

ACE'S SCANDINAVIAN SOJOURN : A SOUTHERNER'S PERSPECTIVE

STORY BY: RICHARD BOSTIC, ASSISTED BY RONNY COOK

When I went on the ACESpana trip back in 2009, it was by far one of the most amazing vacations I have ever experienced. In addition to getting to visit parks in a different culture than we see here, it is also a great opportunity to spend time with fellow enthusiasts and grow friendships while enjoying our common interests. When Scandinavia Sojourn was announced for the summer of 2011, I knew it was a trip I could not miss. Since the 2009 trip was my first trip to Europe I thought that there was no way the overall experience could be better in Scandinavia. I was wrong.

We landed in Helsinki, Finland around 1300 the day before we were required to be at the hotel to meet with the group. Helsinki is an interesting city and fairly new compared to many cities in Europe. Walking around the city you can see the Russian influence in the city's architecture. In fact, many movies during the cold war would use Helsinki to shoot scenes that are supposed to be set in the Soviet Union. After making our way to the Crowne Plaza Hotel and getting a quick lunch at the hotel restaurant we decided to spend the remaining time that afternoon checking out some of the sites around our hotel. Some of these sites included the Temppeliaukio Church inside of a rock formation, the train station, Routatienori Square and National Theater, and a couple of the city's art museums. That evening we met with a couple of friends for dinner at a local Finnish restaurant down the street from our hotel before calling it an early night to begin shaking off the jet lag.

The next day would provide us with time to see much more of the city, so we decided to purchase Helsinki cards that would allow us to enter most of the sites we wanted to visit along with providing us with transportation. Some of the sites we visited were the Uspenski Cathedral, a Finnish Orthodox church that was originally built by Russia, and the incredible Lutheran Cathedral overlooking Senate Square that included a statue of the Russian Czar Alexander II. Also in this area we visited the Market Square at the harbor where we tasted some of the sweetest strawberries we have ever found. We also visited the Seurasaari Open Air Museum, which is a collection of historic buildings showcasing what life used to be like in different parts of Finland prior to modern times. The most impressive site we visited in Helsinki was the Suomenlinna Fortress, a sea fortress that has served Finland, Sweden, and Russia. While no longer practical as a military base, the fortress is more than just a tourist attraction and is a popular picnic destination and actually contains about 900 permanent residents. It contains a Garrison Church and several museums detailing the history of the fortress, along the fort itself where you can explore the passageways and armament locations. After stopping by Stockman's Department Store, the largest department store in the Nordic countries, we went back to the hotel to gather our registration materials and bus assignments for the trip. After getting everything settled we joined some friends at a local restaurant that served Lapp cuisine before we settled in for the night.

The first park we visited during the trip was Linnanmaeki, and with its location in the middle of downtown Helsinki, was the first of several urban parks on our journey. The park covers a fairly small area for the number of attractions and provides a wonderful view of the city and can be seen from several locations around Helsinki. The day started by providing us with a great vision of what was to come on this trip... ERT on Vuoristorata, the park's classic Scenic Railway. This ERT session was highlighted by not only the ride itself and its wonderful air time and tunnels, but also the walk back tour provided by the Brakemen taking us inside the coaster's structure and inside the control room for the lift hill. It was also fun to hear the description of a job that most coaster enthusiasts' dream of attaining...being paid to ride a roller coaster. I do not think we could have asked for a better way to begin our adrenaline filled journey.

The park also included Kirnu, an Intamin Zacspin. Although this is the smaller model like its sister ride we rode in Spain, for most of us this would just be a warm-up to the larger model that we would experience in a few days (more to come on that experience). The park also included 2 Maurer Söhne coasters: Ukko, a Sky Loop X-Car Coaster and Salama, a spinning coaster with a custom layout above Hurjakuru, the park's rapids ride. It was very interesting considering the cooler climate to come across Von-

kaputous, a Premier Water coaster, but as we discovered this would be only one of several water coasters in this part of Europe. The park also has a Zierer indoor coaster named Linnunrata, which is unique primarily since the ride is built inside of an old water tower. Mack Rides was also well represented in the park with Tulireki an e-motion coaster that looks like a wild mouse while also providing an unusual rocking motion, and Pikajuna, a fairly long powered coaster that actually created some pretty good laterals along with a great view of the city.

Besides the coasters one of the best attractions in the park was Vekkula, which was one of the best fun houses we had seen at the time. We had not seen a fun house that had as many different rooms and elements (and in case you are wondering, the use of past tense on this description is intentional). We also experienced the first of many classic dark rides on this trip with Kummitusjuna, a fun and very well maintained "Ghost Train" and Taikasirkus, a fun and comical suspended dark ride with a circus theme. Finally, we also took a spin on the Autorata bumper cars, though we noticed that we seemed to get a lot of dirty looks whenever we ran into one of the locals. Of course the park also had plenty of additional attractions including more dark rides and walkthrough attractions, and very good collection of flat rides, towers, and transport rides. This was also the first time we started to notice a continuing temptation to try one of the local flavors of salt licorice, including salt licorice flavored ice cream.

With this being the first park of our visit Linnanmaeki was difficult to leave and we would have liked more time to try some of the other attractions or even get some repeat rides. However, the time came for us to board the buses and make our way to Tampere for our first Scandic hotel of the trip, which would be our home for the next 2 nights. After breakfast the next morning that included a local specialty called "Blood Sausage," our adventures would see us boarding the buses for a ride to Powerland, which is the amusement park located inside Powerpark in Alahärmä. With a location only about 250 miles from the Arctic Circle, the most notable part of this visit would be riding coasters farther north than anywhere else in the world. Being a fairly new park all of the structures were very well maintained with very few fading colors, the park also did a nice job of adding theming that prevented the usual carnival feel that often comes with a newer park. In addition to Powerland, Powerpark was also known for having the longest indoor go-cart track in Europe along with 1 km outdoor track which were both available for an up charge.

The highlight of the roller coasters in the park was Thunderbird from GCI. This coaster is the original design that was also used at SFSL for American Thunder (formally Evel Kinevel), and it did not disappoint. The ride provides plenty of airtime, laterals, and head choppers as it snakes through its own structure over and over again. Another fun coaster in the park is Joyride, an L&T systems compact coaster that provided a very smooth and fun ride. Neo's Twister, a Fabbri spinning coaster themed to comic characters Neo and Nellie, was a surprise addition to the park this year. Finally, the park also had Cobra, a Vekoma Boomerang and Mine Train, a Zamperla family coaster.

The park had several other rides of note including the Devil's Mine Hotel, and interactive dark ride that was very well themed and had one property that I had not seen and that was it gave you a limited number of shots to use through the attraction. This prevented the usual "shoot as many rounds as possible" tactic most of us use and required a little additional strategy (unfortunately I did not catch the significance of the counter until half way through the ride). Typhoon was another interesting attraction that was a Frisbee/pendulum ride with the riders facing out with the ride cutting through a building creating some nice leg chopper effects. The park also had a very good set of bumper cars, and we discovered that the locals in this area enjoyed bumping as much as most ACE members. In addition to a good collection of flat rides, the park also had a children's area based on various fairy tales called Wonderland.

At the end of the day we made our way back to hotel, and the next morning found us boarding the buses for the short ride across town to Särkänniemi. This was a fairly good sized amusement park that was built onto the side of a hill on the shores of Lake Näsijärvi. In addition to the amusement park, this park has an aquarium, a planetarium, a children's zoo, an art museum, an observation tower, and a dolphinarium. The observation tower was located at the main entrance of the park and a rotating restaurant at the very top of the tower where we chose to have lunch.

The park has a nice collection of roller coasters, headlined by Tornado, an Intamin multi-inversion SLC. This ride was very well paced with the best element being a station flyby in the form of a Heartline Roll. The station and this inversion are located inside a man-made tunnel cut from a natural rock formation. The park provided ERT on this coaster and MotoGee, a custom launched MotoCoaster from Zamperla. The park also has another Intamin coaster in the form of Half Pipe, which was actually the first Half Pipe Coaster I had experienced at the time, though it was difficult to get the cars to spin very much while the ride was operating. Zamperla also has an additional coaster representation in the form of Trombi, a Volare Flying Coaster. For anyone that has experienced one of these no explanation is required, and for those who have not experienced one of these gems I recommend trying one when you can and join us in our bliss. Another wonderful addition to the park is Jet Star, a Schwarzkopf model of the same name. As with most Schwarzkopf models it gave a fantastic ride, but does not operate in the rain. We had several rain showers that day so it took some time but I do not believe anyone missed the ride due to the weather. The final coaster in the park is Vauhtimato, a Zierer Tivoli-small model that was well landscaped and themed.

Another major attraction in the park was Torni Orlochlessin ("Tower of Orlochless") which was a cartoon themed ghost train. I also have to give the park credit for posting the warning sign that the ride "contains effects and lighting that may be too intense for anyone." Tukki-joki is one of the best traditional log flumes I have experienced with 6 drops in various sizes while it navigates the terrain extremely well and crosses through Tornado several times. Another water ride Taikajoki is a family adventure ride with beautiful landscaping and multiple story boards (in Finnish only, so locals get a little more out of the ride). Another ride of note was Huvimaja, which is a Pavilion Carousel that rotates in a motion similar to a Trabant though without the height and speed. Most of us were excited with this attraction because we finally got to experience "Bench, the Ride!" And finally, many of us took a spin on the Volvo Racing "Bumper Cars." While these cars were capable of some nice jars, we discovered that the local rules at Särkänniemi were even more against bumping than they were at Linnanmäki, and one of our group even got reprimanded by the operator for thinking that these were bumper cars. It would be interesting to find a little more information on the history of this phenomenon in Finland.

After a short ride to Turku we boarded the Isabella, our overnight ferry to Stockholm. The cabins on this ship were similar to what you would find on a train with a small bathroom and beds that pull down out of the walls. While the ship had plenty of food options, we decided to try the delicious Viking Buffet Smorgasbord. While it was more expensive than the individual meals on the ship, we thought this would give us a chance to try several Nordic style dishes, and with the house beer and wine included some of us probably got a better value. After dinner we decided to explore the ship before heading back to our cabin to get some rest and gather our strength for our visit to Gröna Lund in Stockholm.

We were originally only given 5 hours in this amazing park built on a pier in the harbor of Stockholm with an amazing view of the city. This created quite a bit of discussion on how we were going to get in all of the coasters and dark rides and still have time to stop for the lunch the park was providing. After quite a bit of discussion, David Finkelstein suggested we become Theme Park Commandos, which would become a repeating theme on the remainder of the trip whenever time was an issue. However, our time was graciously extended by an hour and 15 minutes. The extra time gave us a little reprieve after lunch and allowed us to enjoy the park for a while since as commandos we had already accomplished our mission. The park started our day with a wonderful presentation on the history of the park (with a snack included), followed by ERT on 4 of the park's coasters. During the presentation we learned a lot of the history of the park and how it fits into the society of Stockholm. Most of the buildings in the park were there prior to the amusements being added and was once known more for its social gatherings including a dance hall. The park is also well known for its concerts that draw huge crowds, the largest of these being 32000 people to see Bob Marley in 1980. After allowing us to explore the park for an hour or 2 after ERT, the park also provided us with a wonderful Swedish lunch.

The park has a great collection of roller coasters, and 4 of the coasters (Twister, Jetline, Vilda Musen, and Kvasten) have a good bit of interaction with each other as they were built inside of each other's footprint. The newest member of the coaster collection at Gröna Lund is Twister, and wood twister from The

Gravity Group. While some like to say that bigger is better, that is not the case when it comes to this gem. Using all of the available space that they were given on the pier, TGG got everything they could and then some with this amazing ride. It is hard to believe the number of airtime filled hills and quick but intense laterals on this baby. The only thing that was not too surprising after riding was the number of head choppers after you see the amount of track that is placed in this compact area. Featuring the new Timberliner trains, this ride would continue to be included in the conversations of excited enthusiasts for the rest of the trip, and of the 4 coasters included in ERT it gathered the largest group of attendees that could not get enough.

Another coaster during ERT that warranted a lot of attention was Insane. Like its smaller cousin Kirnu at Linnanmaeki, this was an Intamin Zacspin, but in this case the name of the ride doubles as an equally adequate description. Dwarfing the smaller models by 2 full levels of drops and spins, this ride throws you up and over multiple times. In fact, most of us were begging to be stapled into the ride to avoid banging against the restraints. Once properly secured it is a wonderfully wild ride that created a gathering of ACEers at the exit ramp just looking to get some good facial expressions of the riders going through the last couple of flips. Jetline, the park's Schwarzkopf Speed Coaster was actually the first disappointment of the trip for some attendees. The ride was included in ERT and most of us made sure we got this wonderful ride early, though most only got 1 ride on it since it ran into technical difficulties early during ERT, and there were a few attendees that did not make it to this ride before it shut down. Finally, the fourth ride provided to us during ERT was Vilda Musen, a Gerstlauer Custom Bobsled Coaster, and as the name implies it looks like a wild mouse but gave a better ride than most wild mouse rides I have experienced. The other coasters in the park are Kvasten, a custom Suspended Family Coaster from Vekoma, Nyckelpigan a Zierer Tivoli – Small, and Tuff-Tuff Tåget a Zamperla Fiesta Express.

Aside from the coasters, to Gröna Lund has plenty of other attractions to excite attendees. When I described Vekkula, the funhouse at Linnanmaeki, I said it was the best funhouse I had been through at the time and intentionally used the past tense in that description. That is because I had not been through Lustiga Huset. The park went into the history of this attraction during the presentation before ERT, and described how the original attraction was destroyed in a fire in 1985. After 2 years of planning and construction, the attraction was reopened in 1987. Many of the people that knew the original funhouse were enlisted to help make sure that the new design included everything possible from the original funhouse. The anticipation and history of this attraction caused most attendees to migrate here right after ERT instead of getting the rest of the coaster credits. How often do you hear of ACEers doing that? Even with that level of anticipation, this attraction did not disappoint and many of us wanted a second walk through on this attraction more than extra rides on some of the coasters.

Gröna Lund also has several other dark ride/walk through attractions, highlighted by the park's ghost train Bla Taget (Blue Train). This ride was shut down and updated during the construction of Twister so the effects were fresh and working very well. They also had a walkthrough haunted house called Spokhuset that we would have missed if our time had not been extended. Radio Bilarna is the name of the park's bumper cars, and brought to an end the questions about the etiquette of bumping (apparently Finland was the only place where we had an issue). Starting with to Gröna Lund, bumping was expected and encouraged. Kattingflygaren, the wave swinger in the park, is very well placed on the pier to allow the riders to swing out over the water, and Fritt Fall & Tilt was the drop tower that included one tower that tilts you forward before the drop. Thankfully, the extra time provided in the park gave us time to explore a little more and experience some of the flat rides and other attractions. However, Gröna Lund (along with Stockholm) definitely goes on the list of must visit destinations if I ever get another chance to return to this part of Europe.

It was difficult to leave this amazing park, but the time came for us to make our way to our second Scandic hotel located in Karlstad, Sweden. This stop was primarily chosen for its location between Stockholm and Oslo in Norway where we headed the next morning to visit Tusenfryd about 20 miles south of the city in Vinterbro. The ride to and from the park is the only time we would have to see the beautiful mountainous landscape and huge fjords of this country. The park itself was the most mountainous of any we visited on this trip, and even had escalators leading into the park entrance. The hills continued

inside the park and most of the flat areas contained rides or other attractions.

The park has 6 roller coasters with one of the highlights being Speed Monster, an Accelerator Coaster from Intamin. This was a very well paced ride with a smooth launch, three inversions, and several air-time filled hills. The ride's signature element is the Norwegian Loop, a two inversion maneuver that begins right after the launch. The park also provided us 1 an hour of ERT after the park closed giving us plenty of time to enjoy this ride. The most surprising ride for the park was Thundercoaster, a wooden gem from Vekoma. After experiencing this fairly smooth ride filled with air time and surprising turns and very good pace, it makes you wonder if Vekoma missed their calling. The park also has another Vekoma coaster in Loopen, a looping coaster that would make southeast members think of a smaller version of Ninja. Tusenfryd provided us with a chance to ride the second water coaster on the trip with Supersplash from Mack Rides, and for those that count powered coasters it was enjoyable to catch a spin on Dragon from Zamperla. Teeny-weeny, advertised as the smallest roller coaster in the world, would be the first disappointment for most attendees as it did not run at all that day, though signs at the ride indicated we may have been disappointed anyway due to height restrictions.

The rest of the park included Night Mare, an unusual interactive simulator ride that rotated the riders on a turntable to various screens with targets to shoot, while providing scores and placements at the end. Spin Spider is the Giant Frisbee ride in the park that is very well themed and was very thrilling especially considering the length of the ride cycles. After riding Store Radiobiler, we discovered that the Norwegian etiquette for riding bumper cars matches our own, further isolating Finland in this part of Europe. The park also has plenty of other classic ride types along with a small waterpark that a couple of our members enjoyed.

After ERT we worked our way down the hills of Tusenfryd and began our journey to Gothenburg, Sweden where we stayed at the luxurious Gothia Towers, which was right across the street from our next park...Liseberg. Our room gave us our first view of this amazingly beautiful park allowing us to see the layout of the largest amusement park in Scandinavia. Liseberg is a fascinating park along a river and with a beautiful large hillside making up a large portion of the park. The hillside contains numerous rides that can be reached through trails or by using the escalators on either side of the park. Guests can also reach the summit by walking through the Lust Garden, a wonderfully landscaped garden near the entrance that covers about a quarter of the hillside. Most of the attractions are at the bottom of the hill and along both sides of the river that runs through the park. Liseberg is a part of the community by providing multiple restaurants, a large outdoor concert stage that has hosted many big name artists over the years, and a dance hall indicating that people come to the park for much more than just amusement rides. One concern we had going into this day was the size of the crowds since the park was hosting guests from a worldwide youth soccer tournament in addition to the normal crowds. However, with the entire day available to us plus 2 hours of ERT we found plenty of time to enjoy this iconic park.

Our day at Liseberg started with an hour of ERT on Lisebergbanan, the park's Schwarzkopf non-looping terrain coaster. This ride is over 5000 feet long and is everything a terrain coaster should be by utilizing the hillsides to create the hills for the ride and rarely being more than a few feet off the ground. Another wonderful feature of this ride is the triple helix that goes around the park's screaming swing Uppswinget and is visible from most areas of the park. This was a great way to start a wonderful day at Liseberg, but the hour of night ERT on Balder to finish the day would be the talk of the trip. For those that do not know, Balder is one of the few Prefab Wood Coasters built by Intamin along with the one most of us are familiar with in Jersey, El Toro. While Balder is not as tall, fast, or intense as El Toro it still packs quite a punch with plenty of ejector air, tight laterals, and head choppers that really came to life in the dark. Needless to say the ride kept our group energized until the early hour morning hours, and very few in the group even thought about leaving early to get ready for our early rise the next morning. We also got a lot of enjoyment watching some of the attendees that had not experienced our northeastern bull react to this wonderful ride, with one of our own SE members Angie Fugo stating this one launched to the very top of her coaster list. The park's other major coaster sits right next to Balder and is named Kanonen, which was our second Intamin Accelerator Coaster in as many days. Kanonen is a good ride with 2 inversions and some tight turns but only warranted a couple of spins after riding the longer coasters in the

park and Speed Monster the day before. The final coaster in this park is Rabalder, a Force Two kiddie coaster from Zierer.

One of the most popular rides in the park was AtmosFear, the park's largest drop tower. While the other drop towers Hojdskracken & Uppskjutet were lower capacity rides like many we see here in the US, AtmosFear was actually an Observation Tower that was converted into a higher capacity drop tower for this season. AtmosFear is now Europe's tallest drop tower and since it is located at one of the highest points inside of Liseberg, can be seen from quite a distance. Keeping with the Fear theme, the park also has a very good haunted walkthrough called the Gaston Ghost Hotel. This walkthrough was very fun with a long maze, plenty of live actors, and wonderful detail. Another signature attraction for the park is Sagoslottet, meaning "Fairy Tale Castle," a suspended dark ride taking you on a journey through various fairy tales from around the world. Evert Taube's World is a wonderful historic exhibit on the life of Sweden's national poet.

Another adventure ride that doubles as a water attraction is Kaninresan where families board small boats shaped like eggs and float through a story filled garden. Kallerado River Raft is a very good rapids ride with a good layout, pace, and a wave feature we had not seen before. This is a rapids ride that we suggest guests visit even if you do not normally do rapids rides. The park's log flume, called Flume Ride, is very well landscaped, and built to the terrain, and interacts well with Lisebergbanan. The park also continued our quest for good bumper that allows bumping with the very intense Radiobilarna. The park had plenty of additional rides, shows, shops and restaurants creating a busy and fun filled day, and is near the top of most attendees respective lists of desired parks to visit again.

Even after a late night of ERT we had an early departure from our hotel to catch the Stena Line Ferry from Sweden to Denmark. The journey across the Kattegat Bay took about 3 hours where we could begin our journey to Saltum for our visit to Farup Sommerland. As we began to approach our arrival time the conversations started to shift toward the large number of cars that seemed to be backing up in the middle of a very rural area. As it turned out these were actually the cars waiting to get in to Farup Sommerland. In fact we learned from the park later in the day that this was a major vacation week for Denmark and with rain the previous 3 days, the beautiful sunny day presented to us was to set the stage for the largest crowd the park had ever seen. With crowds like this the theme park commandos prepared for an unexpected mission to try and navigate the wall to wall people, strollers, and pets we would encounter in the park.

Aside from the unusual crowds, Fårup Sommerland is a beautiful park that appears to be a family picnic park and summer camp that added rides. In fact, some of the rides, shops, and other attractions could be difficult to find as it seemed we were walking through a nature trail instead of an amusement park. There were also several areas of the park that had playground equipment that included a climbing ropes structure called The Spider, and a mountain climbing challenge called Volcano. It was also incredible to see the number of traditional trampolines and air trampolines (that looked like huge bubbles) that guests could enjoy, though one of our members actually landed wrong on one of the tramps and separated his shoulder. While his day was over here as the park took him to the hospital, he did meet us at the hotel that night and continued the rest of the trip. The park also had a shooting range, a water park and several lakes where guests could ride speedboats, pedal boats, canoes, bumper boats, and many other boats we will not even try to count.

The most popular coaster in the park appeared to be Lynet, a single car (similar to Eurofighter cars) launched coaster from Gerstlauer. The ride launches to a speed of almost 50 mph in about 2 seconds, then proceeds through banked turns, airtime hills, and inversions similar to the Eurofighter coasters we have become familiar with in our area. Another popular coaster in the park was Falken, one of the few wooden coasters from S&S Power, which provided a fairly smooth and fun ride with good air time and a tunnel with a human shaped impression that you spot entering the tunnel. The park's roller coasters are rounded out with Flagermusen, a Reverchon Spinning Wild Mouse themed to a bat, and Mine Expressen, a Vekoma Junior Coaster themed to a small mine train.

One of the most unusual attractions in the park is Skattejagten, one of the largest challenge courses most of us have ever seen. It takes 30 to 45 minutes to complete and is well themed with a ship, a boat and a raft to pull you across water, swings, a swinging bridge, mazes and much, much more. Rævens Hule is a fun house that we almost missed with the difficulty of understanding the map. There are also 2 classic water rides with Colorado River/ The Tree Trunks, a log flume with 3 drops built on the same structure that looks like a mountain, and Fårup Rafting, a raft ride in a secluded section of the park with the wave feature that was becoming fairly common in this area. All of this makes Fårup Sommerland one of the most unusual parks I have visited and if I ever get the chance to return when I can spend more time enjoying the park I would probably make the boat attractions and the challenge course a priority on that visit.

That evening found us at our next Scandic hotel near Aalborg to get some rest and check in on our injured compatriot before departing the next morning for Djurs Sommerland in Nimtofte. There are many aspects of Djurs Sommerland that are very similar to Farup Sommerland including the picnic areas, playground equipment, trampolines, boat rides and other similar attractions that were just as elaborate. One of the differences is this park is much more open and does not have the nature trail feel. However, to make up for this Djurs Sommerland has what may be the best theming we saw on the trip and the only park on the trip that had 7 distinct themed areas to explore.

Our day started in Piratland with ERT on the park's 2 newest coasters, with a local television crew taping the insanity to boot. First on the agenda was a spin on Piraten, the park's Mega-Lite coaster from Intamin. A smaller version of the mega coasters and giga coasters for which Intamin is famous, this model is still exhilarating with great air time and tight turns keeping ACEers coming back for more and providing plenty of fun footage for the television crew. Our ERT also included Skatteøen, a Mack Rides water coaster that is also the biggest water coaster in Europe.

The park's oldest coaster is Karlo's Taxi, a Wacky Worm from SBF Visa Group located in Lilleputland, a nicely themed children's area. The final coaster in the park is the second Gerstlauer Bobsled Coaster on this trips...Thor's Hammer. Located in the Sommerland section of the park, this coaster is themed to the Norwegian God of Thunder's famous weapon Mjølner and includes plenty of fast turns, quick drops, and even a few great pops of airtime. Sommerland also included Colorado River, a triple drop log flume with a different theme but the same layout as the flume in Fårup Sommerland, a Huss Topple Tower named Omen, and plenty of other attractions including Pedaloos; Canoes; Family Bikes, and Trampolines.

The amazing themes in this park continue with Afrikaland, which is where we discovered that political correctness is not defined the same way in Denmark that we find here. The signature attraction in this area is the jungle cruise style ride called Jungle Safari with Chico and the Poachers, where riders view a story that includes animals turning the tables and capturing their would be poachers. Continuing this unusual area is Kannibal Gryderne, a spinning teacup ride where the vehicles are flaming cauldrons that appear to be cooking the guests for the local cannibals as they ride. The most unusual theme on a ride however had to be the Hottentot Karrusellen, an undulating spinning ride themed to the imitation of sound of the language of the Khoikhoi people of southern Africa that is not considered flattering here. Cowboy and Indianerland is another fun area that includes Rio Grande Rafting, a long and well themed rapids ride with the wave section we are coming to expect on this trip, and Wild West Karrusellen, a wave swinger that runs forwards and backwards. The final two areas of the park are MexicoLand with a raft water slide and a miniature golf course, and their water park Vandland.

After completing our day we boarded the buses for the hour or so ride to Tivoli Friheden, a small urban park located in Århus. This park was more like a carnival than any other park on the trip, though it did have some nice landscaping in some areas. One thing we saw that was completely unexpected was the large statue of Buddha in the back of the park near some playground equipment (it may have even been part of the playground since kids were climbing on it). While we would end up with plenty of time in this park, the limit of two and a half hours got the attention of our commando instincts so we spent part of the bus ride over quickly planning our next campaign.

In this mission our commandos had a critical strategy of choosing which of the park's coasters we had to target first. The target we chose was Orkanens Øje, the Pinfari Zyklon ZL42 due to its low capacity. Our next target was Cobra, a Sartori Rides International Inverted Energizer that was similar to an SLC coaster, with its very well themed cobra train, a tight footprint for the amount of track, and 3 inversions. Rounding out the park's coasters are Tyfonen, a Zamperla Spinning Wild Mouse and Dragen, a Wacky worm from Pinfari themed to a dragon.

The park also included a couple of classic dark rides with Elses Hotel, a fairly short but well themed haunted dark ride and the fun house Hurlhumejhuset. Tivoli Friheden was our first park in Denmark where we found bumper cars, and we had a blast on the fairly intense Radio Bilerne. While some of our group spread out to try some of the park's many flat rides and explore the landscaped areas, a fairly good contingent descended on Sky Tower, the park's up charge Scad Tower Free Fall Drop.

Once everyone was on board the buses we made our way to Odense where we stayed at our final Scandic hotel of the trip. The next morning we were welcomed by nature with something that would be very familiar for the rest of the trip...rain. In fact this was the day we entered the island of Zealand and by the time we left for home we were wondering if they ever had a dry day on this island (though for the record it was supposed to clear up the day we flew home). Even so, no rain would keep coaster enthusiasts out of a park so we began our journey to Holme-Ølstrup for one of the most talked about parks on the trip with Bon Bon Land. This park is well known for its extremely unusual theming and very strange characters including Henry the farting dog, a Hippo with a stained diaper, a vomiting rat, and can anyone think of another park that would sell candy that looks like bird droppings? While Bon Bon Land is a family park that is aimed mostly at children there is still plenty for adults to enjoy, and I would dare say some of the scenery would cause uproar from certain groups in this country.

The largest coaster in the park is Vild-Svinet, a Gerstlauer Euro-Fighter themed to a wild boar. The rain was causing some issues in the morning but the park was able to remove a couple of cars from the track and get it operating. With the small crowds the extra capacity was not required. Hankatten, Danish for "Male Cat," is the spinning wild mouse coaster also from Gerstlauer that included plenty of strange characters adding to the scenery in and around the ride. Viktor Vandorm, or "Victor the Water Worm," the largest Zierer Tivoli style I have seen with a wide path that goes through a long trench. The other Zierer coaster, the famous Hundeputterutsjebanen that most know as the "Dog Fart Coaster," was to be the biggest disappointment for most Acers on this trip. Even though this is only a small Kiddie Force One Coaster it was as eagerly anticipated as most of the larger coasters on the trip. Unfortunately, the rain never stopped long enough to make this ride safe to operate so first time visitors to the park will have to continue to read about this unusual family coaster.

Fortunately, all hope was not lost for fans of Henry the farting dog if they were willing to climb aboard Vandrotten, the park's "Water Rat" flume ride. This compact multi drop log flume with theming only found at Bon-Bon Land includes a surprise appearance by Henry doing what he does best at an unexpected time. Guests could also see plenty of strange characters on the park's raft ride called Beaver Rafting, although the rumors about the beavers being shown in compromising positions was incorrect. The most interesting water ride in the park may have been Soloven, a sea lion themed boat ride that takes guest on a bazaar journey around the world as only Bon-Bon Land can present. Another major attraction in the park is Fairy Tale Walkthrough, which is an indoor trail of fantasy themes that included a small train ride through some portions of the area called Fantasy World.

During our bus ride to Copenhagen the rain seemed to clear for a short time, which allowed us to stop by The Little Mermaid, a famous statue in the Copenhagen harbor dedicated to the story by Hans Christian Andersen. After this stop we made our way to our final hotel of the scheduled trip, the Raddison Blue Royal right across the street from Tivoli Gardens. Originally we were supposed to have this evening in the park, but due to a concert that evening the managers recommended we wait until Saturday night to visit. Therefore, we had an evening to explore the area around the park in Copenhagen and have dinner with some friends. After dinner, we decided to walk around the perimeter of the park before

going back to our hotel and were amazed at the sea of bicycles parked in the area. None of the bikes were secured to anything which would be unheard of in this country, and with the number of bikes we saw it is a wonder anyone was able to find the correct bike when they left.

The next morning we made our way to Klampenborg to visit Bakken, the oldest amusement park in the world. Dating back to 1583, the park started as a picnic destination around a natural spring that was rumored to have healing properties, though it would probably have the opposite effect now as the water is no longer safe to drink. The popularity of the setting drew entertainers and vendors very quickly and they began to add rides in the 19th century. The park still operates with individual vendors running all of the attractions and restaurants. An all day wrist band is available that is scanned at each attraction and the number of scans each vendor gets determines their share of the wristband revenue. We started our day with a tour of the park led by Ole Jensen, the operator of the park's scenic railway who also manages the efforts of the other vendors in the park.

After the tour we started our ERT session on our second scenic railway of the trip Rutschebanen, and relishing the moments when we got to ride without rain. The layout of the coaster is very similar to the scenic railway at Linnanmaeki, though the trains on Rutschebanen were replaced this year with new models that do not require a brakeman. While this takes away some of the variability that can come with a brakeman, this coaster still provides a nice punch with plenty of airtime, 2 double downs, and a long tunnel at the end. Another great attraction at the park is Mine Train Ulven, or "Wolf's Mine Train," my first mine train from Intamin. While the ride is very compact it still provides quite a bit of thrilling drops and fast turns in a surprising amount of track for the space. The park also has 2 Zierer coasters with the Flitzer named Racing, and the small Tivoli model Mariehønen. Tornado, the newest coaster at the park would turn out to be a disappointment for some attendees as it did not open until about 30 minutes before we were scheduled to leave and broke down again before everyone could get a ride. For the attendees successful at getting on this Intamin Spinning Coaster, there were plenty of mixed opinions for a coaster that launches riders up the lift hill then starts through an sequence of tight turns and drops in a car that is spinning freely though its insane journey. For a first time rider all you can do is hang on until you hit the brake run at the end of the ride then sit back and try to figure out what happened to you. I would actually have to ride this coaster a couple of times to really form an opinion because it caught me completely off guard, though the ride definitely gets high marks for the surprise factor.

The park has 2 dark rides with the very detailed haunted castle Spøgelsesslottet, and Safari, an interactive darkride themed to an African safari. They also had MS Hurlumhej, a unique fun house themed to a ship. Another interesting ride that should not be missed is Dillen, a spinning water ride themed with alligators. The rider is standing and can steer the alligator in and out while the ride is rotating, and while I never saw it actually happen, it is fun to try and see if you can send splashes of water into the spectators. Bakken also has 3 sets of bumper cars starting with the standard bumper cars Radio Bilarne that provided the best collisions of the three. Rodeo Banen is a bumper car attraction themed more like a race track and while bumping is not as common it is also not discouraged. The bumper car collection is completed by Spinning Cars, an indoor "spin zone" ride with music during ride operation. Bakken also had plenty of additional amusement rides, numerous restaurants, food stands, and games that were much more than we could attempt to do with our time in the park.

After the ride back to Copenhagen we had a few minutes to drop a few things in our hotel room before meeting across the street for the most iconic park of the trip...Tivoli Gardens. Most coaster enthusiasts know that Tivoli Gardens was the park that impressed Walt Disney enough to decide that Disneyland should try to emulate its "happy and unbuttoned air of relaxed fun." Disney's inspiration is evident even at the main entrance of the park that one can tell was the basis for the Train Station at Disneyland's Main Street USA, especially when it is lit up at night. While there were many parks I was looking forward to on this trip there was not one that had built my anticipation more than visiting this beautiful oasis in the middle of Copenhagen. Some of us even found ourselves taking a picture of the view as we walked into the park for the first time. Tivoli Gardens is an absolutely beautiful park with charming pathways that meander around a peaceful lake, colorful flowers and peaceful gardens, with fascinating architecture and lights that make the place a true wonderland after dark. In fact, it is hard to remember while

in the park that you are in the middle of the largest city in Denmark. The front of the park contains restaurants, shops and a couple of large stages, while the area to the left around the lake contains some of the most amazing gardens in the park along with several additional restaurants (including one inside of a pirate ship). While we would spend plenty of time in these areas of the park, most of our time would be spent in the amusement areas contained mostly in the back third of the park, and is where we would be led immediately upon arrival.

Our first stop in the park was for ERT on Rutschebanen, the park's Scenic Railway that also happens to be an ACE Coaster Classic. This is the third Scenic Railway we rode on this trip and the fourth I have ridden in Europe after riding Montaña Suiza at Parque de Atracciones Monte Igueldo in Spain. While Montaña Suiza may be one of the most unique for its concrete structure, and the other scenic railways on this trip were larger installations, this is the scenic railway for which all others are measured. Built around 1915, it is the 3rd oldest roller coaster in the world and the oldest roller coaster in Europe and still utilizes brakemen. The coaster is built inside of a man made mountain structure that makes it difficult to notice as a coaster at first glance, which provides plenty of tunnels to keep you disoriented and surprise drops to keep up the excitement level. When riding this coaster you can see where Walt Disney may have gotten some of his inspiration for The Matterhorn at Disneyland. Fortunately for most of us that wanted a front seat ride we had time to do this during ERT since later we noticed many of the locals waiting at the back of the loading station to jump in the seat of their choice while the train is still moving. So much for an orderly boarding process.

Our second ERT session at Tivoli Gardens was supposed to be on Dæmonen, the park's floorless coaster from Bolliger & Mabillard. Unfortunately the coaster did not operate at all that evening creating another disappointment for many attendees. Fortunately, those of us that stayed in Copenhagen on Sunday or beyond were provided with additional opportunities to acquire this credit after it reopened on Sunday. While Dæmonen is a fairly short ride, it packs a lot into its small footprint and delivers a very solid and fun ride. With our scheduled ERT not available on Dæmonen, Tivoli Gardens was kind enough to provide us with the ERT on Odinexpressen, the park's Custom Powered Coaster from Mack Rides. While not counted as a coaster by many, it is a fairly long ride with good speed and some fairly intense laterals with the lower section racing through wonderfully landscaped areas and the higher sections of the ride going over several buildings in the park and providing amazing views of the city. The final coaster in the park is Karavanen, a Zierer Tivoli Small coaster that is the original Tivoli coaster from which Zierer's line was named.

After riding the coasters it was time to visit some of the park's other signature attractions. One of the most important is Den Flyvende Kuffert, which means "The Flying Trunk," a dark ride based on Hans Christian Andersen's short story of the same name and takes riders in a flying trunk through brief synopses of many of his fairy tales. Another wonderful dark ride in the park is Minen, a water based dark ride inside the mountain structure of Rutschebanen where riders board small boats and journey through a strange world of unique characters and amusing scenes. Also built within the same mountain structure is the Skærsilden 2 story fun house that was primarily an open area with elements placed so that there is no real path to follow but can be followed in any order desired. Det Gyldne Tårn is the park's well themed drop tower that translates to "The Golden Tower" and provides a great drop, while Himmel-skibet, the park's Star Flyer tower swings spin riders a dizzying heights while providing great views of the city. Tivoli Gardens also provided our final run of bumper cars with Radiobilerne with great bumping action in a moderately dark area, and the vintage cars Veteranbilerne take riders through a beautifully landscaped flower garden. There were plenty of other rides and attractions in the park and we had enough time to try most of what we wanted while allowing time to explore, and I cannot think of a better place to complete our journey. No trip to Copenhagen is complete without a visit to Tivoli Gardens, and any of us that have a chance to return to this city will certainly have this park high on our agenda.

While we would have loved to stay at the Blue Royal for our final night, the price of the hotel was a just too much to stomach. Therefore, after breakfast we made our way to a hotel on the other side of Tivoli Gardens before we started our day of sightseeing in the rain. After buying our Copenhagen cards at the train station we made our way to Rådhuspladsen (City Hall Square) where we could see several statues

including a detailed statue of Hans Christian Andersen, and the Weather Girls statue which rotates depending on the weather to show a girl with a bicycle or a girl with an umbrella. Being from Copenhagen, Hans Christian Andersen statues and exhibits were common all over the city, including several of the museums we visited. We visited 2 palaces in the city including Christiansborg Palace, which in addition to the palace itself also included the Christiansborg Castle Ruins underneath the existing palace, along with a museum showcasing the work of Danish Neo-Classical sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen. We also visited the Rosenborg Castle and Treasury that was surrounded by beautiful gardens and a partial mote. Inside the castle was much more like you would expect for a royal palace (though now only a museum), and underneath the castle was an impressive display of the crown jewels. We went by several churches that were closed on Sunday including the Holy Ghost Church, Sankt Peders Church, and Trinity Church. We were able to enter the Greek influenced Cathedral of Our Lady, a breathtaking building with fascinating sculptures. By late afternoon we had seen most of the sights on our agenda and were basically just getting tired of the rain. Fortunately, that evening the rain subsided, and as mentioned earlier and we were able to go back to Tivoli Gardens and ride Dæmonen and some other rides along with having a nice dinner at one of the lake side restaurants in the park before heading back to our hotel.

The next morning we made our way to the train station to catch our ride to the airport for our flight back to Atlanta. Looking back it is hard to believe the number of places we visited, and I can honestly say that trips like this can have an impact on how you see the world in which you live. While the cultures and the way of life in Europe may be similar to ours in many ways, there are also quite a few differences that can help give us a different perspective, and the Nordic countries are even different from what we saw in Spain. Seeing the way that amusement parks such as Gröna Lund, Liseberg, and Tivoli Gardens fit into the lives of people in the respective cities is very different from what we are used to here, and while most of us would never trade home it is nice to find an escape. The other thing that is wonderful about a trip like this is it gives you enormous amounts of time to spend with existing friends, allow casual acquaintances to grow into friendships, and to meet people for the first time that end up becoming friends. This has been the case for both of the international trips I have attended and for me those opportunities, even more than the rides and parks themselves, is what ACE is all about.



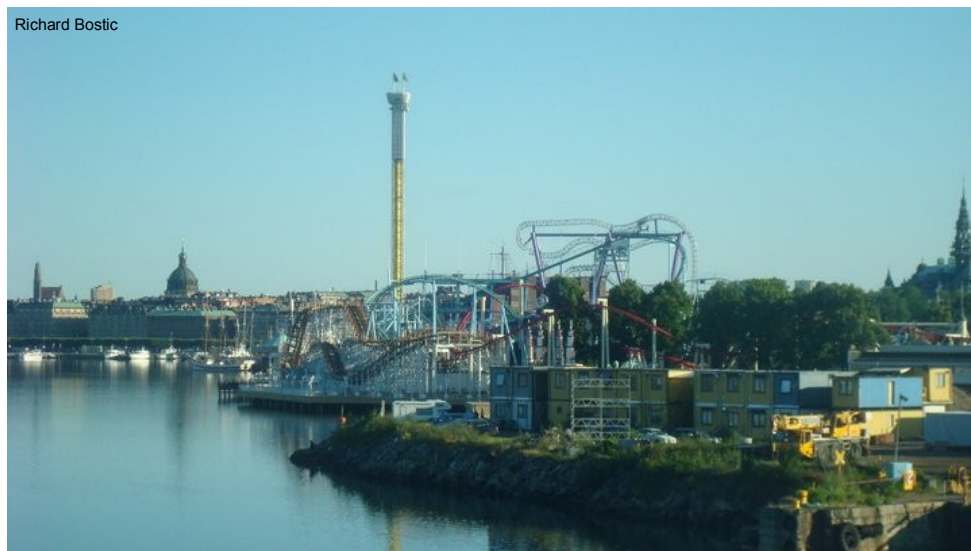
Vuoristorata at Linnanmaki in Helsinki Finland.



Joyride at Powerland
in Alahärmä, Finland



Tornado at Särkänniemi
in Tampere, Finland



Gröna Lund in Stockholm, Sweden

Richard Bostic



Richard get's a milestone coaster with "Thor's Hammer" at Djurs Sommerland in Nimtofte Denmark

Ronny Cook



Ronny poses for a photo op with the Liseberg Rabbit