

## Sweden - Micheal trotter

I know this is going to sound very stereotypical, but where has the last six months gone?!

Tomorrow morning my parents will land in Kastrup Airport (Denmark) and for the first time in six months I'll see them face to face!

The last three months have been just as full throttle as the first.

After coming back from Åre in the northern Sweden things got pretty quite as far as trips went though my social life started to take form. It's really exciting to watch ones relationships with everyone grow as ones Swedish grows!

I've become capable of participating in school to an extent, which is also very exciting.

Just before we went into summer break we had a big party, festival, public holiday here called Mid summer. It's a tradition that has been passed down in Swedish society through generations.



In the morning all the children help the adults go out and collect wild flowers and leaves which are used to decorate a giant Christian cross looking structure decked out with two matching rings on either pole.

The pole used to be in the shape of a giant male genitalia which would be inserted into a hole into the ground to symbolise refertilisation of the farming lands.



After this is all done, with the new and improved family friendly summer pole all the Swedes gather around it and sing songs about foxes sliding over ice, small frogs which have no ears or tails and worn out boots!

After all the festivities are over as far as the pole is concerned all the town folk drive back to their summer houses and get stuck into the schnups which is also a very big part of the tradition. Before taking each shot of schnups they sing silly songs which have also been passed down through many generations.

Another major part of the Swedish summer is student. Which the Swedish final year students graduating from their version of high school. All the final year students gather in the main school building and sing many songs and cheer and chant before each class runs outside to where all the students families await them holding massive pictures of them as babies.

Just when you thought it was all over, all the students then proceed to pile onto the back of tractors which parade around town playing loud music. At the end of the day all the students gather with families and celebrate the beginning of life with taxes.

On the same day that the Swedish kids graduated, I had a little graduation of my own! I turned the magical 18!! WOOT GO ME! The Swedes really know how to celebrate a birthday. At the early hours of the morning the family parades into the happy birthday persons room, armed with a cake, presents and any family pets they can gather. During the procession, the whole family sings JA MÅ HAN LEVA! Which is the Swedish version of happy birthday, though it is completely different. One eats Strawberry cake for breaky, for lunch and again for dinner! While at the same time celebrating it with every member of the family!



So, with space running short, I'll leave you with a couple more pictures of Europe and the fun we are having here!

See you in pictures!

Mike