

Swedish thirty-somethings creating book about locals

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

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Writer, photographer learn about everyday life in community named after their city of Gothenburg

A chance visit to Gothenburg last year by a Swedish man has turned into something more long lasting.

Johan Nerman of Gothenburg, Sweden, was so taken by the town and its inhabitants, he decided to return to gather interviews and photographs for a book.

Accompanied by a friend and photographer, John Wennerberg, the two arrived May 31 and plan to stay until June 24.

Wennerberg said Swedes are fascinated about the States in general and particularly rural areas.

“And there’s only one other Gothenburg in the world,” Nerman said.

Johan said Gothenburg bears some vague resemblance to Gothenburg like tidiness.

“I was impressed with how nice and enthusiastic people were and the mayor came over,” he said about his first visit with his two brothers and friends. “A lot of people were enthusiastic about where we were from.”

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Although Swedes are generally a bit more reserved, Wennerberg said it's easier to be outgoing in Gothenburg because "everyone says hello."

"You get caught up in the atmosphere," he said. "It's contagious."

The book idea took some time to formulate. But with Nerman's skills as a writer (he's an advertising copywriter) and Wennerberg's photography expertise, a book seemed like the thing to do.

Since their arrival, the two have posted updates and photographs on a Facebook page that has garnered more interest than they expected from friends and others.

"We have close to 1,000 people in Gothenburg following us," Nerman said.

Before they left Gothenburg, a newspaper published an article about their trip to Gothenburg.

What they want to focus on in the book is ordinary people of different ages, occupations and interests.

"We follow the person around, shooting, watching them barbecuing," Wennerberg said. "We want to show what everyday life is like."

"We want to pinpoint the differences and similarities between the two cities," Wennerberg said. "For example, you are way more religious here."

An interview with city worker Casey Ross grew into an out-of-city-limits excursion when Ross took them out of town and showed them how to shoot guns.

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“We’d never seen guns in our lives,” Wennerberg said.

Nerman said their intent is not to make money from the project.

“We’re doing it because we found the idea to be so interesting,” he said.

Wennerberg said there are many opportunities for good photographs.

The book will be something concrete to show of their stay in Gothenburg and “we’ll have a product we thought of on our own,” he said.

Even if they lose money, Nerman said they will be glad to have a finished product which will be in Swedish.

“People in Gothenburg are proud of Gothenburg so I think they will find Gothenburg interesting too,” Wennerberg said.

Because of interest from people in Gothenburg, the duo is thinking of producing a version in English if they can get sponsors to help with costs.

To correspond with Nerman and Wennerberg, go to their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/detandragoteborg or email at Johannerman@icloud.com.

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