

# In case people got the wrong impression

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I really did enjoy my trip. I just like talking about the goofy things.

I intend to go back to Sweden in the spring. I'm currently enrolled in Swedish lessons but this trip came far too soon for me to have learned anything useful aside from "tack", "ursäkta" and "Jag talar inte svenska." Though the lady behind the register was exceedingly pleased to see a blatant foreigner buying Swedish children's books. Everybody in Sweden speaks perfect English (it's quite embarrassing, actually), so Swedes are honored when a foreigner actually bothers to learn Swedish. I'm told that one of the factors contributing to astounding English-language abilities in Sweden is that American TV shows and movies are not dubbed into Swedish when imported; they are merely subtitled.

The Øresund bridge is totally awesome.

Amusingly, when you take the ferry from Denmark to Germany, the toll booth agent speaks Danish and expects you to speak Danish. When you take the same ferry in the reverse direction, the toll both agent speaks German and expects you to speak German.

The ferry schedules are published only in Danish. Just our luck, of all the languages of all the countries we were visiting, that's the only one none of us knew. We had a choice of two ferries, and we were unable to determine with confidence what times each one ran, how much time the crossing lasted, and when the last ferry of the day was.

I studied German for five years, but that was a long time ago and my vocabulary has decayed heavily since then. Actually, my listening ability never got very good. On all the exercise tapes, they talk painfully slowly and clearly, whereas in real life, people talk rapidly and don't enunciate clearly. I could usually follow about two or three sentences before the rate of input exceeded my ability to process it. I got around okay, but it was slow going. I've also been told that my German is overly formal and stilted. (Is there such a thing as "overly stilted"? As opposed to what, "just stilted enough"?)

I am myself not a vegetarian, but my two travelling companions are. We discovered the secret to finding vegetarian food: find an Indian restaurant or an Italian restaurant. An Indian restaurant will have an extensive vegetarian menu. ("Scharf" is a good word to know,

too.) An Italian restaurant will have a few vegetarian options. We weren't sure about German or French restaurants. We concluded that, while a French restaurant is more likely to have vegetarian dishes or be able to convert an existing dish to vegetarian, a German restaurant would be less likely to be annoyed at the request. (We only tested this theory once: I stopped at a German restaurant and asked if they had any vegetarian entrees; the answer was no.)

It's a good thing the glockenspiel at the Marienplatz is so badly out of tune – it sets expectations for the show that follows.

The important lessons at Oktoberfest were not learned by me firsthand, thank goodness.

The Deutsches Museum is ridiculously huge. We spent an entire day there.

We did not get to spend as much time in Berlin as the city deserved. Berlin is a “real city” as opposed to Munich, which is a “tourist city”.

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