

Our Scandinavian Grand Tour

This trip was a celebration of my 70th birthday.

I was born on May 17th, which delighted my Norwegian-born paternal grandmother as that is also Constitution Day, a widely celebrated holiday in Norway. Being in Oslo on my birthday has been on my personal bucket list for some time now, so that became the focus as Kathleen and I began to plan this trip.

We have visited Scandinavia several times, and as we began to develop our itinerary we decided to focus on that region and targeted Copenhagen, Stockholm, Tallinn in addition to Oslo. London is a convenient travel hub, and it is another city that we both love to visit so selecting it as the starting and ending point for the trip was an obvious choice. At the time there did not seem to be much rhyme or reason for this particular itinerary beyond the fact that they were cities we have visited and enjoyed on previous trips.

Kathleen then began to create a meticulous agenda for our latest “trip of a lifetime”.

While we were traveling, I received an email message from someone who is a very distant Y-DNA match to me. After the trip I dug into the connection and made a rather interesting discovery.

Our connection is quite distant. Current Y-DNA research traces all humans back to a common point in central Africa. All we know for sure is that our paternal (fathers’ fathers’ father....) lines meet at some unknown male ancestor.

As humans evolved and migrated through the world their Y-DNA mutated and created branches and sub-groups. My particular branch (haplogroup R-FTA46684) is considered somewhat rare. It has been matched to DNA samples obtained from archaeological discoveries.



When I looked at a map available on FamilyTree DNA showing where many of those discoveries were made, I had to wonder if my itinerary choices were influenced by my genetic heritage.

Call it coincidence if you want to... I will call it a fantastic experience that I documented in a journal which is transcribed below.

MAY-JUNE						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
11	12	13 DFW-LHR	14 OSL 5 nights	15 OSL	16 OSL	17 OSL
18 OSL	19 OSL-CPH Train 8 hrs	20 CPH 3 nights	21 CPH	22 CPH - STO Train 6 hrs	23 STO 4 nights	24 STO
25 STO	26 STO-TLL Ferry 16 hrs overnight	27 TLL 2 nights	28 TLL	29 TLL - STN 2 hrs	30 LON 4 nights	31 LON
1 LON	2 LHR-DFW					

Day 1: Tuesday May 13, 2025

Dallas -> London

This trip, which has been planned and arranged in exquisite detail by Kahleen over the course of many months, is suddenly upon us!

Our flight departs at 7:35 pm so we had most of the day to finish packing and take care of the many small things one does before leaving home for a 3-week absence with time to spare.



Cliff drove us to the White Rock Lake light rail station at 2:30 where (for \$1.50 each) we began the first leg of our long trip to Oslo.

While we were standing on the platform waiting for the train to arrive, we received a text informing us that our 7:35 pm flight (AA 80) had been delayed until 9:30, which would cause us to miss our connecting flight to Oslo.

We proceeded to the airport and got some wonderful assistance from the agent when we went to check our bags. It turned out that the 3:00 flight to London was also delayed and now scheduled to depart at 6:20 (AA 50), so she re-booked us on that one instead. We lost our exit row seats and had to sit in separate parts of the plane, but they were aisle seats and we were back on schedule!

Spend the short amount of time we had to wait in the Admirals club lounge, then we were on our way!

It was an uneventful flight that was lowlighted by a remarkably dreadful dinner (I tried the chicken while Kathleen opted for the pasta). Both meals were bland, unattractive and tasteless... Bleah!

Day 2: Wednesday May 14, 2025

London -> Oslo

I apparently managed to sleep more than Kathleen but we both arrived in London feeling remarkably good (probably due to the fact that the crew never came back around to offer refills on our wine!).

Our bags were checked through to Oslo, but we had to go through security screening again (still in Terminal 3 where we arrived).

Had a much more enjoyable meal before going to the gate to catch our British Air flight (BA 762) to Oslo. It was there, just before we boarded the plane, that I discovered that my iPad was missing! All I can figure is that I slid it under my backpack (while it was still in the overhead bin) instead of putting it inside when I was getting ready to get off our flight from Dallas.

The flight to Oslo (on an Airbus 319) was also uneventful, and we landed in brilliant sunshine a little after 4:00 pm. We collected our bags and went through immigration control. When I responded to the usual "where are you going" question my agent said "It sounds like you are on the grand Scandinavian tour"... We bought train tickets (225 Kr each) and caught our train for the ~30 minute ride into the city center. Got off at the National Theatre station (the 3rd stop) and reached our Thon hotel after a 10-minute walk in the cool (about 60 degrees) but sunny day.

Our room is on the top (8th) floor. It is spacious, with a sitting area, large bedroom and a huge bathroom. The décor is an odd mixture of colors. Like all hotels, they only provided one suitcase stand, no drawers (but lots of shelves) and few hangers, but it looks like it will be a pleasant place to spend our time in Oslo.

I filed an on-line claim with American about my lost iPad... Hoping that they will find it and return it to me....



We ventured out and made it all the way across the street to a bar with an outdoor seating area in the still-brilliant sunshine and had a few drinks with the locals before returning back to our hotel for dinner (I had roast pork, Kathleen had pasta).

We took the remains of our bottle of wine back up to our room but were too tired to finish it and went to bed.

6,366 Steps, 2.2 Miles

Day 3: Thursday May 15, 2025

Oslo

We both slept well, until 7:00 or so... The sun comes up early: We are lucky that our room has good curtains.

The Thon Hotel breakfast did not disappoint us – they still provide a wonderful variety of things to choose from with endless quantities of coffee and juices. When we arrived we were mistakenly greeted by the hostess as VIP's who needed a special diet. We just hoped that the people who needed it got it!

We decided to start with the Rick Steves recommended tram tour of the city, which turned out to be kind of a bust... It is hard to take in what we were seeing without burying our noses in his book and missing everything that passed by.

Next, we walked to the harbor to take the harbor tour but (eventually) figured out that we had just missed the hourly departure. We spent some time trying figure out when, how and where to catch the next one, then walked to the nearby Nobel Museum.

That turned out to be a lot more interesting than either of us expected it to be, especially the special exhibit about perception. It touched on how people perceived and react to reality. It has a lot of parallels to how people seem to be reacting to the MAGA/Project 2025 craziness that is occurring at present.

Filled in some time by finding a pharmacy to buy some sunscreen and lamb's wool to prevent a blister on Kathleen's foot. It apparently is not a common product in Norway, so we had a lot discussion with the pharmacist about the best product to use.



Killed a lot more time at an outdoor bar/restaurant at the waterfront over drinks before joining a large number of people to queue up for the ferry trip around the harbor. Opted to not get off at the first island stop (Hovedoya - we did not think we had enough time) and returned to the harbor at the end of the tour at 3:00.

Enjoyed a few more drinks in the brilliant sun, then walked ~15 minutes around the harbor for our 5:00 dinner reservation at the Solsiden restaurant that has a marvelous view of the harbor. We passed on their special dish – a large plate stacked with huge pile of seafood



(lobster, shrimp and who knows what else) knowing that we would never be able to do justice to more than a fraction of what was served.

We did agree on the 3-course special, which turned out to be fantastic: a starter course based on a local salmon-like fish, followed by sea bass, and finished by a wonderful meringue/strawberry dessert that was really good!

It was a bit of a hike back to the hotel, and still quite light, so we stopped off at a park-side outdoor café we had passed when we were walking to the hotel when we arrived on Wednesday. It turned out to be a bad choice service-wise... Waiters were non-existent: I ended up going into the bar to purchase our wine, which did not appear to be a common drink of choice. The bar tender did not seem to know which kinds of wine she had, and had a great deal of difficulty opening the one I chose, and was distracted by an argument between a customer and another employee about his bill. On top of that, payment was a pain. Their payment device was very confusing: It shows the total charge, but it requires you to enter the amount you want to pay. Apparently, the hospitality industry is gearing up to prompt for tips now.

The last bit of weirdness occurred as I was (finally!) carrying our wine back outside to our table. As I stepped out of the bar a waiter suddenly appeared and took the glasses of wine from my hands so *he* could carry them across the sidewalk to the outdoor seating area, apparently to comply with some code or regulation.

Needless to say, we will not be returning to this place!



When we returned to our hotel, we discovered that our floor also features a large lounge area. It is just a seating area (no drinks or food were being served), but it was a nice place to sit, write, plan and enjoy the wine left over from the previous day's dinner.

Went to bed around 9:00...

11,234 Steps, 4.3 Miles

Day 4: Friday May 16, 2025

Oslo

Woke up to another beautiful day – Sunny and pleasantly cool weather. Looked at our plans for the day after breakfast and decided to skip the Resistance Museum (we saw it in 2017 and were less than impressed then) and decided to take the ferry out to the Hovedoya island we skipped yesterday instead.



We were really glad that we did... we enjoyed walking and exploring the many runes, and the view from the hill where the cannons were located – a spectacular vista of the fjord and the city.

Came back into Oslo and took the tram over to the Munch Museum. That was interesting, both because of the art that was on display and the architecture of the building itself. The area around the museum was also really interesting – on the water, surrounded by equally fascinating architecture and a Ferris wheel (which we did not ride).

Rode back to the harbor and had a few drinks at our now-favorite sidewalk bar until it was time for dinner. We had a 5:30 reservation at a Rick Steves-recommended restaurant featuring authentic Norwegian dishes. We passed on the whale, reindeer and other game offerings and both selected the steak. It was OK – loved the vegetables that were served with it.

We finished the evening off with ice cream from a nearby stand, then had a few more glasses of wine before walking back to the hotel.

We talked to several people about what to do/expect tomorrow during the celebration... We think we will make our way to the palace to see the King.

12,483 Steps, 6 floors of stairs, 4.9 Miles

Day 5: Saturday May 17, 2025

Oslo

We slept later, and the restaurant was more crowded than usual: We ended up sharing a table with another couple. It was a good experience: they were about our age and live in Hamburg. They came over on the ferry (~20 hours) for the weekend, but were not aware that the celebration would be happening while there were there – not the first tourists we have encountered that were now aware.

The restaurant staff were all dressed in their traditional Norwegian clothes. We later learned that these were the clothes they wore when they were confirmed at age 17. Each region of the country has its own version. Single women wear white aprons, married woman (and, apparently, single women who don't want the bother of keeping a white one clean) wear black aprons.



We worked our way up to the Royal Palace as the parade was beginning to move past it. There were thousands of people there already, virtually all of them wearing their beautiful clothing. The children marching past were cute and obviously excited to be part of the parade. They were interspaced by marching bands that were fun to listen to. The Royal Family was out on a balcony in the palace to see it all, and to be saluted by the lowering/dipping of each Norwegian flag as it passed by.

The weather was (again) magnificent – Warm in the bright sunshine, cooler in the shade.

When we had seen our fill of the parade we made our way back down to the harbor, which was by now jam-packed with people. Fortified ourselves with some ice cream, then elected to ride the B1 ferry again. It was running on a slightly different route – probably due to the holiday – but still took nearly an hour before depositing us back at the dock.

Walked up to the Akershus fortress lured by the loud music being played. We never did get close enough to the stage to see the performers though. We tried to get into an outdoor restaurant located nearby but they were completely booked and were turning people away (making us really glad that we had made dinner reservations in advance!).



We walked back towards the Parliament building and noticed people sitting in a small outdoor area drinking beers. We investigated and discovered a small restaurant just far enough from the harbor to not be mobbed and perfect for our needs. So we bought drinks and joined the others who had also discovered this little oasis.

Kathleen fell into a conversation with the couple seated next to us while I was inside using the bathroom... They were both lawyers, and she explained the history behind the traditional costumes everybody was wearing. We enjoyed talking to them until they finished their drinks and left to meet their family.

After they left a marching band passed by and stopped in the street behind the Parliament building. The building across from the Parliament had a large 2nd floor balcony that soon filled with people as the band stopped and played 5 or 6 songs for them. It was quite fun to listen to.



After several leisurely drinks it was time to go back to the room to change for dinner at the nearby Grand Hotel. That turned out to be a bit of a disappointment... We were seated at a table right next to the door and across from the hostess station which was a bit of a distraction. The service was perfunctory – it felt like we were in a dining assembly line. We'd ordered ahead of time. We had two choices – Fish (Kathleen) or Duck (me). We were served two rolls (white and dark). The wine selection was printed on a single sheet of paper that listed only 5 – 6 choices, red or white.

The food was good (especially the 1st course – some kind of Salmon puree with small shrimp and fresh dill served on toast – it was delicious!). But... the experience was less



than enjoyable, definitely not fine dining.

Ended the evening in a sidewalk table at a bar that was far more lively and fun.

Kathleen surprised me with birthday gifts: two air tags (I wish I had had one on my iPad!) and slim, small battery/charger.

11,062 Steps, 6 floors of steps, 4.8 Miles

Day 6: Sunday May 18, 2025

Oslo



Enjoyed another Thon breakfast feast before heading out to the Vigeland Sculpture Park. The lawyer couple we met yesterday live nearby and recommended it highly, and I can see why. It started as an estate for one of the wealthiest Oslo families in the 1800's. It was purchased by the city with the intention of using it as a cemetery, but changed their minds and established what would become a huge public park, home to the Oslo Museum and a huge collection of sculptures. It is quite large and gradually filled up with bus loads of tourists while we were there.

From there we navigated our way to the nearby Majorstuen tram stop to catch the #1 train (located near the tram stop but not easy to find!) which took us up the mountain to Frognerseteren.

It was another brilliantly sunny day and the views of Oslo and the Fjord that we glimpsed through the gaps in the trees and between the houses that line the steep route were spectacular.

From the station we walked ~300 meters down the steep path to the restaurant. We were teased by many short-cuts on the trail that were even steeper and rockier, but we elected to stay on the main trail and arrived without incident.



We got some drinks (I had to wait ~10 minutes for the staff to change the keg and get the beer flowing again) before joining the large and varied group of people sitting outside soaking in the sunshine and enjoying their food and drinks.

Our 1:30 reservation time rolled around, and we went into the small (and mostly vacant) dining room... there was just us and one other couple. We had a corner table by a window and got a lot of attention (and advice) from our waiter.



Kathleen got brave and ordered the reindeer. I initially opted for the veal until I saw the look on our waiter's face and agreed to have that as well (much to our waiters obvious approval – he said it was a much more suitable match for the Margaux wine we had ordered.

The reindeer was OK – I'm not sure I will ever order it again, but it was tender and had a good flavor. Neither of us were wild about the side dishes – white asparagus (bland) and some kind of apple based potato-like layered stack.

I had asked if they still served cloud berries. Our server consulted with the chef while we ate and reported that they did not have any. The closest thing they did have was not recommended though – it did not pair well with our wine either!

We had chocolate ice cream for desert (it paired well with the wine) then retraced our steps (uphill this time) back to the train station for our ride back down into Oslo, all the way to the National Theatre stop.

Went back down to harbor and had another drink (lousy service – I had to go into the bar to get them myself).



By this time, it was nearly 6:00 and we decided to go back to our room to do some preliminary packing. Then we walked across the street to a bar that got OK reviews for their food and shared an order of fish & chips which was very good) and enjoyed a few more drinks while sitting at an outdoor table on the sidewalk. We seemed to attract business for them: we were initially the only people sitting outside, but as we ate the tables around us gradually filled up.

Headed back to our room and retired ~ 10:30, just in time to hear the start of an annoying whine of a nearby machine. It sounded like a tree trimmers mulcher (but there are no trees in the part of Oslo) so it must have been a large vacuum truck doing something vitally important at 10:30 pm on a Sunday evening... fortunately it move on eventually.

10,571 Steps, 10 floors of stairs, 4.3 Miles

Day 7: Monday May 19, 2025

Oslo -> Copenhagen

Got up, finished packing, ate, and decided to go to the train station a little early to see what it was like.

Going early turned out to be a very lucky decision. The station was a 20-minute walk. After we arrived, Kathleen realized that she had left one of her small bags at the hotel. So, I stayed at the station with our bags while she returned to the hotel to retrieve it. We had just a few minutes to spare to climb into our 2nd class coach on the 10:14 train to Gothenburg, Sweden.

We arrived at 1:20. Bought some sandwiches, used the bathroom, and walked down to track 14. We knew that was the correct track because there was an announcement on the train from Oslo as we were pulling into the station.



Got in and settled into our 1st class seats, then thought to confirm that we were on the correct train. I found a conductor and discovered that we were on the wrong train! We barely made it off before it departed... Track 14 was correct, but it was a later train (delayed until 2:45).

All went well on the trip until the train developed some kind of problem. We made it as far as Malmö (42 km short of Copenhagen) but stopped there. That didn't present much of a problem: We identified the next train to Copenhagen on the display conveniently located on our arrival platform as we walked off our train, found platform 1b and made it there in time to catch the 6:35 train for a 30-minute ride to the Copenhagen Central station.

Our Copenhagen disorientation curse continues... We got thoroughly confused trying to get out of the station to walk to our hotel (Axel Guldsmeden), which was located a short distance away. We finally found a set of steps inside the station that led us directly to the street we needed to be on to get to our hotel.

And what a place that turned out to be... Two buildings with a central courtyard, bar and restaurant. The décor is somewhat weird/kitschy/eclectic with an ecological focus thrown in for good measure. The room is large, but closet space was sparse (only 3 hangers) and no suitcase stands, but it is clean and comfortable as it can be.

Decided we were in the mood for a good Italian meal and got several recommendations from the very helpful staff at the front desk. We chose one just a few blocks away: Kathleen had lasagna, and I had pasta with chicken in white sauce: Both were good!



Walked past a church with a large group of homeless people camped outside on the way back to the hotel, where we enjoyed a nightcap in the bar.

6,059 Steps, 2 flights of stairs, 2.4 Miles

Day 8: Tuesday May 20, 2025

Copenhagen

Breakfast was a smaller, organic and eco-friendly version of Thon experience, but was quite good and more than adequate for our needs.



Set out for our great Copenhagen experience down “Europe’s First and Greatest Pedestrian Shopping Mall” but were quite disappointed with what we encountered. The quality of the stores has deteriorated, and the tourist shops (of which there were many) were pretty much all selling the same stuff. We could not find any store selling t-shirts from Bo Bendixon (our favorite t-shirt artist), and to top it all off the Royal Copenhagen store was

inexplicably closed for the day.

We browsed around the George Jenson store next door, greatly admiring the things that were for sale there (it was like being in a museum) but purchasing nothing. Kathleen did find a small candle powered gift for Joe at one of the other stores we visited.



Walked over to the Nyhaven and purchased hotdogs from a vendor there. They were messy to eat: I enjoyed mine, but Kathleen was less than thrilled with hers.

Pulled into one of the many café’s that lined the waterfront and washed down the ‘dogs with few drinks. We started out at a table in the sun but soon retreated to the table next to it in the shade. A Danish couple soon claimed the table in the sun to enjoy a beer. Kathleen

offered to move our table back so they could sit in the shade, but they declined – said it felt too good to finally be able to sit in the sun. It was a good place to relax and watch the people passing by.



Walked over to the Gammel Strand and arrived just in time to catch the next canal boat tour of Copenhagen (included in our Copenhagen card). There were only a handful of us on the boat, but the weather was marvelous, and the tour was both informative and enjoyable.

Our guide mentioned a Viking Sorceress exhibition at the National Museum so we navigated our way there and spent an hour or so walking through it. The multi-media introduction was interactive but dull. However, the remaining part of the exhibit featured artifacts and provided information about early life in Denmark and was quite interesting.

We had a lot of time to kill before our 7:15 dinner reservation so we hopped on the water taxi (the 952) and headed South to the end of the line, where it turned around and became the 951 and brought us back to our point of departure. The waterfront was lined with thousands of Danes taking advantage of the sunny and warm weather by swimming and sun bathing.



Dinner at KöD was one of the better meals we have had so far. Kathleen ordered the set piece meal: Lobster Tortellini, Filet w/fries & tomato salad, followed by a crème brulee that was excellent – served with a side of raspberry sorbet. I just had a ribeye and fries, but helped Kathleen with the generous portions she was served.

Had contemplated taking the bus back to our hotel but agreed to walk, which turned out to be very pleasant. We re-traced our walk through the now nearly deserted shopping mall and enjoyed it more with the stores closed than we did when they were open.



Got a glass of wine at the hotel and settled into the courtyard below our room, really enjoying having such a pleasant and private area available to enjoy. It was a short-lived pleasure though, as we were soon chased out by the hotel staff enforcing their 10:00 “quiet time” policy. So, we reluctantly went up to our room. It has a balcony, but it is very small. But once we opened the doors fully and moved the furniture into the room it became a very pleasant little area for us to enjoy.

We remarked that this will probably be the first international trip we have taken in a long time that will not involve the use on an ATM machine. Every transaction (even getting into bathroom at train stations) has used a credit card. We feel kind of sorry for the musicians and tour guides because nobody has currency of change for tips any more.

13,510 Steps, 3 floors of stairs, 5.5 Miles

Day 9: Wednesday May 21, 2025

Copenhagen

Our luck with the weather continues – we woke up to another sunny (although somewhat cooler) day!

Shared a table at breakfast with a Danish man who has obviously been successful at business: he has been the CIO for several large companies (including Lego). He has traveled throughout the western part of the United States and is currently finishing a 3-year engagement with a company in Copenhagen. We had a pleasant conversation with him.



Visited the My Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen’s “Top Art Gallery” and we were not disappointed. They have an extensive Egyptian collection, lots of statues, and an impressive collection of paintings by French artists. I especially enjoyed the exhibit that they had focusing on the technology and techniques used to date paintings.



We then walked back to the train station and took the S-train to the Mosede Fort Denmark, a coastal fort active during WWI. It featured a “On the Brink of War – Neutrality between Warfare and Welfare” exhibition about Denmark’s WWI experience.

Encountered lots of school kids on the train back into Copenhagen, obviously out on a trip to somewhere. Walked back up the Stroget to visit the Royal Copenhagen store. Stopped first at an outdoor seating area for drinks and a shared order of fish and chips. It was becoming increasingly windy and the temperature began to drop while we were there.

Unfortunately the Royal Copenhagen store was again closed (no explanation), so we made our way back to the hotel (had ice cream on the way) to relax a bit before dinner.

It had rained a bit while we were in our room but it had stopped by the time we left for the restaurant (U formel) for our 6:30 reservation. The menu was rather strange – it just listed one 5-course set meal and a somewhat bewildering list of ala cart item. I did not recognize most of the items on the menu and settled on the pork: Kathleen ordered some fish and an order of fried potato bread. As it turned out (as we overheard the waiter at another table explain) the servings are quite small and the idea is for you to order and share several things at the table. Our selections were delicious, and we were under no pressure to finish our bottle of wine.



Went to the quiet train station in search of some cookies which we eventually found at a 7-11 (although the smallest thing we could find was a small tin). We then visited the bar in our hotel where we proceeded to snarf down the entire tin over several glasses of wine.

14,040 Steps, 11 flights of stairs, 5.5

Day 10: Thursday May 22, 2025

Copenhagen -> Stockholm

Woke up to a cool and rainy morning: it rained really hard while we were eating breakfast. If we must encounter rain at least it will be from inside of a train!

We were lucky – no rain during our short walk to the train station at 9:00.

Our train to Malmö left a few minutes late with a lot of people on board. Many got off at the airport a few stops later, and more got off with us after the 30 minute journey to Malmö.

The train for Stockholm left at at 11:10. We are riding backwards (with a pillar blocking our view) but otherwise very comfortable in the 1st class section (which has free coffee!). We named and Kathleen worked on a video of our trip so far. I had a sandwich from the dining car for lunch: Nice way to travel!

Arrived at the very (Very!) large Central Station in Stockholm. It was very busy – felt more like a large airport, full of people going every which way.

Outside it was cool (gloves and hat cool). We had our usual difficulty deciding whether to go left or right when we reached the street, but Kathleen got her bearings and headed us in the correct direction for the 15 – 20 minute walk to our hotel (Lady Hamilton Hotel). It doesn't have a lot of signage outside, so we managed to walk right past it, but we realized it quickly and turned around.



It is a unique hotel, full of memorabilia, furniture, nooks and crannies. Our room (#42) is on the top (4th) floor and it is built right into the eaves of the roof. There are large beams and a sloped roof on the outside part of the room. It has skylights that can be opened, and built in seats (perfect for my suitcase) below.

We plan to have them do our laundry here – in by 9:00, out by 4:00 they claim.

Decided we wanted to have some wine in the room so did a quick Google search to locate a wine store and set out to take care of that chore. Stopped on the walk down narrow and almost empty street we chose at a store selling Swedish horses because Kathleen noticed a unique seated horse in the window. They only had one in the store: it was a bit pricy (950 Kr - \$95) but decided it was close enough to her birthday to justify a splurge and bought it.

Got to (and past) the location of the “wine store” but found no sign of a wine store. Finally noticed the store name listed with all of the other businesses located in the building and decided that it must be an office or something, but definitely not a wine store.



We were on the waterfront, on the eastern side of the island, and noticed several bars/restaurants across the street, so headed over there for a drink. Found the dock for one of the water taxis we will be taking (#82) on the way. Settled into a very friendly bar, at a corner table under a heat lamp (they had extended their retractable roof and put up temporary walls) so while we were “inside” it would have been cold without the heater.

Had a nice conversation with one of the bar tenders (he grew up in Spain). The man sitting behind me turned out to be from Austin! He had been in Greece with his wife, then came on by himself for a business meeting in Stockholm. Small world...

Stayed there until it was time to head to the Michelangelo Ristorante, a restaurant we discovered on a previous trip.



Got a nice quiet table where we sat for a very long time with no service. Got a little agitated when someone was seated and served in the same section. We finally did get service: Our waitress explained that she had just started her shift and had no idea who had been seated when. She was very nice, and things went well from that point on.

The appetizer we ordered was amazing – a 3-tiered serving consisting of some kind of fried cheese ball, bruschetta, beef carpaccio – each one better than the other!

I have a fettuccine that had cooked beef mixed in that was really good, Kathleen had risotto with shrimp, and we shared a good bottle of red wine.

Walked back to the hotel, encountered a lot more people on the street than there were when we went into the restaurant.

The floor in our room squeaks a lot when you walk around... I feel sorry for the people in the room below us!

6,734 Steps, 10 flights of steps, 2.7 Miles

Day 11: Friday May 23, 2025

Stockholm

Yesterday's weather forecast was wrong – no sun this morning! They nailed the temperature though – it is cool.

This is near the halfway point of the trip. We packed lightly and agreed before we left that we would have the hotel do our laundry while we were in Stockholm. As we were getting things together we realized that this was going to be a very pricy event – probably somewhere in the neighborhood of \$200 for not much laundry. Even the desk clerk seemed a little taken aback when we dropped it off at the front desk – she warned us that it was going to be very expensive. We did it anyway: Our vacation time is too valuable to spend finding and figuring out how to use a Swedish laundromat.

Breakfast in a scaled down version of the Thon experience: a good selection of the usual things served in a pleasant room off of the main lobby.



Walked down to the harbor and took the #82 water taxi to Djurgaden Island and (eventually) found the Abba Museum. Neither of us were really big Abba fans when they hit the scene in the late 70's so we had a lot to learn about them. The museum is apparently undergoing an upgrade, so we saw the temporary exhibits. It was interesting but nothing like the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in the US.

We obviously were not typical fans, but we were surrounded by many that were, all of them obviously thrilled by what they were seeing and hearing.



From there we walked to the nearby Skansen Open air Museum & Zoo. It was kind of disappointing (well, maybe more than "kind of"...). Most of the buildings were closed. It was cold and windy and there just wasn't much to see or do. Kathleen did buy a pair of pottery candle holders that were made on-site.

Had lunch (pizza for me, meatballs for Kathleen) back at one of the waterfront restaurants on Gamla Stan, then decided that there wasn't enough time to much beside head back to the hotel for a while before our 6:00 dinner cruise. I napped while Kathleen worked on her next video.

The cruise instructions said to arrive by 5:30 so we left at 5:00 to walk to the departure pier. The clouds were beginning to break up so the sun would be shining while we cruised (although it was still cool).



The experience on the boat was mostly like being in a restaurant. We were seated at a table and a waiter took our order and served our wine. The pace was much slower, which was nice. The view was really enjoyable, especially as we got away from the city and saw some of the homes on the smaller islands.

Ther dinner was a letdown. My carpaccio appetizer was good, but the "Farm House Chicken" was kind of weird... Chicken with gravy & peas, potato cooked like a waffle, topped with a fried egg and a slice of bacon with some greens thrown on top for good measure, all stacked in a bowl. It was edible (neither one of us ate the egg) but not really enjoyable.

We returned to the dock at 9:00... figured out we could take the #80 water taxi (which was waiting as we walked up) to Djurgaden Island and catch the #82 back to Gamla Stan and save ourselves a lot of walking. It worked well!

11,585 Steps, 8 floors of stairs, 4.8 Miles

Day 12: Saturday May 24, 2025

Stockholm

Another boat day dawned clear and sunny. After breakfast we set out at 9:30 to catch our boat at berth #3 – which we nearly missed. Got turned around and briefly went in the wrong direction. We realized it quickly, arrived at the boat with just a few minutes to spare before our 10:00 departure.



The boat was crowded – it was too cold for most people to sit on the open top deck, but we managed to find seats in the back of the boat near a window where we enjoyed the 2:15 trip to the island of Birka.

This was the location of the first Viking settlement in Sweden, established around 700 AD. At its peak it had about 1000 inhabitants and existed for about 200 years before it was abandoned/destroyed for reasons that are not clearly understood.

About 5000 burials have been identified, and about 1000 of them have been excavated, revealing amazing details about the people who lived and were buried here. One grave has been identified as that of an apparently great female warrior and leader, which makes it very unique.



We took the 45-minute narrated tour of the island, walked through the recreated village (several huts/buildings) and enjoyed a late lunch (meatballs) in the island's restaurant. Got into a nice conversation with a man from Stockholm. He had visited the island ~25 years ago, before all the buildings we saw were built. He seemed impressed that we had chosen to take the time to make the trip to see the island. We had a similar conversation with another couple on the boat on the way back to Stockholm.

It has been interesting to see the reaction of people when they learn where we are from. Most have assumed that we are from somewhere in Europe (frequently mistaken for natives wherever we are). Nobody has brought up the disaster that is being perpetrated by Trump.

The main feeling I get is sympathy, disgust and resignation about where things seem to be headed.



Once we reached Stockholm we walked back to our hotel and discovered that they served drinks at a handful of seats on the sidewalk. It was a good location – in the sun and no wind (which has been blowing at 20 – 30 MPH) so we pulled in and had a few drinks there.

Went up to the room for a bit to get ready for our 8:00 reservation at the nearby Pastis restaurant which is advertised as a French restaurant. It was – a very small, crowded Paris-like restaurant with tables close together. We both ordered the pork, which turned out to be ribs with a surprisingly good Teriyaki glaze.



The two women at the table next to us were there when we arrived and endorsed our selection while carrying on a non-stop conversation with each other and (occasionally, us). They were good friends, living in Stockholm, and enjoying a night out together.

As we finished eating a group of men arrived and crowded in around the already crowded bar, squeezing into the small and close by dining area, and the already loud level of conversation increased even more. We abandoned our intention to order desert, paid and left.



We had discovered the square lined with bars, chairs and lap rugs that we enjoyed on a previous trip and stopped for a chilly but enjoyable glass of wine. We were entertained by a group of young men dressed as monks apparently helping a man celebrate his upcoming wedding (as best as we could tell) before heading back to our hotel.

8,665 Steps, 5 floors of stairs, 3.5 Miles

Day 13: Sunday May 25, 2025

Stockholm

We have been on our feet a lot and talked about getting a massage while we are here in Stockholm. Thought tomorrow morning (before we get on the boat to Tallinn) would be good but ended up deciding that today would be a much better day. I found a nearby place (Orchid Massage) that looked good for both of us and booked 2-hour massages at 2:30.



Had breakfast and a little leisure time before walking ~15 minutes to the dock where our Bridge Tour would begin at 10:00. This was a 2:15 tour that took us to see parts of the city that we have never visited. It made us appreciate just how large Stockholm is with its many islands vast amounts of water. It was enjoyable and informative.

When it ended we walked the short distance (~7 minutes) to catch the water taxis (#80 & #82) back to the lower part of Gamla Stan. We had just enough time to stop off for a bathroom stop and a cup of coffee at one of the waterfront restaurants, then walked another 8 minutes to the massage salon.

The massage was great. They did not speak much English, the tables were close together and separated only by curtains, but that was the only critique. The massage itself was amazing – like nothing I have ever experienced before, and the 2 hours flew by much too quickly.

Walked back to the waterfront near the water taxi dock and had some wine and watched the never-ending ballet of boats in the harbor until it was time (5:45) to leave for our dinner.



This was a Rick Steves recommendation – Restauran Kryp in Gamla Stan – located on the narrow, hilly, twisty street that runs next to our hotel. Got seated in a small room at the back – only 3 tables – and enjoyed the food immensely. Kathleen had the reindeer again while I started with some fried cheese ball appetizer followed by cod in lobster sauce.

Lingered over the remains of the bottle of wine before walking the short distance back to the hotel where we relaxed, read and soon retired for the night.

5,595 Steps, 5 flights of steps, 2..3 Miles

Day 14: Monday May 26, 2025

Stockholm -> Ship to Tallinn

Woke up to a leisurely (we hope!) travel day. Ate, packed, and decided to take one more boat trip. We had lots of time, so we checked out, checked our bags, arranged for a 3:30 taxi and walked towards the dock to catch our 12:30 tour. Walked through some areas we have not seen on this trip on the way.

The 1-hour tour had been advertised as having an English narration, but that changed when a large group of tourists from China trooped on board. The narration (recorded) was switched to Mandarin, and we were told to listen to the English narration on our iPhones.

That shouldn't have been a problem – the ship was equipped with WiFi and had an app to use. I had no problem, but Kathleen (and several other passengers) could not get it to work. It took a while for the crew member to explain that it was necessary to have the most recent software running in order for their app to work, so Kathleen had to go through a ~10 minute upgrade process before she could hear the narrations. I had loaded the update before we left Dallas which is why it worked for me.

When the tour ended, we went back to one of the waterfront restaurants near the water taxi dock on Gamla Stan and had lunch. Kathleen had a hamburger, and I opted for the surprisingly good Ribeye steak. We were sitting in an area with the roof retracted and enjoyed what turned out to be a mostly sunny afternoon.



Picked up a few more small houses to add to our collection as we made our way back to the hotel to collect our bags, then walked a short distance down the hill to the main street to meet our cab (cars are not allowed on the street where the hotel is located at that time of day). Our cab arrived at 3:20 and whisked us to the Silva boat terminal on the edge of town.

The check-in procedure was automated and easy. We had to wait until 4:00 before we could scan through the gates but were soon on board and in our room, which was compact but functional.



Headed to the back of the board (our room was on the 9th of 10 decks) and camped out at a table on the aptly named (for today, anyway) sun deck. It was located behind the disco area that had a conveniently located bar. The wine they had was awful, but the beer was excellent so we enjoyed the sunshine and (once we were under way) passing scenery until it was time for our 8:00 buffet dinner.

What a zoo.... There are very many groups of young boys and girls (teens), and they swarmed like locusts through all of the serving lines.

We had been a little confused about where we had booked our meal, and so arrived after the feeding frenzy was well under way. On a positive note we had a private, reserved table to ourselves.

We ate (fine dining it wasn't, but it was palatable). I stayed with the beer (on tap) after trying the wine (also on-tap and just as bad as what they were serving at the bar).

Spent a little time back on the sun deck watching the sun set, but the pounding music from the disco drove us away.

After a few problems getting the card reader to let us into our room we retired for the evening.

13,049 Steps, 5 flights of steps, 5.4 Miles

Day 15: Tuesday May 27, 2025

Tallinn

Not a great night for me... I have developed a slight but irritating cold (sore throat, runny nose) that got between me and a good nights sleep. Fortunately, I did not seem to have bothered Kathleen much.

Other than that it was a comfortable and uneventful night, and the promises to be sunny and a little warmer.

Breakfast was a much more civilized event. Most of the teens seemed to have slept in so the dining room was a lot less hectic. "They" did begin to appear as we finished eating so we lingered over coffee to watch them trickle in.



Retreated to our room to wait for our 10:30 arrival, at which time we made our way down to deck 5 for disembarkation. They had announced that we would be getting off at the back of the boat, but many people were gathered by the doors in the front of the ship as we got off of the elevator. There were even signs posted saying (in English) "Tallin Exit" with an arrow point to the back of the boat, but they did not see (or could not read English).

We made our way to the rear and managed to insert ourselves into the stream of people hurrying to get off once the door finally did open.

We were greeted as we exited the building by a taxi driver. I heard Kathleen discuss the price and thought nothing more, only to learn later that we agreed to pay 30 Euros, about 3 times more than we should have been charged (according to Rick Steves). Oh well...

He did get us to our hotel very quickly (Nunne Boutique). We checked in but our room was not yet ready, so we checked our bags and set out to see the sights.



We climbed up the nearby city wall and discovered that it was the end point of the Rick Steves walking tour, so we did it in reverse order. Learned lots about the history of the city (Kathleen had read the material before we arrived and offered a lot of commentary). It was yet another brilliantly sunny day with a vivid blue sky – great for taking pictures.

Stopped off at the town square and had lunch (Kathleen had soup, I had Lasagna) before continuing our walking tour.

Got back to the hotel just before 3:00 and were able to get into our room. It is located at the rear of the hotel, overlooking a central courtyard. Getting to it involved a long walk with a lot of turns and a few steps – the desk clerk escorted us there, explaining that the hotel had been built around an 800-year-old section of the city wall that could not be modified. Hope we are able to find the room again on our own when we leave.

The room itself is large and modern – it should be very comfortable.

I was not feeling really energetic at this point so I slept for a while and Kathleen made a video about our time in Stockholm.



We did head back out for dinner (6:30 reservation at Pegasus). Got a table near the window that was a little hot until the sun went behind a nearby building). We both ordered the chicken breast that was excellent, accompanied by a Sauvignon from Slovenia that was really good. The meal was noticeably less expensive (105 Euros) than what we have been paying so far on this trip.

We did something we have not been able to do in Oslo, Copenhagen or Stockholm: we bought a bottle of wine in a store (11 Euros).

Had a nightcap in our room and called it a day.

8,896 Steps, 12 floors of stairs, 3.4 Miles

Day 16: Wednesday May 28, 2025

Tallinn

Had another restless night but still felt too good to sit around the hotel and so set out after breakfast for the Balti Jaam Market, located next to the train station which was just a short walk away from the hotel.



It wasn't very busy or crowded, but the few booths there had delicious looking vegetables and fruits available. The strawberries looked especially good! We walked around and looked at some of the other small businesses located there, then walked through a large store/shopping area. The building is deceptively small looking from the outside but is actually built on 3 levels and on the inside seems to go on forever.

Bought nothing, rested outside on a bench while we got our bearings and set out on a rather long walk to the Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom. Estonia has such a long history of occupation, but I feel like this museum does not do a great job of telling the story. The audio guide didn't seem to stay in sync as I walked through the exhibits, and the path wasn't always obvious. The "What freedom means to me" testimonials at the end boring (to me, anyway... Kathleen seemed to really enjoy hearing them.



Next up: the KGB Prison Cells. On our way there we noticed the Great Guild hall that we somehow overlooked yesterday – probably because it is located next to the Soviet Embassy, which distracted us. It did a much better job of presenting its story – the history of the Guild and Hanseatic trading – and was very interesting.



The Soviet Embassy entrance is fenced off, and guarded by the police. The fence is plastered with signs and memorials protesting the Soviet invasion of Ukraine.



Toured the KGB cells further along the street and learned how people were abused and tortured before being shipped off to camps in Russia. Just being related to someone judged to be a criminal was sufficient justification for arrest and incarceration yourself. What an awful time....

Had drinks and snacks at a nearby café, then walked to the restaurant we selected for dinner. We witnessed a small physical protest in front of the Soviet Embassy as we walked by...



It was a bit of a hike to the Fotografiska restaurant. We planned to have drinks on their rooftop bar until our 7:00 reservation but they offered to seat us when we arrived and we accepted the offer.

The menu was interesting... the carpaccio appetizer was vegetarian (it took me a few bites to realize it). Kathleen had reindeer again – I went for the PikePerch (which was delicious).

Walked back to the hotel and had wine in the bar/restaurant and enjoyed watching the variety of people pass by the windows.

It appears that this is going to be our first trip conducted entirely using credit cards. So far the only cash we have handled was the 20 Kr coin we got back after paying for a museum locker token in Copenhagen. We have hardly seen any ATM machines.

13,652 Steps, 2 floors of stairs, 5.6 Miles

Day 17: Thursday May 29, 2025

Tallinn -> London

I woke up feeling a little better than I have for the past few days, but Kathleen woke up with a scratchy throat and a runny nose and seems destined to follow in my snuffling and sneezing footsteps.

Took a cab out to the airport at 9:45 (18 Euros), checked our bags, passed through customs and are now waiting for our 12:15 Ryan Air flight to London. Everything has been relatively easy so far...



The flight (on a 737-400) was full and lasted nearly 3 hours. We both napped most of the way and the time passed quickly.

The Stanstead airport is really efficient. Passport control is automated. Customs was quick, and our bags came up quickly. We found the National Express bus area right away. The Bus boarded and left soon after we joined the queue: We got the last two seats together, in the back of the bus.

It took a while, especially once we reached central London, and the bus made several stops before it reached the Victoria Coach Station. We walked the few blocks to our hotel (The Eckleston Square Hotel) and checked into our very modern room on the 1st floor.



Its best feature is a balcony overlooking the street in front of the hotel. It has a table and two chairs, which makes up for the lack of chairs in the room itself.

Walked to the Victoria Train station to stock up on Sudafed, tissues, wine and cookies, the latter of which we enjoyed in the pleasant weather on the balcony outside our room.

Walked down familiar streets to the O Sole Mia restaurant for our 6:30 reservation and were seated at a table in front near a window. The food and service were very good, although I could only manage to finish about half of the excellent pasta I ordered.

We were both fatigued (must be the colds) and retired early.

6,924 Steps – 2 flights of steps, 2.6 Miles

Day 18: Friday May 30, 2025

London

Slept well, woke up at 7:00. We had to work to figure out the complex plumbing in the shower but soon mastered it. After luxating on the balcony and enjoying coffee in the room we headed downstairs for breakfast.

Breakfast here is kind of meagre, especially compared to the feasts we have experienced so far on this trip. No eggs, just a small continental breakfast with breads, cereals, and some sliced meats. At least the coffee was really good, and they had lots of juice on hand. Apparently, we could order (and pay for) a more substantial meal but we made do.



Took the underground from Victoria Station (located nearby) to the Tower of London to see the new poppy display, which turned out to be as disappointing as the hotel breakfast. Nothing like the previous display. The flowers were much smaller, and they were spread all over the Tower.

We did really enjoy touring the walls and towers, something neither of us have done on previous visits.

We had extra time, we were near the river, and it was a beautiful, sunny day so we took a boat ride up to Greenwich, and stayed on the boat for the return trip to the Westminster pier. I intended to have a sandwich while we were on the boat, but they were out of anything that I wanted to eat and so had to settle for a bag of chips.

We really enjoyed sitting on the top deck and listening to the narration about the history of the areas and buildings that were passing by. This city has so much history! It is hard to believe that tourists have been visiting the tower since the 1600's.

Walked up to Convent Gardens and stopped in at a bar on the North end that we have visited before for a few drinks before dinner (which we were both looking forward to a lot).

Found the restaurant (Blacklock Covent Garden, 16a Bedford St.), a basement establishment in an alley that we never would have discovered without all of the research that Kathleen did setting up this trip. It is a meat-lovers dream... We shared a beef rib appetizer and a 600-gram (the smallest they had) porterhouse steak served with fries. It was quite good!

The only downside (although we did not realize it at the time) was that Kathleen misplaced her credit card after paying for the meal...



We walked the short distance to the Duke of York theatre (we think we have seen a play here before) for the sold-out performance of Stereophonic.

What a disappointment... The plot was thin and the acting was unconvincing. At the intermission we were left wondering if the play had ended. When I said that I hoped that it had we decided to leave, along with several others.

We discovered the missing credit card when we got on the #24 bus to go back to the hotel. Kathleen's Schwab card wouldn't work either but the driver let us on anyway.

After a thorough search back at the hotel I went down to the lobby to have the desk clerk place a call to the restaurant for me... they checked but said that they did not have it either. So we called the credit card company using our cell phone to cancel the card and request a new one (which will be mailed to our house).

We drowned our sorrows over wine on the balcony before retiring for the night.

9,497 Steps, 7 flights of stairs, 4.0 Miles

Day 19: Saturday May 31, 2025

London

Received email from American Airlines telling us we had to update our contact information before the flight home, so I took care of that. At their suggestion I also downloaded the Global Enter App and configured it. Kathleen wasn't in the mood to go through the process so we will see if it does anything for me or to her when we return to Dallas.

Kathleen, the perfect traveling companion, checked our planned route to Kew and discovered that the District tube line was closed for maintenance until 11:00. We discussed alternatives but decided (because we are both a little under the weather with our lingering colds) to lounge at the hotel for a while and wait for the maintenance to finish. We should have plenty of time to fit Kew into the day's activities.

Picked up some more cold medicine at the station on our way, then caught the tube for the 30 minute ride to Kew. The station and the part of town we walked through on our way to the National Archives is still quaint.



The MI5 exhibit was interesting. It provided information on their activities through both wars, the cold war and the present day with exhibits focused on the issues and the people involved, both within the agency and the people they were investigating.

It only took us an hour or so to see everything, so we walked back to the station, waited about 10 minutes and boarded the crowded train to ride to the Embankment.



Stopped at a shop and picked up sandwiches and drinks and joined others sitting at the base of a statue near Trafalgar Square to have a quick lunch. We then walked less than a block to the Coliseum Theatre where we saw *The Great Gatsby*.



I have never read the book, so the story was new to me. To our great pleasure absolutely everything about this production was superb. The theatre itself is beautiful, and the talent of everybody on the stage was top notch. It was memorable for all of the right reasons.



Found the fart lamp (on Carting Avenue off of the Strand) on way to Savoy Hotel. It has a small plaque explaining its significance, but the delivery man parked nearby made sure that we knew what we were looking at. An off-beat attraction to be sure, but we were not the only people who made the pilgrimage.



Had wine at the American Bar at the Savoy Hotel. We had to ask for directions from the hotel staff because memory failed us both... The service was great – our waitress even noticed Kathleen’s sniffles and brought a box of tissues! We enjoyed our bottle of wine, which was served with olives and crackers until it was time for our 7:00 dinner at the Savoy Grill.



That was another great experience. We were seated at a nice, private-ish table in the middle of the room and both enjoyed steaks served with mashed potatoes and fried mushrooms. We passed on the desert, but they served little chocolate-filled pastries with the bill.

Caught the #24 back to our end of London. Kathleen stayed up and enjoyed the balcony but I was quite tired by this time (the effect of another restless night) so I climbed into bed and was soon blissfully asleep.

10,061 Steps, 5 floors of steps, 4.0 Miles

Day 20: Sunday June 1, 2025

London

The last full day of this trip that we have been discussing and planning for such a long time! Usually, I reach this point of a trip ready to head home but this time I am kind of sorry that we are packing up for the last time.

We walked to Victoria Station and tubed our way up to the new Elizabeth line. It opened on May 17, 2022 and is an engineering marvel. I have watched several TV programs about its design and construction and wanted to see the finished product for myself.

We got off at the Canary Wharf station which is right next to the river. The station is impressive, and has apparently triggered a lot of development and construction in the surrounding area.

The trains are comfortable and fast, much more like surface trains. The contrast was really noticeable when we changed lines to get back to The Embankment: the old cards seemed like antiques.

We stopped by the Transport Museum so I could buy a T-Shirt (my first and only one on this trip) with the new Underground map.



By now it was time for lunch. We decided that no visit to London was complete without at least one meal at a Bell Italia restaurant, so we found one near Covent Gardens. Our timing was good: It quickly filled up after we arrived.

We met our tour group at the Embankment tube station and set out on a 2-hour “Westminster at War” walk led by Stephen, our very knowledgeable guide and accompanied by 8 other tourists. We got a bargain senior rate (8 pounds each), and it was worth every pound. It covered a lot ground, and along the way we learned a lot about what it was like to live in London during a war (mostly focused on WWII but with some information about WWI as well).

From there we had to hustle a bit to make our 4:35 “Aldwich – The End of the Line” tour (we were the last ones to arrive). This was a tour of a tube station that opened in 1908. It was poorly planned (only offered service between two nearby stations) and was closed in 1994.



It has been used to mock-up new station designs and is still used for training purposes. It has also been used as a prop for several movies. The two elevators are no longer functional and the ~170 steps down (and back up) were a bit of a challenge for us and several others, but the tour was fascinating and well worth the effort.



We stopped in at a nearby bub (The Wellington, near Kings College) to catch our breath over a beer, then walked the rest of the way to Trafalgar Square where we hopped on the #24 bus and rode it to Victoria Station. We stopped at the pub near our hotel and split an order of fish and chips again.

We were both beat by this time and need to be at the Victoria Coach Station to catch a 7:00 bus to the airport to begin our trip home, so we both called it a day.

17,336 Steps, 24 flights of stairs, 7.4 Miles

Day 21: Monday June 1, 2025

London -> Dallas

Woke up for the first time on this trip to the annoying beeping of our alarms at 5:15. Showered, finished packing, checked out and walked in the brisk (55 degrees) morning air to the coach station.

Had a bit of a kerfuffle when we arrived and discovered that there were four buses going to the airport (and other destinations). I made a quick trip to the ticket office (they looked up our ticket number and told me which bus to take) and then we were on our way.

This is a nice way to get to the airport. Taking the tube is cheap but it can be a challenge during rush hour. This way we have someone to help with the luggage.

The trip only took 50 minutes. We walked from the Central Bus terminal to Terminal 3, checked in easily (in the priority line thanks to Kathleen's Gold Card status) and settled into the Admirals club (thanks to my credit card) at 8:30 to wait for our 11:10 boarding.

The breakfast food was adequate (eggs, ham, sausage, rolls and all of the other usual things) so we didn't mind missing breakfast at the hotel at all (they don't start serving until 7:00).



We had exit row seats so there was just the two of us in the row and we had lots of legroom (flew a 777-400).

Kathleen thought she had dropped the case with her ear buds in them... we searched (the people in the seat behind us were really nice and helpful) but we could not find them. We planned to do a more thorough search after we landed in Dallas, but as we were getting ready to do that, she found them in a pocket of her purse:

They must have fallen in there.



We arrived right at rush hour and so elected to take the train to Mockingbird Station and get an Uber ride from there. The train was really depressing it seemed that all of the passengers and everybody standing around on the platforms at the station were homeless or on the verge of homelessness. Not an uplifting way to see Dallas...

6,651 Steps, 5 floors of stairs

Epilogue: Lessons from the Road

We averaged walking 4.2 miles each day on this trip (10,389 steps, 7 flights of stairs).

Navigating using our iPhones was vital and challenging. Getting started was the hard part because: when we emerged from somewhere and entered the next destination it was difficult to know which way to go.

Door Hinges

- All of the doors in Scandinavia have three sets of hinges with the top two clustered closely together near the top of the door. Doors in England (and the US) that have 3 hinges use the upper-middle-bottom arrangement. I wondered why Scandinavia does it differently?
- I Googled it when I got back home. It is called a European hinge arrangement. It counters the tendency for doors to sag.

Thoughts:

- We have been on several boats now... No US Coast Guard like safety briefings yet.
- I don't recall ever seeing anyone praying before a meal in a restaurant on this (or any other European trip).