

Stockholm JROS Tour Report by Hebe Darwin

13 August – 25 August 2024



I travelled by coach from Cambridge to Heathrow, leaving at a sociable 4am! After a leisurely breakfast at the airport, I flew to Stockholm with Grace, Ben and Harry, who had travelled from the southwest after a slightly friendlier alarm call. After arriving at Arlanda Airport, we got our first experience of the amazing Swedish public transport system, taking a bus, train and another bus to get to Hellasgarden, the location of the OK Ravinen club hut in which we would be staying for the next 12 days. Once most of the group had arrived, we went for a 5km jog around the lake, getting lost quite a few times as the paths were not obvious! This didn't bode well. Near to the end of the run we crossed a motorway and explored a cave nearby, discovering Chloe's favourite rock!

Day 1 Svardso

I'd never orienteered in Scandinavia before, and today I was most definitely thrown in the deep end (just how I like it to be). We took the bus to Svardso, an island just outside of Stockholm centre, and walked the last 2km to the area. Chloe shadowed me on the course, and I was happy that she was there because the contours and knolls were mapped very differently from UK maps. This confused me quite a bit!

In the evening, we did our first competition, Melkers Minne Relay. This was a 2x2 relay which I ran with Lyra. It was a very different area from our morning training, and I made some stupid errors as I was distracted by some differences to British relay customs. For instance, we started in lanes with

the maps at our feet, just like you see the elites do at World Championships. They also don't use SIAC in Sweden (despite all the competitors having SIACs). Halfway through her course, Grace was run into by a deer – oh, dear!

Day 2 Flemingsberg

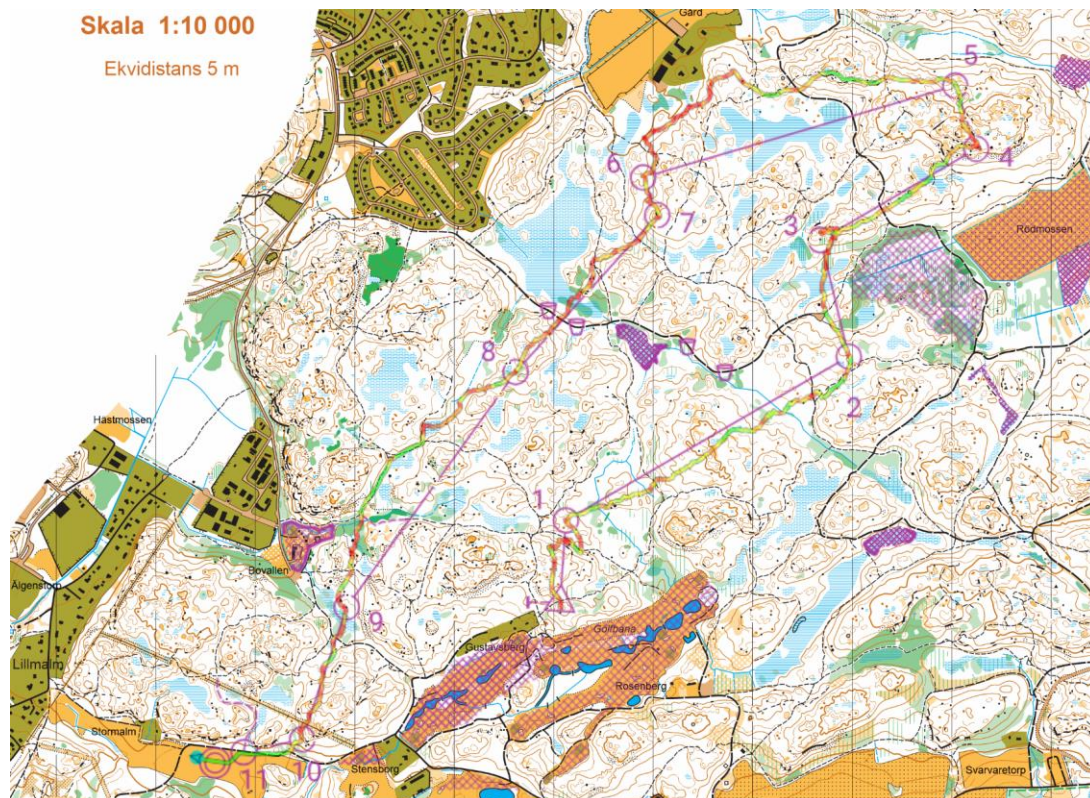
Today we had another long trek to Flemingsberg, where we did a very slow warm-up before heading out with maps. I went on a course with Nick Barrable shadowing me, and then did a course on my own. I quite liked the area, once I'd got used to it, but it was very green compared to the areas we were going to run on later in the fortnight. In the evening, we did a pyramids session with the OK Ravinen seniors. Two sessions a day keeps the doctor at bay.

Day 3 Alby

Today we went to Alby to train. I went on the first course by myself, which mostly went well. I tried to trust my compass rather than always using land features, as it was quite often hard to tell what was mapped and what wasn't. On my second course I caught up with Charlotte (who was being shadowed by Toni), after which Toni shadowed me for my second half and taught me a great way to visualise using features to go quickly across the terrain. For example, picture a front crawl stroke, reaching out to a feature and pulling yourself towards it, so you can run fast to the feature and continue from there. I'd met the concept before, but this was the best way to imagine it and it really worked for me! After the training here, we went for a swim in the lake, before running back to the bus, just catching it in time. In the evening, we went to a Body Pump session at Alta Centrum. Here, we did lots of weighted squats, core exercises, lunges and deadlifts, all to different songs. It was a very intense hour, but I loved it. Some of the boys had been competing with the weights they could use, and thus complained about their body hurting for days afterwards.

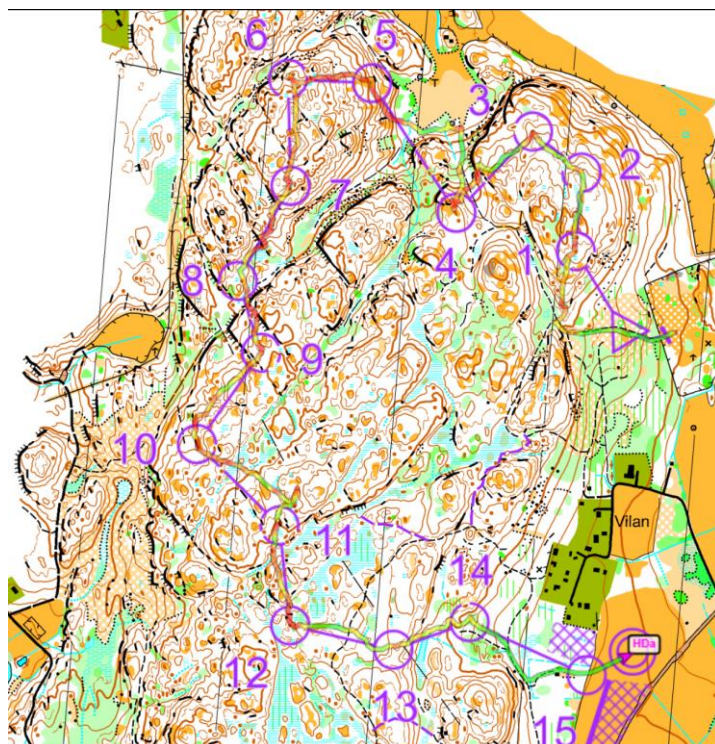
Day 4 Malmsdubbein Long

Today, we did a Long race, at Malmsdubbein. I made lots of mistakes. Being in a race made me forget what I'd been practising for the last few days. I took 95 minutes and was very upset with myself because I'd made at least 15 minutes of mistakes. That afternoon, we just relaxed and swam in the lake, our first calm afternoon for the trip. It was beautiful.



Day 5 Malmsdubbeln Middle

Today, we did a middle race at the same part of Malmsdubbeln and I was determined not to mess up too much, and I didn't 😊! I probably made about 5 minutes of mistakes and compared to the day before, it felt a lot better. That evening, we spent more time at the lake and some people played volleyball.



Day 6 Svartsbacken and Hellasgarden

In the morning we went to Svartsbacken and I cannot remember what we did, so it obviously wasn't super exciting!

In the afternoon, we did a forest ultra-sprint relay at the club hut in Hellasgarden. I was paired with James, and we were hyped up beforehand when we did pre-race interviews and mostly wore matching shirts with the other person in our group. We each ran the same map as a relay (gaffled), then another map as a relay (gaffled), then a final map as a relay (ungaffled). I ran second, and I had an amazing time in the forest, and sprinting around the place – it was great practise for terrain running at speed, but I think that I used a bit too much energy in my first run, as I was much slower for the other two legs. I also spent two minutes looking for a control that hadn't been hung (which nobody else noticed, so they mispunched(!)). We ended up in last place, but both James and I had worked very hard. I regard this as merely unfortunate, given that I'd apparently looked at the map more accurately than most people. After this, we then went to the other side of the road and did two individual micro-sprints in the resort area and surrounding forest, starting at 20-second intervals in order of teams finishing (so James and I started last!). I enjoyed the first course despite misinterpreting the scale and climbing down an uncrossable cliff. Whoops. On the second course I came in as second girl; I'd got used to the map scale and other people had tired whereas I'd been re-energised! As usual, we finished that day with a swim in the lake. Bliss.

Day 7 Nacka Strand

Today was a fantastic day of training! We went to Nacka Strand, with awesome views of Stockholm in the distance. We ran 3 courses, each about 2km long, starting where the other finished (creating a massive loop, like a triple-sided map), and apparently, I was the only person who completed all of the loops?! Anyway, this was the day when the steep terrain and cliffs made sense, and after being a bit uncertain in the first loop, I quickly found my stride and understood what detail to take from the map and what not to, going in some very nice straight lines, and ultimately covering 6km in the fastest time yet! This area really helped to boost my confidence in Swedish terrain, which was needed after the races at the weekend.

That evening, lots of the others went out to train in a remote area, which was apparently very nice, but I decided to stay at the hut with a couple of the others, as my knee was hurting a bit and I didn't want to make it worse. We made ourselves useful by going to an ICA Maxi to buy some supplies for Carol the cook and have a look around the shopping centre in Nacka. Retail therapy, some would say.

Day 8 Luffarligan

Today, we hosted Luffarligan. This is a regular event which is primarily for the older members of Swedish clubs, and includes some shorter courses. The event is also used as a fundraiser to reduce the costs of our tour by raising money from the entry fees and selling our baked goods at a stall. James and I mostly manned registration/download, getting taught how to work the Swedish Excel system by the person who had created it! We were also able to run our own courses at the event as well and I had another great day, only really messing up 1 or 2 controls, and hitting the others spot on with no problem and quickly! It made me very happy. Disappointingly, we didn't raise as much money as we would have liked to from our baked good sale. That evening, we went to a different

club hut to pre-run the 25manna courses. Having taken an oath of secrecy, I can't reveal anything about the courses yet!

Day 9 - Kvarnberget

Today was GCSE results day. I got mine at breakfast, but let's stick with the orienteering... We went to Kvarnberget, where I ran a contour-only course with Toni shadowing me for the first half, and here I fell in love with the Swedish terrain completely. It was extremely runnable (at least, as much as good orienteering areas can be), and I understood what was mapped and what wasn't. There were so few mistakes that Toni let me go run on my own for the second half of the course, and I still hardly made mistakes! One of the best pieces of advice she gave me was this; 'You are amazing, so trust where you think you are' and to rethink where I went from a beacon if I wasn't sure where I was, rather than try to fit the ground to the map. In Sweden and Scotland, the latter approach rarely worked for me.

In the evening, we had OK Ravinen training from the club hut, where we had a 2km jog to the start before doing a terrain intervals session before jogging back. In the terrain intervals, we had a mass start with everyone in groups doing the same short course (600m) racing each other around the controls to the finish. We then jogged back to the hut and, yes, we went for another swim. Double bliss.

Day 10 - Hammarsbyden

Today was our last day of training – and it was sprint style! We went to Hammarsbyden and everyone did the first 3km course (with a gap in the middle, out-and-back style), which was great fun, as the coaches had put in lots and lots of barriers on the map, forcing us to go certain ways, which meant that it was extremely technical. Whilst we were happy with the training, the locals were not so enamoured, as apparently we were running in their back-gardens! A small number of others (including myself) then did a second course of the same length, but with significantly more climb. On this one I was the sweeper; I collected controls once everyone had been through them, speeding up the process of moving location. I'm very glad I did it, because it was yet more sprint training, but it was still extremely tiring!

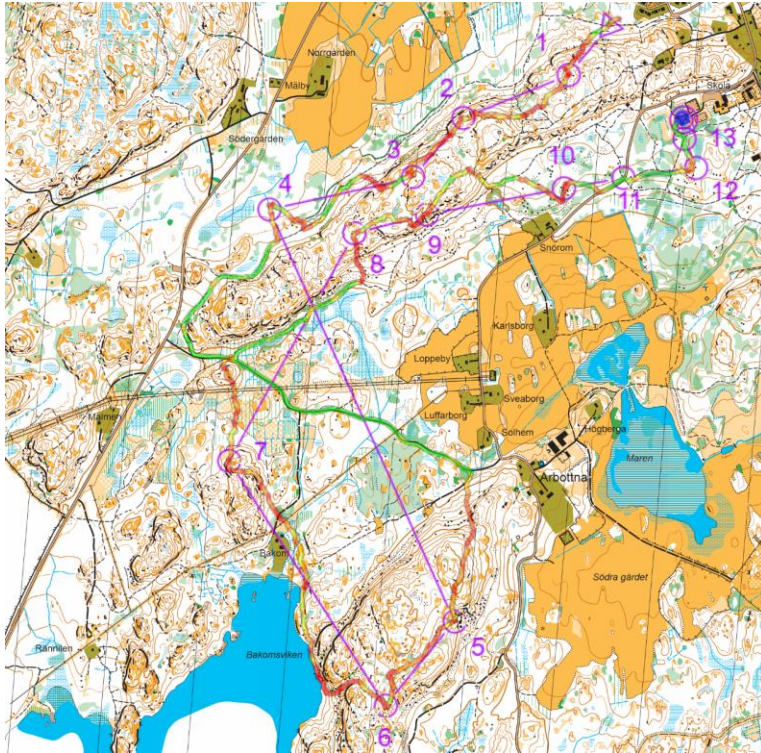
In the afternoon we went into Stockholm. First, we went to the Vasamuseum, a museum dedicated to the Vasa ship, built between 1626 and 1628, but due to a lack of ballast, it sunk on its maiden voyage after only 1.3km. We then went to Gröna Lund theme park, where many stayed for the whole evening until 10pm, but Ruth and I (not liking rollercoasters) only went on the water tunnel and then into a crazy house which bombarded the senses with different lights, moving rooms and steps and a slide to finish! After that, Ruth and I took the pendelbat (commuter boat) across to Gamla Stan, the old island in the centre of Stockholm, and went for a wander.

Day 11 – Musko island (long)

Today we did the Stockholm district championships long race. This was situated on the island of Musko in the Stockholm archipelagos. It was an amazing area, and a fantastic race - although extremely long! My GPS Watch says that I went into the Baltic Sea. What really happened was that I made a bad route choice and ended up climbing over enormous boulders at the bottom of a cliff at

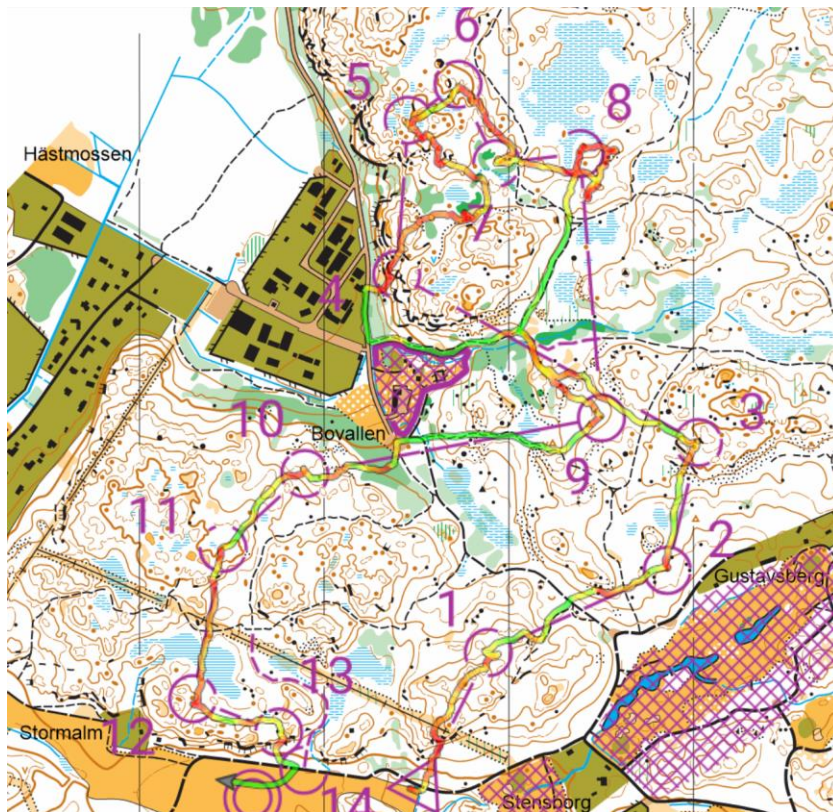
the edge of the sea. Sometimes all that was between the boulders was water! Overall, my time was nothing to shout about but I knew that I hadn't made any large mistakes and hadn't been 'lost' at all.

That afternoon was another restful one, apart from packing luggage and cleaning the hut so we could hand it back to the club on our final day.



Day 12 – Musko island (middle distance)

Our final day in Sweden! It was also the Stockholm district championships middle race, on the same island as the day previously, but not in the same area. This was an even better race, and my only medium sized mistake cost me about 2mins. Typically, these small mistakes were 'control circle' problems, trying to identify the exact feature. There were some brutal uphill sections, but I enjoyed myself, making very few mistakes. The eventual winner of my course overtook me a few controls from the end, and from there, I decided to try to stick with her. I managed to keep up with her but I couldn't find a good way around her until the run-in. I put my heart into that run-in and stayed ahead! It was a great end to the tour. I hope that the knowledge that I can now orienteer that well in Scandinavia will help my confidence when orienteering in the UK!



As soon as I finished, I jumped into a club-member's car to get to the station to get a train to the airport. I had plenty of time before the flight to recharge and rest. However, once I landed in Heathrow, I had a nightmare! London Transport had to suspend lots of key routes, and then the main line to Cambridge suffered a power outage! Luckily, I was able to stay at a relative's house in London, before completing the journey the next day. Having had problems on trains to Lagganlia in the past, I know that being prepared for anything in the UK is important for these tours!

Overall, I had a wonderful time in Stockholm; almost as good as in Czechia the previous year. I learned so much about how to navigate in Scandinavian areas that I am so pleased to have been able to be part of it. I picked up many tips and tricks that the elite orienteers use, which will be really useful in the UK as well. Most importantly, it has fuelled my desire to orienteer in Scandinavia as much as possible, and boosted my confidence that I can orienteer, something that endless selection races can squash over time. I would definitely recommend the Stockholm tour for any aspiring junior to aim at. I hope to be able to go to Scandinavia for an orienteering holiday – such as the O-Ringen next year in Jonkoping, perhaps!