

Sweden

SWEDES TUNE IN AS THE FRIENDSHIP TOUR MESSAGE GETS A MUSICAL BOOST IN THE CITY OF MALMÖ

About Sweden

Sweden, which brought you IKEA, Bjorn Borg and Abba, is a large country with a small population of under nine million. It is a scenic land, with beautiful forests, giant lakes and stylish cities.



When To Visit

If you like the sun, June to August are the best months. Many attractions are only open during this time.

Visa Requirements

Visitors from a long list of countries are exempt from needing visas. Check with your nearest Swedish embassy.



Getting There

The main international airport is Arlanda, half an hour's bus ride north of Stockholm. Sweden has bus, train or ferry links to Denmark, Finland, Norway, Germany, Poland, Estonia and the UK.

Bahrain Connection

Bahrain and Sweden are both kingdoms and have strong trade links. Many leading Swedish corporations like Ericsson, Volvo and the GAC Group have business interests in Bahrain.



WE HAD QUITE THE RECEPTION IN SWEDEN. Henrik Melius, founder of Spiritus Mundi (Spirit of the World), a company and musical group whose exclusive ambition is to enhance cultural relations between the Arab world

community and the West, had pulled out all the stops in organising a big event to welcome the Friendship Tour and spread its message in Sweden.

The tour vehicle was put on display in the centre of the old Malmö city square of Lilla Torg. The square boasts some 15 restaurants and buildings from the 15th-18th centuries. Many big events are held here, including ice skating competitions and concerts, but it was the first time people here had anything like the Friendship Tour!

The event itself was began at noon, to take advantage of the sheer number of people who were outside then, enjoying their lunch hour. Henrik also contacted schools in the area and invited students for the event.

Malmö City Council member Anders Rubin kicked off proceedings by welcoming the Friendship Tour to Sweden. Also present were Sweden's then am-



The Spiritus Mundi band entertains the audience at the Malmö concert.

PAGE OPPOSITE:
The bridge leading from Denmark to Malmö, Sweden.



Swedish crowd enjoys watching a film on Spiritus Mundi's experiences and performance in Bahrain.



bassador to Bahrain Lars-Erik Grundell, commercial manager of Gulf Air Europe John Evans and Stefan Ljungh of GAC Group Sweden.

A big screen was set up near the stage, and visitors could watch a newly edited film about Bahrain and the Spiritus Mundi cultural exchange tour to the country. The film, produced by Henrik Melius, included footage provided by Bahrain Television.

This was followed by songs by a number of Spiritus Mundi musicians, whose “unplugged” performances, while tinted with a Western hue, were about the palm trees of Arabia and the long-lost loves of heroes and heroines, such as Qais and Layla. All the members of the group wore Bahrain International Circuit (F1) T-shirts.

“Our music touches upon the human empathy that runs deep in the psyche of each one of us, no matter

where we come from,” said band member Sabbar.

Music, he said, is a language that can transcend the human condition and bring people together as well as “correct the image of Arabs”.

Henrik himself has had a passion for multicultural music, including songs by Lebanese diva Fairuz, since childhood. This was one major reason that compelled him to pair up with fellow-musicians to create a fusion of tunes that marry Arabic scales (*maqamat*) to Western pop and jazz. Melius and Sabbar are the main composers behind the highly professional music for the Spiritus Mundi program.

“The essence of the whole project is to further ties through a language that everyone can understand,” Henrik said.

There was a very nice speech from Hana Al Hirsi, projects and fundraising assistant at the Council



for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding, UK. She spoke on the relations between Arabs and westerners, from a woman's point of view. Also speaking at the event was Spiritus Mundi band member Holst who gave a superbly engaging talk on Bahrain and the objectives of the band.

The event, sponsored by the GAC Group and the City of Malmö, was covered by local TV stations, radio and newspapers, with Ali giving interviews to several journalists.

After the event Ali and the team were treated to a typical Swedish barbeque on the beach south of Malmö. A beautiful Scandinavian summer sunset, singing, good company in the true spirit of the Friendship Tour concluded the visit to Sweden.

Sweden was the end of the tour for Martin, for the rest, it was on to Germany!



The Friendship Tour vehicle piques the interest of passers-by as a crowd builds for the concert.



Ali with the Swedish ambassador to Bahrain and the members of the Spiritus Mundi band.



Band members wearing Bahrain International Circuit T-shirts and enjoying a traditional Arabic barbeque.



Hana Al Hirsi gives a speech about the Arab world.

