

English Guide • Gamla Stan

a guide for short visits to the oldest Stockholm island

A simple English tour guide that quickly leads you to the rich history of the Old Town. Clues are everywhere from earlier centuries, even from medieval days.

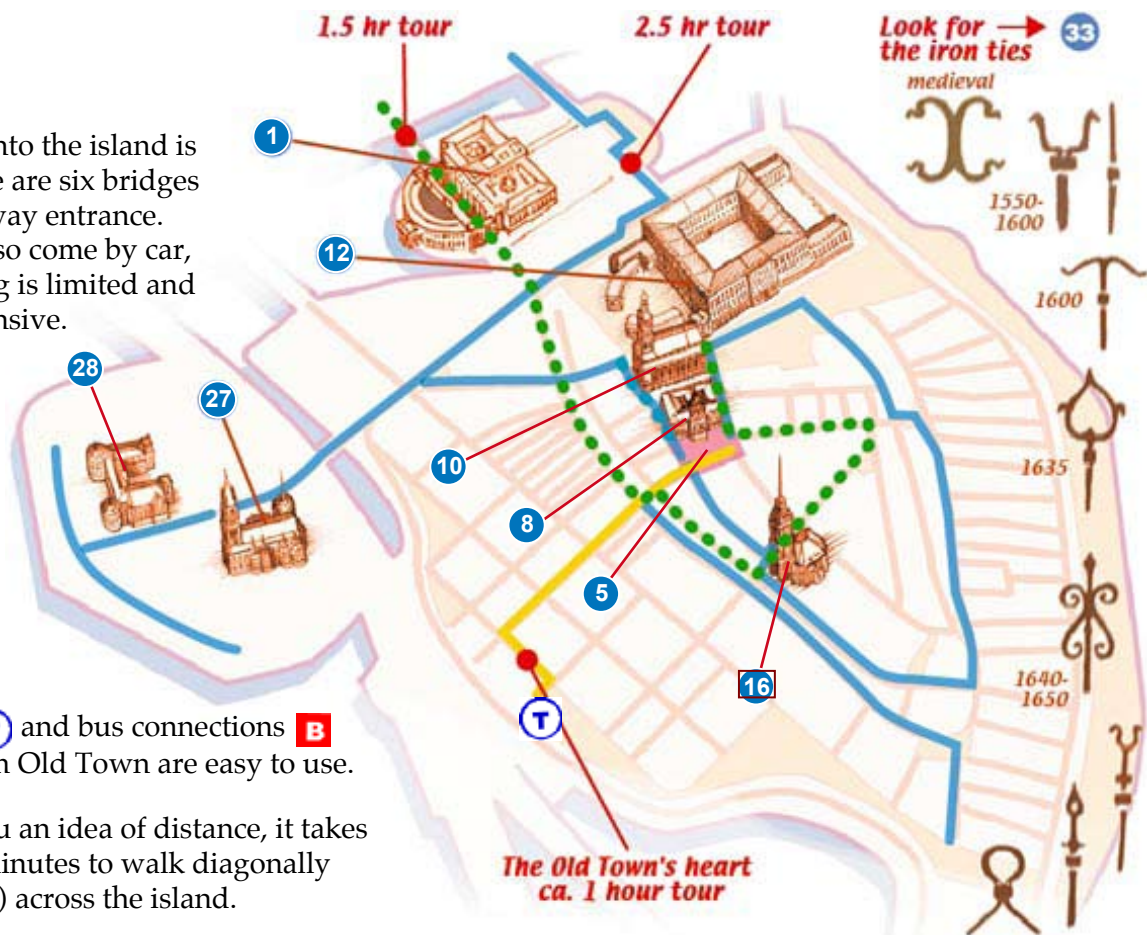
Meander along the main streets and wander off into back alleys . . . or follow a suggested tour route. Notice that some of the main streets, Österlånggatan and Västerlånggatan, were actually footpaths in the 13th century.

See 13th-century island on the last page

Walking onto the island is easy. There are six bridges and a subway entrance. You can also come by car, but parking is limited and quite expensive.

Subway **T** and bus connections **B** to and from Old Town are easy to use.

To give you an idea of distance, it takes about 12 minutes to walk diagonally (SW > NW) across the island.



Highlights that you shouldn't miss.

The **Riksdagshuset** **1** (Swedish Parliament)

Stortorget **5** (Great Square)

The **Nobel Museum** **8** and Library

Storkyrkan **10** (Great Church)

Kungliga Slottet **12** (Royal Palace)

Tyska Kyrkan **16** (German Church)

Riddarholmskyrkan **27** (Riddarholm's Church)

Wrangelska Palatset **28** (Wrangel's Palace)

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illustrated and produced by Terry LeBlanc



Here's where things are located

The **Riksdagshuset** ① (Swedish Parliament) can only be visited with guided tours.

Medeltidsmuseet ② (Museum of Medieval Stockholm) is underground and reached by a set of stairs. There are objects and settings from medieval Stockholm.



Mynttorget ③ (Mint Square) was once the location of the Royal Mint (1790), but today it is the Kanslihuset (government office building) erected in the 1930s.

Riddarhuset ④ (Knights' House) is the 17th-century House of Nobles.

Stortorget ⑤ (Great Square) is the heart of Old Town and the real beginning.

• **12th c.** . . The square is the intersection of the earliest paths across the island. This was the city's first trading/meeting place.

• **1290s** . . Stockholm had become a very large town. The square was being frequented by craftsmen who were working on building the castle, the city wall, the church, the monasteries, the Guild Hall and private houses.

• **1400s** . . Political meetings were taking place here and laws and ordinances were being read from the Guild Hall. It was also a place of execution, beheadings and punishment. A pillory stood on top of a stone gaol and was used until the 1770s.

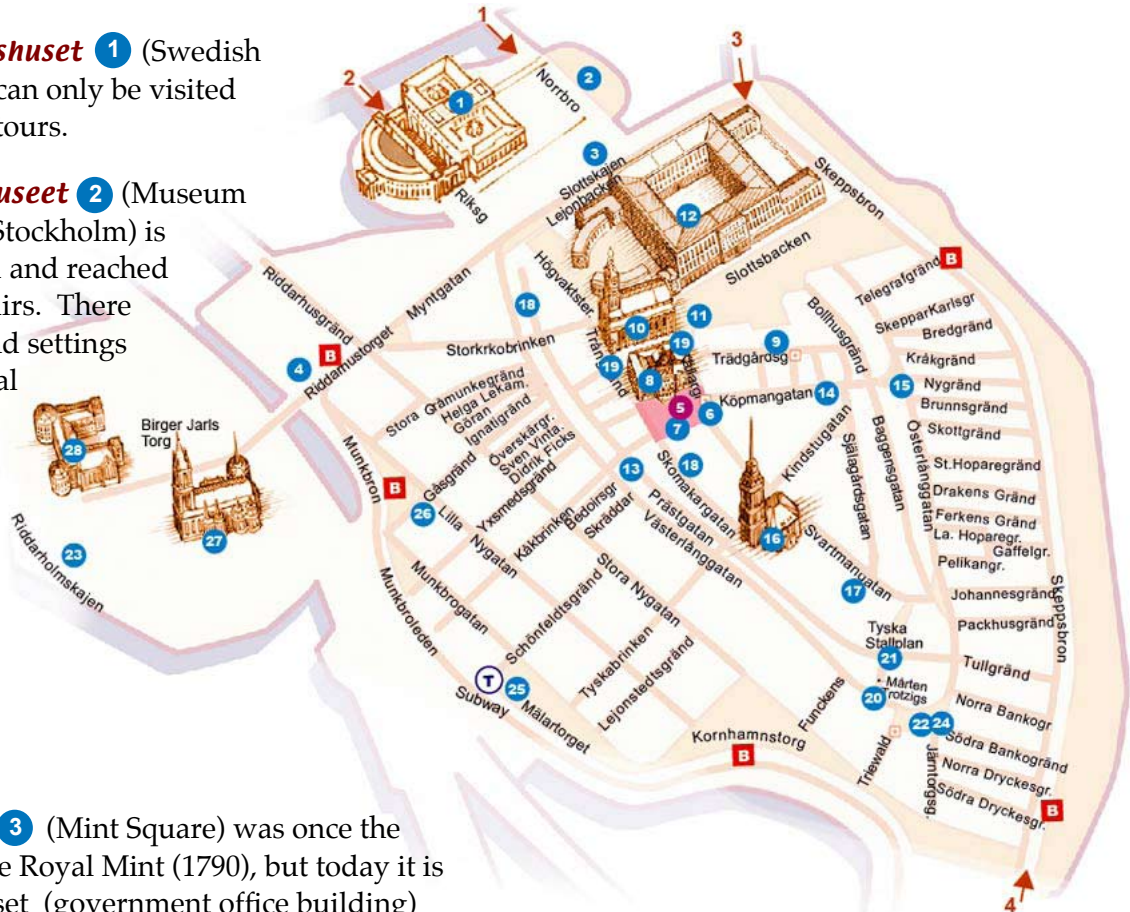
• **1520** was the year of the Stockholm Blood Bath. Christian II of Denmark made a

surprise arrest of 82 city burghers, bishops and nobility. In a quick trial, their execution was ordered. Heads were displayed in a "pyramid" in the square.

• **1776** . . the Stock Exchange was officially opened (replacing the Guild Hall). It was a great achievement on the part of a young architect named Erik Palmstedt who managed to "squeeze" the building into the irregular shaped medieval site.

Grillska huset ⑥ (#3 Stortorget) is a medieval building. It has a painted ceiling that is worth seeing in Riddarsalen (Knights' Hall).

Stortorget's Pumpen ⑦ (Great Square well) also designed by Erik Palmstedt. The well dried in the mid 1800s.



Börsen 8 (the Stock Exchange) designed by Erik Palmstedt in 1770s. The **Nobel Museum** and Library are also located here.

Behind the Finnish church, in an interesting garden 9 with a long flat fountain.

At one end is the **Iron Boy**,



Old Town's smallest sculpture. It is 3.5" high.



Storkyrkan 10 (Great Church) is Stockholm's 13th-century cathedral. The church's finest artifact is the oak- and elkhorn-gilded sculpture of St. Göran och Draken (St. George and the Dragon), a 15th-century Gothic masterpiece of carving.

The **Obelisk** 11 donated by Gustav III to thank the citizens that defended Stockholm against Russia in the war 1788-1790.



Kungliga Slottet 12 (Royal Palace) opens into a half-circled shape courtyard where the changing of the guard takes place. The **Palace Information Office**, just beside Storkyrkan, offers many tours.

Runestone/Cannon 13 One of the buildings at the corner of Prästgatan and Kåkbrinken has an unusual corner protection. It is a runestone and reads, "Torsten and Frögun raised this stone in memory of their son".

Köpmangatan 14 (Merchants' Street) is the oldest recorded street in Stockholm and it connected Stortorget with Fisketorget (Fish Market Square). At Köpmantorget there are two statues worth seeing. Today a bronze copy of the **St. Göran och Draken** 15 (St. George and the Dragon) statue stands here. Beside it is the **Princess** statue that symbolises Stockholm.

Tyska Kyrkan 16 (German Church) Since the beginning of the 17th century this has been the

German Church of Stockholm. It has a baroque interior and is exquisitely decorated.

Ehrenstrahlska huset 17 was built in the 1660s by the court painter, David Klöcker, later knighted to Ehrenstrahl.



Some early buildings can still be found. There are **17th century facades** 18 located at 5, 7 and 9 Skomakargatan.

Two very unusual "cabinets" are near Stortorget. One is a **Telefon** 19 booth and the other a **Pissoir** 19 (urinal). Each is beautifully designed, colorful and worth finding.



Mårten Trotzigs Gränd 20 the Old Town's tiniest path. The alley is only 36" wide.



Prästgatan 78 21 is where the famous Swedish artist, Carl Larsson, was born and lived his young life. The building has fine architectural elements, a 1670 baroque portal and rococo doors from the 1750s. It sounds elegant, but when Carl lived here it was a slob and very poor.

Järntorget 22 (Iron Square) was once the center of the copper and iron trade in the 16th and 17th centuries. At times in its long history it has been the place of punishment for "wrongdoers".

In Järntorget stands a statue of Evert Taube, 24 the troubadour and Swedish national poet of the early 1900s. He nonchalantly stands viewing the square, his sunglasses pushed up high on his forehead. The sculpture is dated 1985 and was done by **KG Beijemark**.

There is another statue of **Evert Taube** 23 on the island of Riddarholmen. The statue is the work of **Astri Taube** in 1983.

Family Statue 25 by **Pye Engström** (1973) is called a "living" sculpture because the family members are moveable.

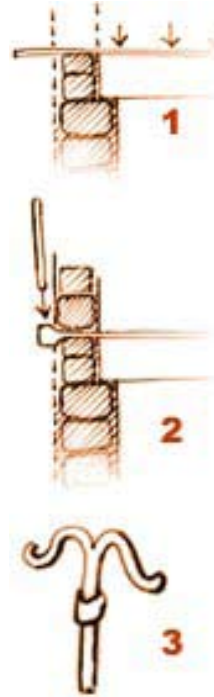


Petersenskahuset 26 (Petersen's House) is a beautiful private "castle" that has been owned by many prominent people, one being Aurura von Königsmarck. The vaulted cellar is called Aurora after her. The beautiful entrances are deceiving. The one on the left is just a fake . . . an expensive sense of humor.

Riddarholmen (the Knight's Island) is closely linked to the Old Town. Its chief landmark is the Riddarholmskyrkan 27 (Knight's Island Church) with its cast-iron spire.

Wrangelska Palatset 28 (Wrangel's Palace) built by Nicodemus Tessin the Older in the 1600s. It is also called Kungshuset (the Kings' House) since the monarchy did live here 1697-1754. The Svea Court of Appeals is located here.

Iron Ties 33



There is a detail that you will see hundreds of throughout the island. They are **Järn-ankarna** (iron ties) and were a very important building element in the middle ages.

As you can see in the illustration, (1) a strip of iron is attached to a horizontal beam which is then placed within the growing wall.

The ends that stick out of the building (2) are made into loops. The iron ties are put through this loop (as a cotter pin). These structures hold buildings together.

The earliest ties were very simple and functional, but later became a part (3) of the buildings' decoration.

Stockholm was a small island at the time shown here, about 1250-1300

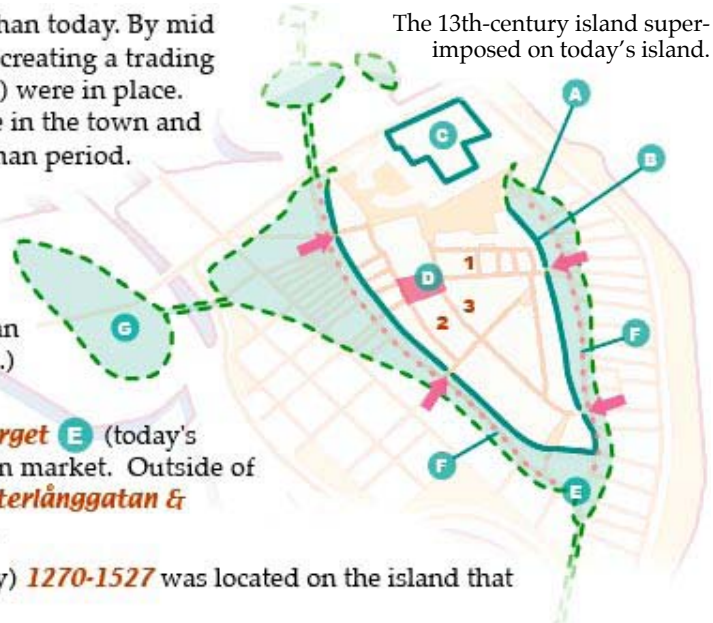
The **shore line** A was about three meters higher than today. By mid century, Birger Jarl had fortified the town and was creating a trading center. A town **wall** B and a **Borg** C (stronghold) were in place. German merchants of Lübeck were invited to settle in the town and establish trade. This was the beginning of the German period.

The center of island activity was **Stortorget** D (the Great Square). There were important squares outside of the gates → and the main paths of the island connected everything. Some of these paths are still main streets today; Köpmangatan 1 (Merchant St.), Skomakargatan 2 (Shoemaker St.) and Svartmangatan 3 (Blackfriars St.).

One of the busiest places on the island was **Korntorget** E (today's Järntorget), first as a corn market and later as an iron market. Outside of the town wall were two busy footpaths, today's **Österlånggatan & Västerlånggatan** F (East and West Long Streets).

The **G Gråmunkeklostret** (Grey Brothers' Monastery) 1270-1527 was located on the island that was to become Riddarholmen (Knights' Island).

The 13th-century island superimposed on today's island.



More historical information available at the Stockholms Stadsmuseum (the City Museum of Stockholm)

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