

**COVID-19 European Tour**  
**By Capt. M. Ramsay**  
**March 2020**

It has been an interesting week or so. I am suffering from a bit of jet lag which is nothing to complain about considering all of the challenges and experiences we have had.

We had planned to leave for our trip to Denmark and Germany on the day that Spring Break from school began but somehow when we were booking our trip we mixed up the dates and wound up leaving for Europe one week early—which, as it turns out, was the only way we were able to get there at all.

On March 8 we flew out of Seattle for a planned two-week vacation that turned out to be anything but what we had planned. We enjoyed a couple of days in Mainz seeing the Gutenberg Bible and Hameln of Piped Piper fame. My wife, Susan, kept checking the news. Coronavirus (COVID-19) was starting to catch our attention.

On March 11 our trip changed, the day before we drove to Denmark. We didn't expect to be met at the border by the Army but we were and after we made it to our hotel Denmark's borders were closed. No one was coming into the country. It got even more interesting. We were woken at 4:30 a.m. local time to discover that the USA declared that non-citizens were not allowed to enter their country. We flew out of Seattle! Our flight home was supposed to fly back to Seattle! Our car was in airport parking in Seattle! Our flight was supposed to leave from Germany in a couple of weeks—now none of that looked possible.

We were on the phone and email for hours trying to speak with our travel insurance, the airlines, the Canadian government. No one was able to help. We never got through to the travel insurance. The person we spoke to from the Canadian government knew less than we did at the time and our airline refused to change our flight or reimburse us anything. We asked a lot of people for prayer and family helped us out as we needed to buy a whole new flight back that did not go through the USA. Our car, however, was still in the USA. Susan has a cousin not far from the airport who graciously agreed to pick up our car and store it at her place until we are able to travel to the USA.

The next day we looked around Ribe, the town where we were, but everything was locked except the churches. We saw some historic churches and a lot of outdoor monuments. We then looked for interesting outdoor monuments in other places in Denmark and drove there. At two of these locations (Four Men at the Sea and Jelling) reporters from the TV and newspaper spotted us and interviewed us. It was quite something.

We made our way to Copenhagen via Aarhus when Susan read that the Denmark had not just closed their borders but that at 12 noon the next day the military would be sealing off the country. We had to flee the country before the army came at noon.

Provisionally as Susan had heard this, I was walking around the abnormally quiet streets of this big European city looking at the outside of closed museums, empty amusement parks and vacant squares when I noticed something...the Hard Rock Café Copenhagen was still open. This is one of the things Sarah-Grace, my 17-year-old daughter, really wanted to see. I ran back to the hotel to get them and we had one last night out before we fled the country. It was more than a little surreal as the restaurant was not full by any means and those who were there seemed to be having 'end of the world' type parties. But we had a great time that night before we fled over the northern border in the morning to Sweden.

When we returned from our night out and before we fled there was no sleep for Susan and I. Susan had been keeping up with the COVID-19 news and border closings and flight restrictions and it looked like we would need to change our flights again. We had by now already paid for flights back twice (and we are still unsure as to whether insurance will reimburse us anything! The airline said we are out of luck).

Now we have to pay for another, earlier flight back. These flights are not cheap. We contact more family! They transfer money to our accounts. We now have a couple of days to try to get to Frankfurt, Germany before all the borders are closed and we are trapped—or worse, get sick. Susan books our new flights back and a ferry from Sweden to Germany, The race is now on. We have to get to Germany before they seal their borders and then back to Canada before Canada seals our border.

About this time a receive a message from our MP, Gord Johns, advising us to come back to Canada NOW!

The next day we flee over the bridge to Sweden, after a quick stop at the Little Mermaid statue, before the Army rolls in to seal the border. The ferry from Sweden to Germany doesn't leave until the morning. Sweden is open so we see museums and Viking sites while waiting for our ferry and hoping that we can get away before we are trapped.

The next morning we take a six-hour ferry trip to Germany and make a seven-hour drive inland to Frankfurt, where we catch a few hours sleep before we fly back to Canada. We do all of this just in time. Praise God!

We are very thankful for people's prayers and other support—we couldn't have made it home without your help. We are very thankful that we have returned and are now settled into self-isolation. We are very thankful for friends who have left supplies at our front

door. We are very thankful that we can be here, working from home, to coordinate The Salvation Army's efforts in this community to help others in need during the COVID-19.

**END**