

For our honeymoon after our civil union in June, we wanted to go abroad. We both prefer scenery (especially mountain landscapes) to big cities, traffic, and endless museums; both of our families have origins in Sweden; and we wanted to go somewhere we could feel comfortable being "out" as a lesbian couple. Scandinavia seemed like the logical choice.

PDA's, "Family," and Double Beds

Scandinavia – Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland – as a whole is quite gay-friendly – in fact, when we left for our trip, the only two things denied to gay couples in Sweden were adoption and the right to a church ceremony. By the time we returned nine days later, the ban on gay adoption had been lifted, making Sweden one of the most progressive countries in the world on gay rights.

That's not to say that the whole place is like Provincetown, though. One of our guidebooks mentioned that public displays of affection (PDAs) would get strange looks – not because you were gay but because Scandinavians tend to regard

such displays as distasteful regardless of the genders involved.

Our first indication of how different things are in Scandinavia came when making our flight reservations. We flew SAS, a Scandinavian-based airline, and were delighted to discover that we qualified for a family discount on flights within Scandinavia. We were also able to check in together, with both bags registered under Stina's name, for the flights to Scandinavia.

In general, the whole time we were there, we were not treated any differently than a straight couple would be. We were prepared for some bed-related issues. We could have played the games needed elsewhere – make reservations in advance via the Internet or by phone, have one partner wait in the lobby while the other makes the arrangements, and so forth – but we didn't have any problems with the direct approach. An employee at the tourist information desk just gave us a knowing grin and made our reservations with no problem once we explained what we wanted. (Well, it wasn't exactly *no* problem – there was a doctor's convention in Stockholm that made our reservations

there problematic.)

At any rate, we usually got what we wanted, and when we didn't, we shoved the beds together. Elizabeth's parents (decidedly heterosexual) had the same problem in Germany, and found that the twin beds were nailed to the floor!

The "Honeysun"

One of the best pieces of advice anyone gave us about traveling is to "do what you like to do at home, not what you think you should do." Thus freed from any obligation of what we 'ought' to see on a first trip to Sweden and Norway, we promptly headed for the far north – well north of the Arctic Circle. While some thought our choice of destination odd (after all, summer had finally arrived in Vermont – why were we going even farther north?!), our friends were less surprised. *Of course* we were going to the middle of nowhere! It promised to be very scenic, and we were intrigued by the chance to see the midnight sun. In all we spent five days north of the Arctic Circle – we joked that since the sun never set, the trip would be better called a "honeysun."

Our base of operations for the first three days was Kiruna, Sweden, a mining town and the largest settlement for miles. We went pony trekking on Icelandic horses one afternoon, hiking in Abisko National Park another day, and we ate a lot of pizza and ice cream in the evenings.

The landscape was very different – the area around Kiruna is relatively flat and covered with scrub forest with an underlayer of lingonberries. It was easy to see how this berry had become synonymous with Swedish cuisine – the berries were everywhere. To the west, the snow-covered, glacier-carved mountains around Abisko frame valleys with rushing rivers, permafrost heath, and few trees.

Anybody Want a Car?

Kiruna was also our introduction to the open, trusting nature of the Swedes who live in this remote area. When making reservations and checking into our hotel, no one took a credit card number or anything other than a name.

When we got back to Kiruna after our day in Abisko, we

caught a taxi to the airport four miles outside of town to pick up our rental car. We got out, the taxi left – and then we discovered that the airport closes at 3pm on Saturdays.

We started walking back toward town – no danger of it getting dark! We called the rental agency whose agent explained that since they don't have office hours on the weekend, the car was in the parking lot at the train station with the keys on the front left tire and we could just pick it up. Amazed, we asked about payment since all they had about us was a name – no credit card or anything. The guy on the phone said that was fine, we could pay for it when we returned the car.

When we returned the car they did finally take a credit card number. We never did have to show a driver's license. We try to imagine the same thing happening in the US, and just can't quite see it.

Glory Be To Cod

Once we had our car, we set off on the E-10 for Norway and the Lofoten Islands. The scenery got progressive-

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Northeast Passage: a honeymoon in Scandinavia

**Above the Arctic Circle, History, Scenery, Cod and Sun Reign
Over a Lesbian-Friendly Land.
by Elizabeth Hane & Stina Bridgeman**

