

CONFLUENCE V

Orchid School-Guteskolan Södra, Gotland,
Cyber Gymnasiet, Stockholm

India - Sweden exchange program
April 2016





What is the first thing that crosses your mind when you think about another nation, country or a group of people?

Asians are so hard working?

The French are really romantic?

Never trust a Russian?

Or, other negative, more prejudice lined stereotypes?

Unfortunately stereotypes can be linked to more than just gender, age or nationality. More often than not, they are very negative and tend to be less flexible to new information. They often create prejudice and discrimination, not allowing us to understand individual differences and understand others.

I believe that we need to create opportunities for our students to meet people from other cultures. Intercultural experiences have an important role to play in a world situation that is – to say the least.

I believe that we have the demanding opportunity to support this generation of students and future leaders to deeper understand the major challenges of cross-cultural conflicts and to develop the capabilities, commitment and grit to address them.

I believe we have to create that possibility and train our students to be empathic, sensitive, compassionate and respectful to other cultures.

I believe border-crossing will enable our students to open their minds , critically examine what media and adult world talks about cultures, draw their own lessons about cultures , rely on their experiences than borrow someone else's perspectives and most of all know all cultures are good and there are no inferior /superior cultures.

Lakshmi Kumar

Director,

The Orchid School & PNES

Travelling is “The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.” — Marcel Proust

My trip to Sweden was an official trip turned into the best learning and fun filled experience which added to my knowledge and experience about people and their perceptions outside India. I have travelled a lot in India and seen almost each dimension of my country. Crossing the borders of this beautiful country to explore beauty and adventure of the world around was the most exciting experience, especially because it had many firsts added to that.

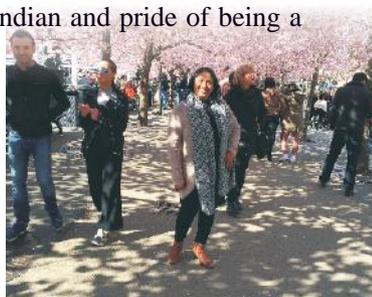
Other than adding many dimensions to my outlook as an educationist it has enriched me at personal level too. This had been a great opportunity to peep into the world of young students both Indian and Swedish and their way of treating each and every experience of this three week long stay sharing their living spaces; it was hectic and relaxing at same time as I was away from routine work.

Every day was extremely amazing both because of fun and learning. My host Annelie had planned this trip so meticulously that I could get a first hand experience about life style, food habits, daily routine, families, festivals and travel by making us live every moment of professional and personal life of a native Swede. I could get a chance to look at many aspects related to education with lot many similarities and contrasts which made me to come closer to the students and teaching fraternity of Cyber Gymnasiet.

Along with enjoying the varied landscapes of Sweden I loved the hospitality of my host families. The historical back ground of both Stockholm and Gotland ,which has been preserved in every possible way is just amazing. The beautiful locales gave a boost to my photography skills and I can now claim to be an expert in groupies and selfies. Right from running to catch a bus for school to being a part of celebrations of 'Euro Vision - A Musical Festival' of Sweden and being part of football madness, I came back home all energised and rejuvenated to get back to my routine work.

Every thing about me is same ,save the widened outlook ,better understanding and perspective with which I look at the world outside India, the world of students and teachers; the world which posses similar challenges and offers many opportunities; the privileges of being an Indian and pride of being a global citizen !

Namrata Majhail
Principal



Foreword

“To travel is to discover that everyone is wrong about other countries.” – Aldous Huxley

Yes, we do have different perceptions/myths about other countries, cultures, and people but when we travel we realize that these existed in our minds. We were bogged down by narrow boundaries which prevented us from exploring new horizons.

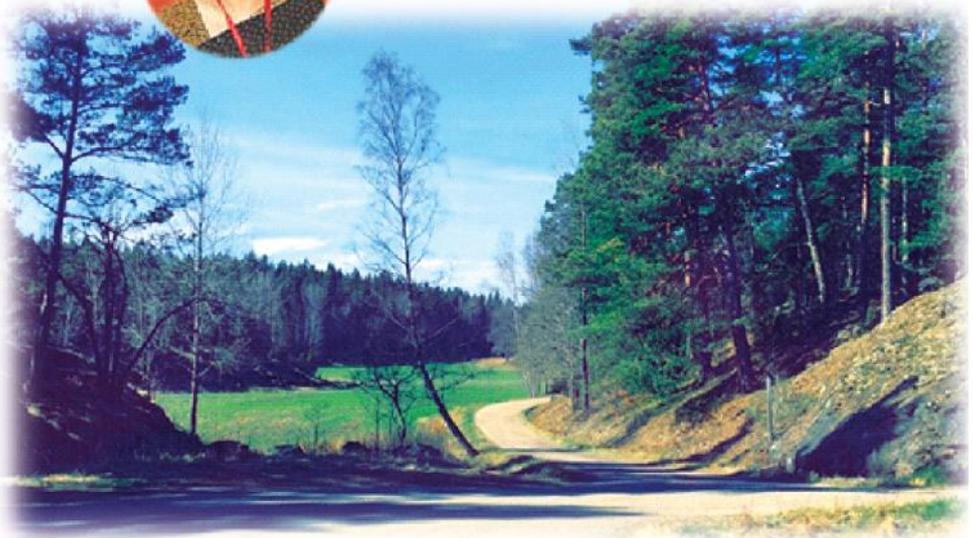
In order to enable our students to be sensitive global citizens of tomorrow, an exchange program was initiated with a few schools in Sweden.

Guteskolan Sodra, on the island of Gotland, in the vicinity of the Baltic Sea and Cyber Gymnasiet in Stockholm are our partner schools in Sweden and has been extremely cooperative, enthusiastic and energetic in taking this initiative further.

We are happy to bring to our readers the fifth edition of 'Confluence' an aptly named journal which is a rich repertoire of articles penned down by our students and teachers who were part of this exchange program this year. They talk about their experiences, impressions and learning which reflects that the journey undertaken was with an open mind and heart.

“Travel and change of place impart new vigor to the mind.” – Seneca

Coordinator's Desk - Baishaki Bapat



A Life Changing Trip

Hej Hej

I try to never lose track of how lucky I am that I was selected to go for the Sweden Exchange Program. Who in The Orchid School hasn't dreamt about getting this opportunity? As a student this trip introduced me to extraordinary locations, experiences and people. Never has this been more in focus than during hanging out with friends and our teachers , interacting with my host family and also with my Swedish friends. Without a doubt it stands alone as the most incredible, breathtaking travel experience of my life.

To say that there's truly nothing like it in the world would be an understatement. Gotland and Stockholm are the places where travel dreams come true.

Everything is just so marvelous. Experiencing one of those shimmering Swedish afternoons when everything seems to glow from within: the boathouses on the harbor, all pulsing vermilion red; the wind-rippled bay, glittering like a million suns had made me forget about all my worries.

I had gone there with an open mind but they really gave us a welcome as though we were a part of their clan itself.

Learning

their lifestyle, their way of communicating, commuting, eating was just so wonderful. I've never experienced anything like this in my life and I don't think I ever will. I learnt the basic human values in Sweden. It was not only about the learning and the fun, but it was also about how it changed me as a person and the trip made me realise who I am as a person.

I've never looked at the world in such a way. I've learnt a lot from this trip which is a life time learning.

Aayush Borde
TOS Student



'A Window To The World'

Sweden by far has been one of the most meaningful journeys I have ever had. Because of previously living in America, I thought it would be rather same, and maybe was in some aspects. But living with a family and experiencing their daily life was something I had never experienced. I was excited at first but at the time of actually going and living with the family, I became really nervous. We also had a "circle time" the night before our dispersal to the respective host families. We were asked about our expectations. Mainly we were told not to expect a lot of things and how to adapt, adjust and accommodate. But as soon as we got to know the families we realised that they were very nice people and could see all the efforts they were putting in our care. All the 17 days I spent with my family were something I would cherish for the rest of my life.

Vedant and I were living together with the same host family. It was good because we gave each other company while going to school or traveling around the city. I personally loved the experience, I really connected with the host mom, and had tons of fun with their kids. Their everyday life was very busy as the mom would get up at 5 in the morning and leave by 6. Because of their busy schedules they made sure that everyone had dinner together every night. It was organised in the most beautiful and loving manner. If I have to put it in a few words, I would say "we all had a grand dinner every night". Living in that environment and understanding their culture gave me an insight about the people of Sweden. It taught me that they had a lot of trust in each other, for example we went to the farmers market and no one was there at the counter, you were supposed to pay for your self and be honest to pick products you paid for.



The kids of my host family were also very independent, polite and well behaved. All day they were busy with their school and extra-curricular activities. The host family dad was very accommodating to the routine of his family members. He would help around the house, taking care of the kids, helping the host mom in cooking and cleaning up. My favourite memory with them was, of a weekend when they invited their close family for dinner and requested me if I could cook some Indian food for all of them. Every part of that day was very exciting for me because this was something I had never done before. That whole day was dedicated only to cooking. My host mom helped me throughout the day and we managed to get a few Indian dishes on the table. The food came out really good and the stealer of the show was paneer makhni I made. The best part was when we all sat together and ate, I didn't feel any different than their family, everyone contributed something to the meal, even if it was laying the table or cutting some salad . All of them became very fond of India and my host mom decided to dedicate her dining room to an Indian theme with lots of Indian artefacts.

Sweden was not only fun but also a meaningful learning experience. We got to experience life without our parents, and got a taste of independence. We were also exposed to new culture and people. This exposure to the world has made us more knowledgeable and mature, it has also given us an understanding about globalisation.

Akshat Kapoor
TOS Student



Hej hej Sweden

We went to Sweden on Saturday and reached there on Sunday. It was the first time I was going abroad with my friends and teachers. It was really exciting for me to travel with friends and to catch up with the friends that had got shuffled into other classes earlier.

I thought it was horribly cold for the first few days but later I actually started liking it a lot. My roommates and I would cook us some ready to make food after everyone was asleep.

In the first day of school over there we had an introductory session that Jim had organized for us. Later we played football with the students there and also made very good friends while playing.

That night I was going to meet Olof after a very long time and I was really excited! However, I was really nervous to meet his mother. After talking with them for a while I started getting more comfortable.

On the next day we started with our regular subjects... Music, baking, and a lot of exciting things...

From that day I started living at Olof's house... We both had many common interests... We liked the same kind of music; we had the same favorite soccer team Liverpool! And also liked the same movies... He and I cycled to school daily and I would always get late... The teachers didn't like it, but one day for the first time I came to school before most of my friends and so I was really happy!



We went to a few sight seeing places which I liked a lot especially where we saw birds that looked like mini penguins that could fly.

Olof was an amazing host and took me around very enthusiastically. He also told me stories about two summer ago when he had a lot of fun with his friends.

We also went to a place called Sproge in the south of Visby. Raghav's host, Carl was the best friend of Olof so we got together a lot of times and we had fun with them and their band.

Finally when I was supposed to leave Visby it was really sad for me and I knew that I was going to miss Olof, his mother and his band and also his mother's friend a lot.

In Stockholm the only 2 things we did was eating at BURGER KING and SHOPPING at H&M! None of us felt like coming back to Pune and wanted to stay there forever!

We also had a lot of fun and especially one of my friends sleeping on all the three seats. When I reached Mumbai I thought I was going to vaporize because it was around 40° and we had gotten used to 10°. I was very happy to see my mother after 3 weeks. And was really excited to give everyone the gifts I had got for them. I also learnt a lot from the student exchange program like responsibility, time management, new songs, and also how to make friends...

Arjun Roney
TOS Student



"Home Swede Home!"

April 23rd was the day we all looked forward to. It was the day our Scandinavian adventure began! I cannot begin to explain how amazing an experience this was. From staying in the cottages amongst our fellow Indians, cooking away our Maggi packets to saying our goodbyes and moving in with our new host families, it was all such a memorable experience.

Our first week in Guteskolan introduced us to tons of new classes like Home economics and Wood work where we learnt to bake cakes and sawed away to make simple butterknives!

Our second week in Gutegymnasiet or what we may call the Junior college included a Hairstyling course, a Photography session, A Religion course and even a Physics class!

Personally, I believe I had the complete host family experience with Maggan and Morgan, my Swedish parents, Viktor and Felix, my Swedish brothers and of course Amanda, my Swedish sister and the person I hosted in India! Everyone was very warm and welcoming and it was extremely comfortable.

I am grateful to Amanda and the rest of her family for taking me all over Gotland to witness the scenic beauty! It was a captivating experience and it also filled up the space on my phone because of the numerous pictures I clicked!

Amanda and I bonded so well through the trip and I made so many more lifelong friends who I hope to meet again soon.



Our last three days in Stockholm were very different from the time we were in Gotland. From an Island where traffic was practically nonexistent to living in a lodge at the Centre on Stockholm! Boy was that a drastic change. It was all of us in one cozy dormitory. The 5 teachers and the 10th and 12th grade exchange students combined. We went to the Technical Museum, the Vasa museum that was about a ship with a rather disappointing story and of course our last minute shopping for our families back home!

The 22 days in Sweden, be in Gotland or Stockholm was like a dream. An absolute surreal experience. So surreal, that I was practically disoriented for the first few days when I returned! I've brought back a suitcase full of memories I can never forget! It didn't feel real and I think that was the best part because, this exchange programme was a dream come true.

Jvalita Krishan
TOS Student



The Best Days of My Life

Hello, my name is Kartika Kallianpur and I am one of the lucky students who were part of the Sweden exchange programme. This trip was fun for all of us. It was an educational trip but we still had a lot of fun. Sweden was an entirely different country as compared to India! It is different in terms of their culture, beauty and history. After visiting Sweden, you can witness its beauty!

In Gotland we spent most of our time in two main schools, Gute Skolan and Gute Gymnasiet, wherein we experienced their daily school routine. Their school starts at 8:00 and ends at 2:00. During this they only have two subjects per day!

Other than these two schools we visited two other schools, one was a rural school called Kräklingbo and the other was a film school. In the film school we saw how they made sets for a film and the props they use. We were also told the process of making a film.

In Gotland we went to many sight-seeing places. We went to Stavgard which is a historical place where they found a lot of treasure and it is an Iron Age camp where one can stay and live the life of a person during the Viking period! We also went to Stora Karlsö which is a small island a few hours away from Gotland, by ferry. There we got to see one of the migratory birds, and there were thousands of them!! They looked like a penguin but they were larger and they could fly. We had a small picnic over there.



In Stockholm we stayed in dorms with the 12th graders and it was fun to interact with new people and make friends. Here we were left to roam around the place alone but were given a curfew time. We shopped a lot here. We visited the old city of Stockholm. It was really very pretty! We then went to two museums. One was a technical museum which had many games and fun stuff to do. The other was Vasa Museum which was a museum about a ship which sunk before getting to war. This was very informative.

We all learnt a lot after going to Sweden. We learnt how to handle money. In Sweden our money was basically our life! Because if we lost that we would be without food! This also instilled a sense of responsibility. We were responsible for our passports, if they were lost there would be no coming back!

We learnt how to adapt to new environments and this was most important. We learnt this through many situations.

First was just the weather. Since Sweden is up at the top, the weather is freezing!! The first few days were really bad! We were basically in two to three layers of clothes!! But within five to six days we got used to the weather.

Second was living with different and for a few people, unknown families. We had to adjust to new living spaces. Both of my families lived in the country side. One of my hosts, Erik and his wife Veronica lived in Dalhem which was not very secluded. They had a small garden and they loved gardening. It was really fun with them! My other host, Hanna Friström lived in pretty much secluded area but that had its own beauty!

We learnt a lot about Sweden through many excursions. Their history is very rich and interesting. They had a long Viking rule over them. Their old cities say a lot about their past. The old buildings have their own history. Their schooling system is completely different from ours. They start school at 6 whereas we start at 3. Since they are the highest tax paying country, the citizens' education till university level is free, transport and medical facilities are free till the age of 18 years!

Sweden is just an amazing place!! If given a chance again I would definitely visit Sweden again!

Kartika Kallianpur
TOS Student

A month to remember...

What an experience Sweden was. Every single moment of the trip was just so exciting right from the first day. Though the trip was for fun and enjoyment it taught me many things as well. It created a sense of independence, teamwork, and many such qualities which can be showcased only in trips like these. I never even thought that I would get an opportunity like this one but when I got one I had promised myself I would make the best use of it.

I was feeling a bit homesick initially, but as the trip progressed it became a routine which I would never want to leave. The first few days of the trip were well spent in the comfortable and sweet lodges together with our friends. The aim for staying in the lodge was so that we get adapted to the conditions and spend some time together.

Next was the part of the trip everyone was excited for, the host families. We had gone to the Gute Skolan, a school nearby directly from the lodge. Then came the time we were eagerly awaiting for, we saw our host families after school waiting to take us home.

This was the routine for us for the first week. In school we used to do some interesting activities such as playing soccer, woodwork, best out of waste, and many others. At school we also learnt many things about Sweden and many other countries. We learnt many languages such as German, French and Spanish. We also performed a short PowerPoint presentation about India so that the students and people of the school have a brief idea about our country.

While at the same time we were doing many activities at school, we were also enjoying our time at our host's house such as seeing sceneries nearby and visiting places around Visby. Then after one week there was a change. Now we were told that we will be going to Gute Gymnasiet, a higher Secondary school. There too we enjoyed a lot. There we had a subject



of photography where we travelled around Visby to click some amazing pictures of the beautiful place. Then after 2 days of hard work we worked on the pictures using the software Photoshop and took the best 3 pictures home with us.

After these 2 tiring weeks we were set to leave from Visby. We had planned to stay in the capital of Sweden, Stockholm for the last few days of the trip. Though there was excitement to go to a new place there was a sad feeling to leave our host families and the kind people of Visby as well. Then after reaching Stockholm we went to the city lodge where we could relax for some time. Then for the next 2 to 3 days we enjoyed the new place going across and shopping for our family and friends in Pune. After these amazing days it was time to leave back to India. Now at this moment of time I had some mixed feelings in my mind. I was sad to leave this awesome place at the same time I was happy that I will meet the people in India again.

Though as a whole I think this experience was very enriching and taught me many new things that would help in future.

Mayank Garg
TOS Student



My trip to Sweden

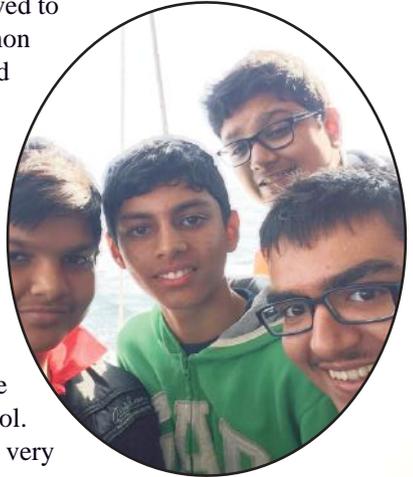
We had gone to an island called Gotland. I had a really amazing experience. My host was Karl; he was a very kind and nice host. His parents Aiya and Michele were loving, caring, kind and they took very good care of me. I did not feel homesick at all. They really loved to cook and so did I so we used to bake cakes, cinnamon rolls and many other things. We really enjoyed staying together. They used to take me out for shopping and for sight-seeing. On the weekends we used to go to the main town to roam around and visit museums. One Saturday I met their cousins, we had a marvelous evening at the beach.

The school was 50km away from my host's house and we went via bus. I learnt many new things like I learnt some Spanish words and some Swedish words. We also did baking in their school. We learnt new physics equations which were very complicated. We had visited a school where we met students who were from 1-6 standard. We played football with them then we also played some Swedish games.

Their culture is very different from ours. One evening I made some paneer butter masala for them, we all enjoyed a lot. We ate some authentic ice cream that was made in Gotland. We had also gone to a place where they had 180 flavours of ice cream. That was one of the highlights. My host helped me find fossils which were about 3000 years old.

The time had come when we had to leave, my host felt really sad and so did I, now we are really missing each other. We have been able to talk a few times since I have reached India. It was an amazing trip. We also had a lot of fun at Istanbul airport. Exchange program is a really helpful and fun program and you must attend it if you have a chance.

Raghav Kirloskar
TOS Student



Until Next Time Sweden

The Sweden trip was one of the most memorial trips which I will never forget. I remember going to Namrata di's office in search of Baishaki di on the last day of submitting the form, I was for some reason against going but my parents forced me to submit it, so I did which turned out to be the best. I was very nervous rather than being excited. One of the main reasons was being a vegetarian. At first I didn't know most of my fellow students accompanying me but I ended up becoming good friends with each of them.

The trip started with everyone bidding good bye to their parents, ready to see a new part of the world but in the back of my mind the thought of traveling this far haunted me. Once we were on the airport the excitement level was at its peak. We had time to kill hence we roamed the airport going shop to shop. But most importantly we were all very careful with our passports, following the clear instructions given by our parents. We had a connecting flight with a quick stopover at Turkey, Istanbul. In both my flights I slept and watched some movies. When we reached Stockholm my first reaction was "It's too cold". The cruise to Visby, Gotland was a fun trip. We were all hungry and were trying to make Maggi on the cruise. We succeeded in making edible Maggi. The first three days we all lived together and tried to roam around a bit.



Seeing a new city all by ourselves was a different experience altogether. On the second day we went to the Gute skolan for the first time .It was actually very different compared to Indian school. Their way of learning was more informal and practical and not syllabus based. Next day evening we all were nervous as we had our first dinner with our host family. Then the game actually began. Over the next weeks I did a lot of things in school and with my host family. Some of the things which I did in school were learning Spanish, German and Swedish, playing football; see the different things they use in the film industry, photography, woodwork, baking, and many other things. The place you can't miss going to in Visby is the Pokemon ice cream parlor where you get 180 flavors of ice cream.

My host family was really warm and welcoming. Akshat, a fellow student and I were staying together. Actually halfway through we were supposed to move to a service apartment but our host family graciously asked us to stay with them all throughout. They took us to different places; we cooked together with our host mother and had a lot of fun. I was lucky enough to meet the Mayor of Gotland as he was the step father of my host mother. My host mother, Eva was like a second mother to me. They treated me as their own. They never let me miss my family back here. There were many things I did with my host family like playing football, going to the gym, running 5 kms , cooking the dinner ,going to visit different places like a forest and many other things.

After the wonderful days in Visby we went back to Stockholm for the last three days. Everyone wanted to bring back home some souvenirs for family and friends. We also had to manage the meals on our own. I ended up shopping a lot of things and then I was tensed on how I would fit it in my bag. Thankfully my friends helped me by putting some of my things in their bags. We all had crazy ideas on what we wanted to do to end our trip but ended up having no time for it.

I learned a lot of things from this exchange program. This exchange program helped me a lot to become a better person. Since I was responsible for my finances in a foreign country, I had to take care of the expenses and had to manage my accounts daily. These made me aware of my daily expenditure and keep a tab on them. There were many new things I got to do which maybe I couldn't do in India like woodwork. This exchange program makes you emotionally ready for life beyond school. I wish to go back someday and meet my host family again. I thank The Orchid School for giving me this opportunity.

Vedant Munot
TOS Student

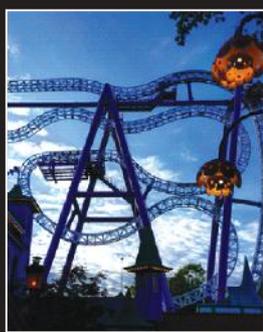
Adventure of a Lifetime

As Gustave Flaubert rightly said, “Travel makes one modest. You see what a tiny place you occupy in the world.” The Orchid School gave me an opportunity I could not refuse. I accompanied ten students of Class X and another teacher on this journey of exploring Gotland and Stockholm. Another group of Class XII students visited Stockholm in the same duration as we were on Gotland.

Having prior expectations of how things should be, doesn't always help. What does help is, keeping an open mind and being ready to receive whatever is waiting for you. I did just that! I was ready to experience a new set of possibilities. We spent most of our time in Gotland.

Having lived with three host families, I was able to experience a great variety of social dynamics. It was great to know that everyone was so warm and comforting. For instance, being a vegetarian, I was always wondering about the kind of food cooked at the homes and if I would be okay with it. I was overwhelmed when my hosts made me feel most comfortable and I ate the yummiest food with them! I was taken to the community hall for the monthly movie night, P4 radio station. The highlight of my trip has to be the numerous day trips spent in bird-watching with none other than my amazing ornithologist host, Jim Sundberg! I was baffled by the beauty of the many different kinds of birds he helped me spot.

We interacted with students from Guteskolan and Gutegymnasiet. The way the schools function was very different from the systems that we are used to in Pune. There were only two subjects taught in a day while we do at least six in a day! But the most interesting observation for me was, no matter in which part of the world you go, students are just students. The attention and care that any student requires does not change by changing the geographical location of the school, no matter where in the world.



The variety of subjects that are offered in school is interesting. We got to experience each of them with the students. Some Swedish students were very interactive and helped us. Some even wanted to know more about where we were from, while some, like in any other school, preferred to be left alone and not be the focus of attention. They all enjoyed the presentations and dance that our students had prepared for them.

Gotland was just *beautiful*. We visited places all over the island. There was not one place where I did not feel like capturing the natural beauty. So mesmerizing that over the 21 days, I took 'only' 1597 photographs! And I agree with Ibn Batuta when he said, “Traveling – it leaves you speechless, then turns you into a storyteller.”

For the last leg of the trip, we visited Stockholm city. We were also joined by the group of Class XII students here. This was almost like a complete culture shock as compared to Gotland! Both places in Sweden, yet each with a different style of living as well as the pace of life. The transformation from country side to city was quite astounding. It was great to see such a well-connected city with public transport that was easy to understand; even for someone new to the place.

Stockholm city has more museums than one can see in three whole days! There were so many more on my list, but time was not on our side. A visit to the adventure park just sealed the deal with the most awesome roller coaster ride called 'Insane'. It was truly insane and amazing.

The experience of accompanying our students for this trip was something I also cherish. It was fascinating to see how the students interact with each other and how much they 'grew up' on their travels. There was just a two year gap between both the groups but so much difference. It was also remarkable to see the journey of each child and adult through the 24 days of travel. Each one has learnt something new. Each one has had a unique experience. Each one will go back a richer person with memories and lessons that will stay with them forever. And again I realise, adventures are the best way to learn.

Mansi Kapadia
TOS Staff



"The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only one page." - Saint Augustine

Keeping this thought in mind I set on a journey to Sweden.

Every year when Baishaki di used to ask for names for the Sweden Exchange program, I would hesitate and push it for the next time.... I believe that everything happens at its destined time and certainly this year it was my time to explore the land of the Vikings. A place where sun sets at midnight.....

It took a while for me to realize that I would be travelling overseas and as the days drew closer my anxiety level increased. Right from renewal of my passport to the tickets to visa to shopping to everything I felt it was happening at breakneck speed. But at last I made it and flew to Sweden.

SWEDEN AHHHHH! Was much more than what I had heard about it. First experience was the weather, suddenly the air felt good, I could feel a change in the quality of air I was breathing. It was almost like taking a shot of oxygen down my lungs. The environment was a treat to my eyes & the BALTIC SEA on which we sailed was simply astounding. The only thing that was going on my mind was the weather.

The stay in Gotland for almost two and a half week was just amazing. There was a pool of opportunities for us to grab on and add on to our learning experience. Staying with host families was truly remarkable. We were treated like one of their family



member who has been away for a while. They took care of each and everything; from beds to the heater temperature, they made sure our stay at their place was pleasant and comfortable. Gotland being an island was a plus point for me, as I knew I won't get lost. The school which we visited was different from TOS yet similar. Our philosophy of education is similar but the culture and the style of teaching differed. Our students and teachers could gather a variety of experience in terms of the way teacher- student interacted, subjects offered, duration of a class, assessment & examination system etc. The best session I enjoyed was the religion class, where in India it's understood that if you are born in a particular family with a particular religion, you know everything about it. But that was not the case, many of us were not sure about our own religion or we were not confident to talk about Gods and Goddesses. This is not about following a particular religion but to know and respect each one's religion. TOS students spontaneously merged with the students of Guteskolan and they came up with an incredible presentation. That was really a proud moment for me as a teacher, seeing their enthusiasm to learn and absorb was something I truly appreciated.

Apart from learning in school, we got to learn a lot out of school during trekking, horse riding, cooking, while spending time with the host family members, interacting with media students, and at many more spaces. Even at times when we were left alone, I'm sure at that moment also it was a good learning for us.

We had not got the jolt of leaving Sweden till we arrived in Istanbul and the wait was for almost 5 hours. Each one of us was browsing through the memories captured in our smartphones and smiling looking at them. That was the time when we realized it's time for us to go and meet our loved ones back home. There was heaviness in our hearts that our Sweden trip was over but there was a positive energy that learning continued.

When we returned back to school I witnessed the most beautiful scene I had ever seen, when a student hugged his mom and started crying, this shows no matter how far and for how long you go, the bond of love brings you back. Value each and everything what you get in Life and make full use of the opportunities in life. Now I eagerly wait for my next trip.....

"Investment in travel is an investment in yourself." ~ Matthew Karsten

Marita Cleetus
TOS Staff

A Home Away From Home

Being part of the Sweden exchange program has been an experience that I cannot even begin to describe. Initially I didn't think I'd make it through the trip. I wasn't sure I'd be okay away from my comfort zone, from my family, but as the trip progressed, I proved myself wrong. Every single part of this trip has been exhilarating, from the bus ride to Mumbai to staying with my host families, all of it. Not everyone is given an opportunity this unique and experiential. Naturally, things in Sweden were very different. From the way they live to their education system. I decided to use this as a chance to explore, discover and learn. We got the chance to go to Guteskolan and Gutegymnasiet that are primary and secondary schools respectively. There is a vast difference between the education systems that prevails in Sweden as compared to that of India. While both have their pros and cons, learning in Sweden is more practical based. Whereas in India, it is more theory based.



Through the course of the trip, I stayed with three different families. The first family I stayed with, Linnea, Linda and Perra were all very welcoming. While I didn't get to spend too much time with my first host family, I enjoyed whatever little time I did get with them. After two days, I shifted to my new host family. Veronica, Erik and Ellias were all very warm and extremely lively. I spent most of my trip with them. Kartika and I were both with them for around 8 days. I am glad I got the opportunity to meet them and to get to know them. Veronica, Erik, Kartika and I would cook dinner together every night. They took us around the island and introduced us to a lot of new things. Next, I stayed with Angelica, Linda and Tomas. Angelica had stayed with me when she had visited India. It was absolutely amazing seeing her again. She took me around the old city of Visby. One of the highlights of my trip was when she took me Horse riding. It was something very new and very exciting.

While I was looking forward to going to Stockholm, I didn't want to leave Gotland. In Stockholm, we stayed in a lodge along with the 12th grade batch of students from TOS. We spent most of our free time shopping in Stockholm. Over there, we visited two museums. Since we were only there for three days, we didn't have the time to explore the city a lot.

This trip has definitely made me a lot more independent and a lot more responsible. It is something that will remain with me forever. I have made relationships that I truly hope will last long. All in all, it was a great trip and this experience has taught me so much. It taught me that it's important to step out of your comfort zone and try new things. It showed me the importance and the boon of interacting with new people and the joy of making new friends.

Ruchika Gupta
TOS Student



Learning of A Lifetime

As per definition, Sweden is a Scandinavian country with a rich natural heritage and a beautiful culture, but I can assure you, through experience; that's not where it ends. Sweden has a lot more than what meets the eye. Like all countries it has a complex yet fascinating social structure. My experience in Sweden was a once in a lifetime sort of experience which, like all beautiful experiences can never be forgotten.

3 weeks is a long time and initially, the days seemed to be very long and it seemed like time stood still but as and when we understood the pace of the country, we started enjoying our time. The first 12 days of our trip were spent in Gotland, an island in Sweden. I stayed there with my host, who had visited me last September. My host family was very warm and welcomed me into their home with open arms. I learnt a lot about the way their country functions and how their social structure exists. They in turn learnt a lot about India and our way of living. Towards the end of the trip, I moved to another home. This one was quieter and quainter than the other. But this family was equally warm.

The last 3 days of the trip were spent in Stockholm, the capital city. It was a complete contrast from Gotland. Stockholm had a fast paced and happening life like all cities.

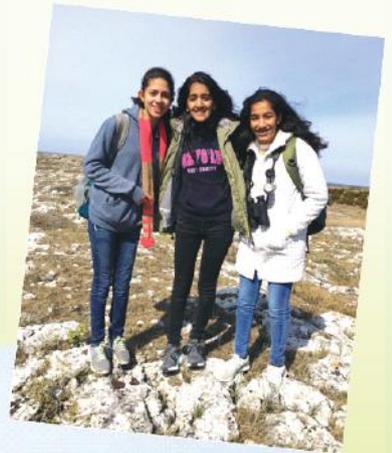
To quote Danny Kaye, "To travel is to take a journey into yourself." This trip has made me think about the choices I have to make in life, especially in the near future. To know, that you have the ability to live independently is extremely liberating and when a trip to Sweden teaches you that, it is all the more liberating. An important lesson I take away from Sweden is the practice of the phrase,





“Live and let live.” They truly believe in that and while they are very warm people, they know their limits and boundaries and respect the other person's privacy. As any other trip, it has enhanced my communication skills and to my surprise, my thinking abilities. Decision making has never been easy for me which is why the most important skill I learnt through this trip is to take quick yet informed decisions. Lastly, the bonds you create will last forever. I'd like to conclude with one of my favorite quotes that truly summarizes my experience in Sweden –“All that is gold does not glitter, Not all those who wander are lost”.

Trisha Welde
TOS Student





Absorption

The Sweden trip, in many ways changed our views on life. Be it the small things or the big ones, our learning was tremendous. For me, personally, one of the key things I learnt from this trip is absorption. This might sound a bit vague but it will be quite clear by the end of this article.

I can honestly say, that the life of an average Indian student is more hectic compared to any other student in the world, simply because of the importance given to academics by Indian society. We are so busy with our daily assignments, tasks, studying for exams that we forget to pause for a second and analyse what we are exactly doing. We are almost as mechanical as robots performing the same monotonous tasks day after day without a break. Our ability to reflect and contemplate is lost as a result. This is something I realised during the course of my trip.

One fine day, after returning home with my host after an eventful day at school, I decided to take a solitary trip to the lake nearby to see what it was like. The view was majestic. The serenity of that place left me awestruck. Gazing at the calm waters and the splash of colours in the sky really got me thinking. I began pondering over everything that was happening around me. The fact that I had been fortunate enough to go to Sweden. All the things I had learnt over there. My friends who I am so grateful for. The air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat. All the things we seem to take for granted.

What I essentially did was absorb, and I can honestly say that it made me feel enriched, complete and refreshed. This is something I now plan to inculcate in my life and which I suggest we all should do occasionally, Pause!

Aashish Kumar
TOS Student



Sverige

The excitement was building up. A month before we left for the exchange programme, most of us had started packing and picking our clothes and gifts for the hosts. We had researched a lot about the country, the culture, the people, the food and other such aspects. It was finally time to leave! We had a late night flight (super long flight!) and we took our stop at Frankfurt. Then we had a short flight to Stockholm. We were guided to the city lodge by Annelie (the vice principal of Cybergymnasium). Our first three days at the city lodge were a lot of fun! Me and Anusha being the only girls on the trip shared the room with the teachers and the boys had a separate room. We were given breakfast at the lodge and we had lunch and dinner at different restaurants. At night, we played lots of games and had long talks. We were given public transport cards by Annelie that we could use on the bus and the metros unlimited times. This gave us the freedom to explore a capital city on our own. We travelled to various areas of the city that seemed scenic and interesting and met a lot of people on our way. This independence gave us a different learning. We learnt how to travel on our own in a foreign city and how to get our way out. Personally, for me, it increased my confidence tremendously. We had a school tour and introduction by Annelie on our first day at school. After that, we met our hosts. They were so caring and fun! We had lunch with them and later during the day they took us to see cherry blossoms. It being my second time in Sweden, I wasn't nervous or afraid of interacting with the host family. I was very excited in getting to know more Swedish people, and learning about the urban life. The families were very, very





hospitable and caring. They took care of us like our own families would. We did so many different activities with them. During the 3 weeks that we were in Sweden, a lot of us went to many other places that were outside of Stockholm. I went to towns called Uppsala and Hälsingland with my host family. We went there for Valborg (celebrated for welcoming summer). I met my host's full family and had the experience of staying in a cottage with no lights, no electrical sockets, no gas, and no phone range. It was difficult, no doubt, but I've never been as close to nature as I had been then. It made me realise how much the Swedes value nature. Almost all families usually have summer houses faraway in towns which they go to very often to escape urban life and to relax. It was nice to experience their kind of vacation. We also tried a variety of food every day, and even learnt some Swedish! In school, we attended various classes. We went to classes such as Math, Physics, Art, Music and Journalism. We learnt the different ways in which they studied. We met the school teachers and interacted with many students. We even went to the Tyresta National Park with students from the art class. Apart from school activities, we also did lots of sightseeing. We went to the Vasa Museum and the Technisk Museum. Even though this was my second exchange programme to Sweden, it was very different from the first. Last time I noticed how they were so independent but this time I actually got to experience what it was like. I learnt about how they managed time and how they valued so many things we don't give much importance to. I learnt how practical learning benefits one but also how too much freedom gets one into trouble. This trip also helped me destroy some of my fears, and it has made me much more confident now. It made me realise my capability. This was one of the most fun ways of learning things that can't be taught elsewhere. I feel lucky enough to have gone a second time, and can surely say it has changed me as a person. It is an unforgettable experience and I will cherish it for lifetime!

Kashin Shah
TOS Student

"Stockholm Syndrome"

"A Man cannot discover new oceans unless he has the courage to lose sight of the shore."

A joyous yet uneasy feeling crept upon me as I ambled to the departure gate of the Pune Airport. I was going to be in an absolutely different surrounding for the next 21 days: staying in another country with people who I had never met before. Interacting with people who speak a different language, embrace different cultures and have different perspectives of the world: I would be lying if I said that I didn't felt scared.

"Oh there they are!" Annelie exclaimed. It was our first day at Cyber Gymnasiet, Stockholm. My classmates and I were sitting in a classroom with Annelie (Vice principal of Cyber Gymnasiet), discussing about the crux of the program for the next 21 days, when we saw a few nervous faces popping at the door and as it was - those very students at the door were our hosts for the next 3 weeks.

Our first interaction with our hosts was fruitful to say the least. There was warmth when we spoke to our hosts and we definitely struck a chord with each other. My host Tim was a slim, innocent blonde guy. He was reticent when I first met him but over the next few days, we broke the ice and I had the craziest time of my life with him.

Tim's family was receptive and welcoming. All of them made me feel extremely comfortable and made sure that I felt like I was at 'home' away from home.

In the ensuing 3 weeks, The Swedes and us had a great time together - playing football at euro turfs, eating a lot of candies, tasting Swedish delicacies, travelling all over Stockholm, visiting exotic scenic places, attending classes together and working on projects, having dinners at MAX and Burger King, admiring the Ferraris and Rolls Royce and so much more. Our friendship changed enormously.

But other than that, what changed more was my thought process.





At the end of the 3 weeks, my outlook towards Swedes was completely different as compared to my initial impression of Swedes.

Swedish people, stereotypically, are said to be awkward and reserved and are said to avoid human contact with strangers. While it may be true that Swedes keep to themselves as far as possible, it is most certainly not true that they are always reserved. In actuality, Swedes just take longer to open up and converse with strangers. But once you get to know them, they are really talkative and they enjoy listening as well as sharing their opinions.

Next, I also noticed that Swedish students are easy going in their daily lives. Some of them are extremely focused but they are, more often than not, less ambitious as compared to Indians. They tend to take life as it comes, rather than planning a lot for future events. Indian students in comparison are more focused on their goals and what they want to do in life.

Another thing that surprised me was the relation the Swedes shared with their families. On the days of various festivals, my classmates and I noticed that the Swedes have a vivid culture and their values are strong. They are deeply attached to their families and culture. There is massive respect for friends and relatives. They stay in touch with their families as much as possible and enjoy each other's presence.

This was in complete contrast with my thoughts. I believed that the western culture in Sweden did not accommodate families after a certain extent. However, I was proven wrong, yet again.

While these were the more obvious differences that I observed, there was also a lot that I learnt through observation.

Starting at the home itself, Swedes are obsessed with being 'on time'; they plan their day in accordance with a minute-to-minute timetable, which is in deep contrast as compared to India. They also consider their day incomplete without a few rounds of 'fika' (translates to coffee in the day or at night). Ikea and H&M are everywhere, literally. The area that I was residing in had around 4 H&Ms, each situated a few 100 meters from the other. Another very interesting trend I observed was that 90% of the dog-owners in Sweden had dogs of relatively smaller size. On asking around, I found out that this was due to the less area that small dogs required as compared to larger dogs. Another thing I saw and experienced was the speed of walking of the Swedes as compared to Indians. The Swedes are quick! Their walk is, on occasion, equivalent to our jogging.

Observation and experiences is what made this experience truly enriching for me.

A joyous yet uneasy feeling crept upon me as I ambled to the departure gate of the Stockholm Arlanda Airport. I was going home. Back home, finally. But bidding goodbye to this beautiful city was sad.

Nevertheless, I was rapt with my day-to-day experiences at Stockholm and also about the fact that I was returning home with tons of memories, with people who had taught me so much more about life.

Swastid Badve
TOS Student



A trip to 'Venice of the North'

As the French novelist Marcel Proust said, “The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes”, the cultural exchange program to Stockholm was a similar experience for me. Trips to new places are usually full of sight-seeing, shopping, trying different cuisines and learning about the history and culture there. Thanks to the exchange program, we had something else to add to that, something that was even more interesting, a firsthand experience of the lives of the people there.

Living with your hosts' family, indulging in their day to day affairs, and trying to adapt to their lifestyle was something new altogether. It wasn't just about visiting a new place; it was about meeting new people and interacting with them. The first few days when we stayed at the City Lodge were exciting. Contrary to what all of us thought before we left from Pune, we showed no signs of jet lag and were eager to start exploring the city on the first day itself.

By the end of the third day I had moved in with my host family. The family was really jovial and helped me get accustomed to their daily routine. Day by day the level of exhilaration reached new heights. Each day was one to look forward to, especially meeting up with everyone in Cyber Gymnasiet, the high school that our hosts attended. We saw Swedish league football matches, visited various museums and parks, and spent time with our host families.



While the visits and excursions gave us memories worth a lifetime, the people we met gave us new perspectives that we never would've otherwise encountered. Comparing the society in Stockholm and in India, there were many similarities as well as differences. Sweden was full of people from diverse backgrounds, not unlike India. The Swedish government functioned smoothly, and obviously India is nowhere close. People were friendly and helpful towards tourists, but mainly engrossed in their tasks. The teenagers were largely independent and quite a few of them were already working part time jobs. As education is free, parents are usually keen on letting their children get some experience and let them loose if they wish to. At the conclusion of the trip, there was enough proof that, regardless of backgrounds people can relate to, and adapt to each other. This provided fuel to the idea of a unified world, however wayward and obnoxious it might sound. Situations, frames, cultures, languages, all of these change, but people are always constant. Each place has its own angels and demons.

Anitya Vilekar
TOS Student



Sweden Trip: An Heuristic Experience

Visiting new places, meeting new people and learning about different cultures and traditions has always been of a great interest to me. While I was in Sweden, I got the opportunity to fulfil all of my best interests, it was truly eye-opening and I can now safely say that I have a fresh perspective, not only of Sweden but also of my own country. Though the countries are strikingly different, in lieu of our cultural, traditional and social correctness, yet the countries seem so familiar.

The teaching-learning is markedly different from the traditional Indian rote-learning, Swedes believe in heuristic methods of teaching and learning with hands-on learning, visuals and ample of discussions to follow. The students type their own notes and are allowed, in fact given a laptop for their use. The relation between the student and the teacher is very friendly and the difference in the knowledge quota is not at all visible.

My family in Sweden, though I felt they would be indifferent towards me, or be really reserved, were actually very much of a functional family and were constantly thinking of ways for me to absorb most of the richness of the city. Now it really feels like I have another family of my own, in a different country.

The food in Sweden is greatly influenced by the regional placing of the country. I, personally had a wonderful time during meals, as I got to enjoy the various ways of eating rice, fish and even oatmeal. This trip has even been successful in making me understand that trying different cuisines and food is not particularly bad.

During my stay, I noticed that my overall outlook towards the Swedes changed greatly. Though perceived as reserved and shy, I feel they are more open to change and anomalous behaviour than us here in India.





I went half way around the world and learned that, people, no matter from which part of the world they belong still have similar hopes and aspirations from life, from the world and their families. Though Swedes are not as goal-oriented as the Indians, they still set goals, very different from the usual ones we set for our success here, yet the aspirations we all have out of our lives are completely the same.

This trip has changed me in ways unimaginable. I feel like I have become stronger and more confident than ever before. I have evolved into a person who is capable of tackling different situations. I have also become friendlier and open towards people. This trip will always have a special place in my heart forever.

Anusha Bailoor
TOS Student



Sweden Exchange – An Overview

Introduction

I would like to share my views and my takeaways on my trip Sweden.

I had a lot of expectations from this trip. I was expecting that the people there would be really kind and very willing to help. I was expecting the country to be really clean with everyone following all rules. I had expected myself to get an inside look on how things work in a family of a different country and learn about their culture. Most of my expectations were actually a reality when I went to Sweden.

Just before the day we were going to leave I was really nervous on how I would stay away from my family and how my host family would be. There were many questions running in my mind. When we finally reached the airport, looking at everyone all ready and excited I felt much better. As we reached there and we stayed more with our host families, we got more comfortable with them and shared a really strong bond with them. Slowly we got to know their culture and how things worked in their lifestyle. Getting to know a different culture in such detail was really a blessing for me.





Sweden as a country and its people

We got to know Sweden as a country much better. We understood how the people there were. What I noticed in the people of Sweden was that they did not care about what the other person was doing. They would mind their own business unlike the people in India. This was one of the biggest difference I saw between the people in Sweden and in India. But they are really helpful and caring. They rush to someone who is in need of help. All of them have a great understanding between themselves.

The Hosts

The hosts at first were really nervous to see us and so were we. But then as days went by, we got along really well with our host families. They were very caring and made us feel as if we were at our own home. Every small thing was taken care of by the host families. In a span of just 20 days, we made an exceptional bond between each other. They took us around Sweden and showed us all the beautiful places In Sweden. They explained us what the significance of each place was and told us a little bit of a history behind it.



Activities

We did a lot in a mere span of 20 days. By the end of 20 days, we had been through almost all of Stockholm. We had been to the Tyresta national park, we went around to see a lot of different museums. We also went to see a football match in the Tele 2 Arena. Every time we went somewhere, we understood the importance and its history. We tried to relate it to India and thought how it would have been different or similar in India. A lot of learning happened whenever we visited a new place.

Overall...

Overall the trip was a huge success. We learnt a lot of things starting from how to be responsible for our own things like our passport to how we could take the positives of a foreign country and incorporate it in our country.

I would really thank The Orchid School for giving me this opportunity to learn in such a unique way.

Arpit Bhaskarwar
TOS Student

Mi Experiencia

When I applied for this exchange program, I had certain expectations of this trip before going there. I had a lot of worries, but when I went there everything was so different from what I had expected.

My host's name was Maximilian Scherman.

He asked me to call him Max. The first time

I met him along with the other hosts, he

was as nervous as I was but when we

shared the first hello, we became very

comfortable with each other.

Everything clicked at the first meet

itself. His family consisted of Max

and his father. When I met his father,

he was so welcoming. They made me

feel at home. He took me to the most

beautiful places which no tourist would

ever see unless taken there by a true

Stockholm resident. His home was very cozy and

being the only child, he had many videogames and

gamin

g consoles. We went out late at night in the forests nearby just to take a walk with

his neighborhood friends and came back home as late as 3a.m. On the last day of

the stay, he said "Thank you for staying with me. Can't you stay for longer? It'll be

very hard for me to get used to the routine life again." It was a very emotional

parting.

Both, the culture of Sweden and India are based on excellent morals yet they are so

different. Most children in India are spoon-fed by their parents until they go to

college and they suddenly face the harsh realities of life when they go out in the

world. In Sweden, children are given independence at a very early age. We saw

children going to school using public transport being only 10 years of age. In

Sweden there is a lot of safety. Parents don't mind if their children come home at 2

or 3 in the night because they know that he/she is safe. Parents are entirely

supportive in the decisions their children take. If one day the child says that he

wants to be a plumber or wants to keep the city clean and wants to be a sweeper,

they help him become what he wants to. No one forces their child to be an engineer

or a doctor. In Sweden, Swedes don't think about what others would think about





them. They do things solely because it's their choice to do so. One day suddenly Max coloured his hair blonde and it was looking very funny. I asked him why he did so and he said that one of his friends had coloured his hair purple and others were teasing him. He wanted to support his friend so he coloured his hair blonde so that his friend sees that Max is with him and doesn't feel bad about it. Swedish way of life is something very different than that of India's; may it be the regular FIKA times, or the wonderful transitions of weather throughout the day.

Unlike the Indian standard time that is well known for all the wrong reasons, everything happens on time in Sweden. A party at 7 pm begins at 7 pm and so works the same way for an official meeting at 8 am. Coming and being on time seems the way of life there irrespective of the weather or any circumstance. At my home in Pune I have the luxuries of having a maid and 'istri-wala'. There is pick up and drop facility for everything. In Sweden I learnt to do my house-work ranging from washing dishes and picking groceries to disposing garbage in the dumping yard and even mowing the lawn. People in Sweden prefer to walk or cycle their way. Seeing a 70 year old man overtake you on his bicycle isn't a very rare scene to see. In India I go to get the groceries on my bike even if it's less than a km away but in Stockholm I used to walk a minimum of 5-6 km a day. Max walks that much every single day!

If I would have the opportunity I would go to Stockholm and relive this all over again. There is so much to learn from this experience and so much to cherish. Now I have wonderful friends in the other corner of the world that will always stay in touch.

Atharv Mudur
TOS Student

A Lesson For Life Swedish Style

I visited Sweden this year in my summer holidays. I received this wonderful opportunity by my school 'The Orchid School' as an exchange program to 'Cyber Gymnasiet' in Stockholm city. It was a 21 day program in which I learnt a lot many things while interacting with the people there and students of 'Cyber Gymnasiet'. The people there are open and quite friendly.

The education in Sweden is a bit different than that in India. In India the average age of children beginning School is 3-4 years while in Sweden it is nearly 6 years. Swedes believe that children should enjoy their childhood so they don't send their kids to school at a very early age. Fees for children in Sweden is paid either by the government or community so more people apply for education.

In Cyber Gymnasiet students were given their laptops for their Programming classes so that they could finish their assignments even at home. I visited their art class and was quite fascinated by the wonderful exhibition of beautiful art by the students which made me think that how interesting art classes can be. I even visited the hair dressing classes where our whole group got their hair tended to by the students, which they did like professional. I appreciated the fact that Cyber Gymnasiet provided other options of study and practical learning than just the conventional education. I learnt that there was a wide scope of many streams at the school level. We took part in many activities conducted by them in which we had to form groups and discuss on the given topic. This we had to present it to the rest of the class. These activities gave me self-confidence and I learnt the art of how to speak in front of and present my views to an audience. The overall infrastructure of the school was very



good. The students were quite friendly and inquired about Indian culture and education. The teachers were also very nice to us.

In addition to this I had the privilege of being hosted by the Vice Principal of Cyber Gymnasiet 'Annelie Rohlin' along with our Principal 'Namrata Di'. I never felt homesick while living there due to Annelie's motherly care. Annelie was extremely hardworking and did all her work with a smile on her face. A great learning that I received from my host was time management. She used to do all her work in an orderly manner and timely fashion. She never used to get late and did all her chores on her own. She never even required a maid. This made me learn that doing your work yourself makes you feel energetic and provides more knowledge about that work. It makes doing that work interesting and you indulge in it with great zeal. I learnt that it is better to do your work by yourself rather than depending on others to do it for you.

I had a great time exploring Stockholm and loved learning new things. I appreciate the lifestyle of Swedes on how they are very hardworking and at the same time fun loving. I enjoyed relaxing in the authentic Swedish way by having my Fika fix. All in all it was a fantastic holiday for me and I'm very grateful to Orchid and 'Lakshmi Di' our director for this opportunity.

Ayush Singh
TOS Student



Visit to Sweden-a dream ?

You start dying slowly

if you do not travel,

if you do not read,

If you do not listen to the sounds of life,

If you do not appreciate yourself.

These are few lines from Pablo the famous poet who won Nobel Prize. These are the lines that motivated me to volunteer for the trip to Sweden.

When the names were announced of the teachers going to Sweden and I saw my name in the list it was a dream come true. The journey to a new land, away from the family, responsibility of ten students, was a lot to take in. After long preparations, running around for visa, the much awaited day arrived and we all arrived at the airport with excitement and apprehension written clear on our faces.

The whole purpose of cultural exchange programme is to expand and enrich our pedagogical expertise as in our school we aim to be global citizens it helps us explore realms of global citizenry. Moreover it was meant to help in connecting with people living in different part of the world.

The moment we landed brain went into overdrive as there were so many different things to see and absorb. The whole visit was a kaleidoscope as everyday something new was happening and needed to soak everything. The visit changed my perspective of looking at things. I have realized that a smile can open many doors. A calm and positive approach can help things run smoothly and efficiently.

The host families extended a warm welcome and lent every possible support. The whole family including the two children were very welcoming to the extent that to make me feel comfortable they did not eat any meat. I had to assure them that it would not disturb me if they wish to have non vegetarian food .I was taken by the family to a museum of ancient art. It was invigorating to know that life of people living in ancient times were quite similar to that of people in India.

Visiting a place so far and you already know so many people spoils you for future visit. The next time you go for a trip you tend to wish you knew someone there and who could take you around the place for shopping and sightseeing.

There are so many things to see and experience that twenty days passed in a whirl. I had not planned to do any shopping but then everything looked so exciting and we all were enticed to buy stuff and almost everybody's bags were bulging at the seams.

First few days at the school taught a lot many things about the Swedish students. From the very childhood the children are given training to speak softly and hence when you visit the school it may be bustling with activity but there is certain calmness. Students may be eighteen or nineteen years old but still long to gain attention and had lots of curiosity about Indian culture. People are still ignorant that now India is not as shown in Hollywood movies. It is trying hard to become a developed nation. Students really would like to visit India if given an opportunity.

I got a chance to experience Walpurgis festival –Welcoming the end of winter and onset of summer season. It was a great experience as it reminded me of the way we celebrate Holi or Lohri. The name may be different but the idea behind the ritual is quite similar. A huge bonfire is built and people gather around sing carols and songs welcoming spring.

There are so many similarities between Indian and Swedish culture. Farming used to be the main occupation of the people in Sweden so it is in India. People prefer leaving their shoes outside the house, they do the same in India. Parents take care of their children and vice versa. Families love spending time outdoor and specially the few spring and summer months.

Cybergymnasiet arranged a visit to a natural reserve and we all had the opportunity to experience nature in its pristine form, it was breathtaking to view such a sight where you could walk for miles and not see another soul. A rare feat in India.

Last but not the least it was a trip which has left everlasting memories in my mind I would always cherish the wonderful experience of meeting such a gorgeous family of Helena, always smiling Annelie and a very practical Päivi. I really wish when they come to India they all have a Great time.

Vinita Pande
TOS Staff





















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