



Swedes and Sweden

After months of 'Radio Silence' Mark Taylor has finally sent us a few Wedding Shots. Mark & Lisa, you may recall left Riyadh in the summer of 2007 and moved to Stockholm.

After the wedding and what sounds like a fantastic honeymoon in Paris and St Lucia, Mark seems to have settled in to life in Sweden. Cropped from the two thousand plus words in his missive are a few observations:

Some time ago, I found myself surrounded by the essence of all things Swedish. I was driving a Volvo from Gothenburg to Stockholm in the snow, with a Swede in the car (my wife) and listening to Abba. Only if I had been carting a poorly laminated self-assemble shelving unit could I have felt more Swedish.

But, I need to be careful here. Not only is my wonderful, beautiful (pre-emptive grovelling here) wife Swedish, but so are a number of other people reading this. So below I have listed what we shall call observations about Swedes and Sweden, with no judgement that might be of interest to people of other nationalities and cultures:



AND
FINALLY

- You can't buy a mobile telephone without giving an address
- You can't get an address without officially registering one at the tax office
- You can't register at the tax office without a personal number
- You can't get a personal number without having lived in Sweden for a year...
- No-one has curtains. It is considered positively rude to stop passers-by looking at you naked.
- In almost every shop you need to take a ticket (like at the Deli in Tesco) on entry. Even if you walk into an empty jewellery store you will have to take a ticket before a sales assistant will speak to you.
- Busses run on a timetable.
- So does the tube.
- You can't open a bank account without a personal number.
- You can't use your credit card without the supporting evidence of a passport (or ID card, which you don't have).
- There is only one shop that sells alcohol. It is about as frequently occurring as a post office and it closes at 18:30 (or 1500 on a Saturday).
- There is a rule in the Highway Code that says that when driving on the main road, you must sometimes give right of way to people joining from minor roads on the right; apparently you are supposed to guess when this rule applies.
- If you walk on a cycle-path, a cyclist may try to shoot you.
- The Stockholm A-Z fits on one sheet of A3 paper (not a 98 page book like London).
- They do actually love Ikea.