

Monday, July 17th, 2017

Vain Viking “Hiking” Tour!

When told that we were going on a hiking tour of runes I was more than thrilled as hiking is my favorite thing to do. But my dreams were quickly squashed when the tour guide told us that we would be bussin’ around. After I got over the fact that our adventure would not be how I imagined it I was able to embrace the beauty of sitting between stops and not walking miles and miles for hours.



Välkommen till buss



2017 meeting 1050 A.D.

Our Vain Viking Tour started the second we got on the bus as Yan drove us to the first stop. Alex, our colorful tour guide, gave us a brief viking history complete with complimentary handouts. As they were passed out my teacher self celebrated! Ever since my first tour in Sweden where the guide name dropped a million swedish royals that I (1.) had no idea how to pronounce (2.) didn't know I finally had some context and a family tree!

The first stop brought us to the Viking Jarlbanke's causeway. Jarlbanke was one of the vainest of all the vikings as he built several rune stones for himself, hence the tour name. Rune's typically were built as a memorial to those who were gone, however, Jarlbanke created not only one but 10 runes to indicate how important he was. The two Runes below welcomed you to his estate via his “bridge” or causeway and stated that this was HIS territory.



Jarlbanke's family framed the whole of our tour and after a few questions we were back on the bus! The next stop brought us to a little spot on the side of the road with even more rune stones and the burial mound of Jarlbanke's grandmother Estrid. Estrid was one of the only females that had several Runes mentioning her, as typically males were the only ones who the Runes were memorializing. The best part about this area was that it wasn't touristy, you never had to fight for a good shot on your camera, and you were able to get up close and personal with these ancient artifacts.



The third stop brought us to a Rune Stone that was in memorial of Jarlbanke after he died. Alex was also able to tell us what these various Rune Stones said and would read them to us in Swedish and English. This one said "Ingefest had this stone raised and made the bridge for Jarlabanke his father and Joruns son and Kattilo for her husband. Opir carved." The last part indicated who carved the Rune Stone. This stop was by far my favorite of the tour as



We finally got a chance to wander around and enjoy the nature, my favorite thing in life. The flowers were so beautiful and there was even a field full of horses, one of whom came to say hello!



The last two spots featured a church and a Ting house where people were judged for their wrong doings and had meetings to be judged and talk through.

All of this was beautiful and interesting to learn about, but honestly my favorite part of this tour was Alex. As I've found out from doing about 5 tours so far in Sweden I have realized that the tour guide really makes or breaks the tour. Alex not only had extensive knowledge on Runes but also on anything Swedish. On the bus Alex was willing to answer any and all questions we had and even tell us a few off color Swedish jokes. Since Alex a former Kansanite turned Swede for the last 20 years he was able to offer us a unique perspective on Sweden. Before coming here I think a lot of my friends and I had put Swedish Education on a pedestal and Alex squashed this thinking but pointing out some major flaws in the system. Specifically, he talked about how Swedish children are the guides of their education and teachers do what the kids want. He also talked about how Sweden let in over 100,00 refugees which has caused a lot of political shifts, specifically a rise in the Nazi party, and has thrown educators for a loop. We also learned that Sweden has closed its borders, something a lot of us had not realized.

So, if you are looking for a hike, I don't recommend Viking Vain tours, but if you want a unique perspective on Swedish life and an extensive background on how and why Runes were erected, then I highly recommend touring with Alex! Oh and he even runs a Swedish cooking class out of his home! Happy Travels!