



Richard Deiss

The cathedral of the winged wheel
and the sugarbeet station

Trivia and anecdotes on 222
railway stations in Europe

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Preface

This is the translation into English of the European volume of my five-volume series on railway stations worldwide. Each book contains trivia, interesting facts, and anecdotes on about 200 stations. In total, 1001 stations are covered in the five books. Currently, four out of five volumes are available in English, while all five are available in German

In this volume 222 short stories, facts, trivia and anecdotes on railway stations in wider Europe, including Turkey, the Caucasus and Russia are covered. Railway stations in Germany and the Alpine countries are dealt with in separate volumes. The book travels through Europe from North to West and from South to East.

The annex includes some tables with statistical data and other information in table form.

Anecdotes relating to famous people or to dramatic events involving other people are marked with a star (★).

Comments on the content and tips for further stories are appreciated and will be included in the next edition which is foreseen for 2021.

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Richard Deiss

1. Northern Europe

1.1 Sweden

★Vassijaure and the bullet hole

Seven km from the Norwegian border along the Kiruna-Narvik ore railway, lies the Vassijaure station. On 20 May 1940, Sven Sjöberg, a young ranger, waited on the platform for a letter that should come by train. Suddenly, a German aircraft appeared, which flew at low altitude towards the train station. Since the Germans had previously occupied Norway and it was a station near the border, it was equipped to protect the border, and even an armored train was stationed there. Sjöberg opened fire on the plane. The Germans responded, and Sjöberg was hit. Seriously injured, he was taken by train to Kiruna but died during the trip. The next day, mail for Sjöberg arrived at the station. It was a letter permitting him to leave the service to help his parents on their farm. At the news of his death, his mother collapsed and never recovered. The station still has the bullet holes from the exchange of fire between the Germans and Sjöberg, and there is a commemorative plaque on the platform.

Kiruna

The northern Swedish city of Kiruna lives through mining. However, the hollowed out ground leads to cuts and subsidence and more and more damage to buildings. Therefore, a decision was made in 2012 to move the city four km to a safe slope. The moving of the town started in 2014 but is still far from complete. One of the first buildings to move was the railway station of Kiruna, and a new

provisional station was built in 2013 at the northeast end of the town. The old station was demolished in 2017.

👉 There are also other unusual things happening in the area. In the vicinity (in Jukkasjärvi), there is an ice hotel, which is rebuilt every winter. Additionally, the British entrepreneur Richard Branson wants to build a “Spaceport” for space tourists near Kiruna. Furthermore, there is a station of the Space Agency ESA located there.

Stockholm CS

In front of the Stockholm Central Station, there is a statue, not for a king, but for the engineer Nils Ericson (1802-1870). He was so instrumental in the construction of the railroad in the country, that he can almost be regarded as “the father of Swedish Railway.” Shortly before the completion of the railway station in 1871, Ericson died. The train station’s façade has hardly changed since then, but the same cannot be said about the interior. The vaulted hall, where steam engines once were puffing off, now is a waiting room. The train station has also changed from a terminal to a station with through traffic. The station compound also includes a bus station and the Swedish World Trade Center. From the outset, this extension was designed to optimize energy consumption. Overall, only fifteen percent of the compound’s energy consumption comes from municipal utilities, and it sometimes even feeds energy into the urban district heating system. The low energy usage is achieved by, among other things, a domed transparent roof, which captures energy and also helps cool the complex in the summer. In wintertime, heat energy is even obtained from the 25,000 people, who pass daily through the World Trade Center. Due to the success of this idea in the trade center, the station operating company Jernhusen wanted to apply the same method in the station proper. Additionally, the organizers of the complex announced in spring 2008 that they also wanted to use the heat energy captured from the

approximately about 200,000 passers-by daily in the station to heat a 13-story office building at the station. Up to 15 percent of the energy expended on heating the building is expected to be obtained via that method.

In the ground floor of the Stockholm train station, there is a circular opening, through which one can look at the deeper level. The locals have nicknamed the opening "spittoon (spottkoppen)."

Laholm - the little house on the prairie

When the railway line Malmö-Gothenburg was straightened for high-speed railway traffic, the town of Laholm got a new railway station on the new route. The new station building, a small brick house, is, however, of very modest appearance. Since it is also located three kilometers from the town center, it was popularly nicknamed "The Little House on the Prairie (Lilla huset in het Prairie)," inspired by an American TV series of the same name.

Malmö and the UFO

In 2000, the Öresund fixed link was opened, connecting Copenhagen and Malmö by rail. However, at Malmö Central, trains have to turn around and then travel around the city to reach the bridge. Therefore, a city tunnel was constructed to make Malmö Centralen a train station through traffic and to introduce more stops. The most important new station along the route is the underground station Triangeln (40,000 passengers daily) situated on a triangular square. From street level, passers-by can see the glass dome of light of the station Triangeln. Due to the appearance of the lens-shaped roof, a local newspaper wrote in March 2010, just after the station's opening, that "a UFO landed in the middle of Malmö."

1.2 Norway

Oslo - the station of Tiger Town

In front of Oslo Central Station is the bronze sculpture of a tiger. In recent years, Oslo searched for an icon, and tigers currently have a positive connotation. Economically successful countries are today - or at least before the 2008 financial crisis - called Tigers. Some examples include Iceland (the Arctic Tiger) and Finland (the Nordic Tiger). However, in the 19th century, the term tiger had a different meaning when describing Oslo. Back then, the living conditions were still difficult (think of Knut Hamsun's 1890 novel *Hunger*). The city was considered so merciless that the writer Bjørnsterne Bjørnson "Tiger Town" in an 1870 poem. Later, this former critical term established itself as the nickname of the city. Oslo then still belonged to Denmark and was called Christiania (also Kristiania starting in 1878). Back then, the main station was still the Eastern Station (adjacent to it, a modern central station was built and opened in 1980). In 1925, the old name of the city, Oslo, was restored. Despite the nation's oil boom since the 1990s, more beggars (Tigger in Norwegian) stayed on the station square. Oslo has, therefore, been derisively called "Tigger City."

Hell frozen over

On the line from Trondheim to Bodo, there is a railway station called Hell. In English, conductors announce upon approaching the station, "Next stop: Hell." On the station premises is a goods shed with the words "Gods Expedition (goods expedition)," which adds some more biblical humor to the mix. In winter, the station is often covered by snow and ice, which might lead some to remark "Hell frozen over."

Finse 1222

A special station, Finse 1222 is also located on the Bergen railway line. It is 1222.2 meters above sea level and the

highest railway station in Northern Europe. Not far from the train station one can find a hotel named *Finse 1222*.

Trondheim and the synagogue

Trondheim is situated north of the 63rd latitude. The geographical location leads to several alleged records. With the Grakallen line, Trondheim has the northernmost tramway in the world. The first train station in Trondheim, located on the waterfront in the Kalvskinnet district, is now home to what is believed to be the world's northernmost synagogue. However, the actual record holder is found in Murmansk, Russia. In reality, the Synagogue of Trondheim, which was established there after the small Jewish community of the city purchased the disused railway station in 1925, is only the fifth-northernmost in the world.

📖 Trondheim was an important center of Christian pilgrimage in Northern Europe during the Middle Ages because canonized King Olav II is buried in the Trondheim Cathedral. The town was once called “Jerusalem of the North.”

Trondheim and the landslide

In 1877, a new train station was built in Trondheim on an artificial island in the harbor to ensure good connections to navigation. However, the newly created terrain was not stable. In April 1888, the ground gave way, there was a landslide, and 180 meters of track were swallowed by the sea. The station was renamed three times due to the city's frequent name changes. When the station opened, the city was called Throndhjem, later it changed to Trondheim, and then Nidarors. In 1931, the city was renamed Trondheim.

1.3 Denmark

Copenhagen - the InterRailers Paradise

In the 1980s, when many young people travelled with the Interrail pass, the main railway station of Copenhagen (built in 1911) had a good reputation amongst them. It was the first railway station, which had a special InterRailers travel centre, with cooking possibilities, showers, and an info-centre. Yet, the station is not only a meeting point for InterRailers; even Copenhageners tell each other, “we meet at the station clock (mød mig under uret).”

Hoje Taastrup

The station of the Copenhagen suburb Hoje Taastrup was opened in 1986. The station building above the tracks, which became the symbol of the community, gave rise to a pun due to its three arches. Because of its station, Hoje Taastrup is called “Buernes By (City of Arcs),” which almost sounds like “Byernes By (City of Cities).” At the south end of the station complex is Thor's Tower. At 26 meters tall, it the tallest sculpture in Scandinavia.

Aarhus

A common stereotype is that Copenhageners think they live in the only big city in Denmark. They joke about the long-distance trains' name, “Intercity,” since there is only one city in the country. The Copenhageners also like to make jokes about the Jutlanders or the inhabitants of Aarhus. One goes like this: “Why do the Aarhusers remove the doors from bathrooms? So no one can look through the key-hole.” Does this also apply to the Aarhus Central Station? With 17,000 passengers and about 30,000 users per day, it is the busiest Danish railway station outside Copenhagen.

Køge Nord and the new station hose

Køge Nord station, which was opened in May 2019, links the new high-speed Copenhagen-Ringsted line with the suburban train lines, various cycle paths, and a motorway. In cities with stronger nickname traditions, such as London,

Rotterdam, or Berlin, the long pedestrian walkway would have long since been known as the tube, millipede, or rectum. In Denmark, however, there is still no mention of a nickname. It is to be hoped that in the long-term that vandalism and wear and tear will not turn the pathway into a "long misery."

★ **Elsinore and Hamlet**

In the city of Helsingør, lies the fortress Kronberg. Kronberg is also called Hamlet Castle because the hero and namesake of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* lives in this fortress. As soon as you leave the city's station, you come across a bronze statue of Hamlet on the left of the portal and a statue of his lover Ophelia on the right. The Danish sculptor Rudolph Tegner created the pair in 1937. In 1938, they were placed in a park near Marienlyst Castle, where Mayor Christensen wanted to establish a Hamlet Museum. For this purpose, a plan was made for three additional statues of the three most important characters of the play plus a statue of Shakespeare himself. However, only the two statues were ever realized. In 1980, they were removed from the park and stored in a depot. In 1983, they were placed in the city centre, and in 1996, they moved near the castle. Due to construction work, they had to move again in 2008, and this time, they were placed by the railway station, where they are still standing today.

1.4 Finland

Helsinki Central Station - the station with giants

In 1904, a competition to design a new station was announced in Helsinki. The winner was the young architect Eliel Saarinen (1873-1950) with his National-romantic design in neo-Romanesque style. However, this sparked a debate in which critics argued for more modern designs. Finally,

Saarinen radically re-worked his design towards a more modern and clearer Art Nouveau architecture.

The station has a 50 square meter waiting lounge, which was originally built specifically for the Russian Tsar. When the station was opened in 1919, Finland was no longer part of Russia. Therefore, the waiting lounge was reserved for the President of Finland. The station name was written in two languages: Finnish and Swedish. The clear design of the station, with a mighty clock tower, its pink granite, and the giant holding lamps still impress today. In 1923, its architect Eliel Saarinen emigrated to the US. His son, Eero Saarinen was famous for the construction of the TWA terminal at John F. Kennedy Airport in New York.

👉 In addition to the main station of the Helsinki, the Art Nouveau train station built in 1905 in the town of Kajaani has also been called the most beautiful train station in Finland.

Nokia - the unassuming station

The Nokia Company was founded in 1865 in the small town of Nokia, Finland. Once, the company manufactured paper products and rubber boots. Around 2010 more than 1 billion people worldwide used Nokia phones. Often, foreign tourists visiting Finland make a trek especially to Nokia. There, however, they are disappointed to find no high-tech station, but only a few platforms and no station building.

👉 There is also a Nokia station in Bochum, Germany, however, the Nokia factory there (after which the station was named) has been closed.

★ Once in a lifetime to Inari

In the summer of 1998, the movie *Trains'n'Roses (Zugvögel ...Einmal nach Inari* in German) was released in German cinemas. The director was Peter Lichtefeld. The protagonist Hannes (played by Joachim Krol) is a beer delivery van driver in Dortmund, Germany. He spends lots of time

thinking about railway timetables. He wants to participate in the railway timetable competition in the Northern Finnish town of Inari. Hannes packs his bags and applies for paid leave. Yet, a new boss arrives and does not want to let Hannes go. Hannes freaks out, knocks the boss out, and sets out on a train journey to the Arctic circle. The irony of the story: Inari, located on Lake Inari in Lapland, is in reality far from any railway line and therefore has no station. From the train station of Kemijärvi, where a train only arrives once a day, the protagonist must, therefore, continue traveling by bus to Inari. Lichteefeld supposedly got the idea for the film in 1994 on a return trip by train from Sodankylä to Helsinki. However, even in Sodankylä itself, there is no train station.

The train robbers of Humppila

In 1973, the station of Humppila burned down. Burglars had tried to break open the safe of the nearby post office. When they heard noises, they left in a hurry, but let the welding torches with open flames on the ground. Thus, not only did the post office burn down but also the neighboring railway station. Ten years later, a new function railway station building was finished.

The station of Kolari

The station of Kolari is the northernmost of the Finnish Railways. From here, there is more than 1,060 km of track to the main train station of Helsinki. Kolari lies in Lapland on the border with Sweden and is connected by a branch line to the border station of Tornio. Kolari's station building, which was finished in 2000, has a conic roof element that mimics the style of a Lappish hut. Lappish huts have such roofs, to allow smoke to escape. The station of Kolari is often busy in the winter season when many skiers from the south of the country arrive here.

★ Mannerheim's saloon car in Mikkeli