene. However, his son King John III started the construction of a new church on the location in 1588, and the church was completed in 1634. The interior of the church is magnificent, and must be seen. The famous Swedish troubadour and poet Evert Taube is buried at this church.



Hornsgatspuckeln (Hump)



Dårarnas båt by Sture Collin



Mary Magdalene Church

Today is a wonderful day with a lot of sunshine, so I take a short rest on a park bench at the edge of the cemetery. Across from where I sit the street Bellmansgatan appear. Another Swedish troubadour was born in this area in 1784. A long time ago there was a building called the “Dauerska Huset”, where Carl Michael Bellman was born. Carl Michael Bellman, a significant Swedish poet and composer, is a central figure in the Swedish song tradition and remains a very important influence in Swedish music. The start of one of his most famous songs, Fredman's Epistle No. 23 is, 'Alas, thou my mother'. To a graceful minuet tune, Fredman, lying drunk in the gutter outside the *Creep-in* tavern, 'a summer night in the year 1768', blames his mother for his conception.



Dauerska Huset, ca 1861

I'm smiling by myself as in the same area there was an historic place called “Bysis” (Bysättningshäkte), where poor indebted wretches was held as they had not paid there debt. Many good songs and poetry was caulked here when the poets was incarcerated in this place.



Bysis (Bysättningshäkte)

With a little bit of fantasy I could see the drunkards sit here with a piece of cracker bread in their hands and lice in their hair. Carl Michael Bellman was known to be one of them sitting at Bysis.

Maybe such an institution would be appropriate for modern governments not paying their debt.

Today there is a restaurant with the same name, Bysis, at this place.

My next destination was planned to be Mariatorget, but I make a small diversion in to an area that represent the old “Söders höjder” as I remember it from my younger years. I'm following Bellmansgatan all the way up to Pryssgränd that is located high up on the top of Mariaberget with a stunning view of Lake Mälaren, Old town and the Stockholm Town Hall. Here I'm able to see what was in Stockholm in the past, with it's old building architecture. Stockholm Stads Museum said in a review:

“There..emerge within the eastern part of Mariaberget the image of a unique set stone buildings from the 1700's that is particularly important culture and architecture interest.”

The run down buildings were carefully restored in the 1970's for the benefit of us that are visiting much later in time.



Pryssgränd

I continue my walk west towards Blecktornsgränd to reach Mariatorget. Here I find my absolute favorite Stockholm dish, the “Strömmings macka” at Mariatorgets Gatukök. Many city's' in Europe have a dish that symbolize their specific city character. For Stockholm and the South Hills (Söders höjder) it is the “Strömningmacka” (Baltic Herring on crackerbread with mustard sauce) describing the city character.



Mariatorgets Gatukök

I'm arriving at Mariatorget with its very beautiful park, a lot of trees and flowers showing off its beauty to the visitor wishing for a nice afternoon in the sun. As I mentioned there was a large fire burning down several blocks including the Maria church in 1759. Here is the interesting piece of the story. A new square was constructed, named Adolf Fredriks Torg (after the king Adolphus Frederick). The conditions from the king, for using his name, was that no executions could take place on Adolf Fredriks Torg. During this time period it was not uncommon to have public executions in town squares. In 1959 the name of the square was changed to Mariatorget.



The park at Mariatorget

After spending some time in the park, and visiting a small shop named Söderkryddan to purchase some tea, "Södermalms Blandning", I'm starting my walk back to Slussen to take the bus back to my mother's place for dinner.. As I'm walking, I'm quietly, with great emotions, singing one of the best known songs I know about Stockholm, written by the Swedish troubadour Evert Taube.

*"See how the whole of Uppland is in flames.
Evening sun burning beyond the Solna forest.
Green verdigris against the violet waves,
Brunnsviksreed stands where the pike splashed.
Far in the South against the faded sky shining
windows shine with gold at Södermalm,
and the palace guard lowers the flag
Stockholm is cooled after today's suffocation."*

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www.newsweden.org

www.swedishrootsinoregon.org

More information is available for the interested:

Stockholms Stads Museum/Stockholmskällan ([stockholm stadsmuseum/stockholmskällan](http://stockholm.stadsmuseum/stockholmskällan))

Stockholms Spårvägs Museum (sparvagsmuseet.sl.se/)

At Wikipedia:

- Carl Michael Bellman
- Ellen Key
- Maria Magdalena Kyrka
- Hornsgatan and Hornsgataspuckeln