THE EXCITING NEW TRAVEL CONCEPT
TURNING DREAMS INTO REALITY

An interview with
HENRIK TIDEFJÄRD

Imagine you're hiking through the deep, enchanting forests of Sweden. You've got your best friends with you, and there's a mischievous glint in the air, a premonition that something thrilling is about to happen. Perhaps it's the atmospheric fog lingering below the treeline, or maybe it's the dense green foliage looming ominously either side; the surreal setting of myths and legends. All of a sudden, you stumble upon a great historical mansion, abandoned in the roaring twenties and somehow frozen in time; a glorious relic of the notorious party era of the century. Curious, you step inside and are immediately thrown back in time – your clothes are exchanged for 20's attire and, in a peculiar twist, there's a priest couple here to host you for dinner.

Sipping on a bee's knees cocktail, you explore the enigmatic manor, each room containing something more outrageous than the last, and exchange wild and outlandish stories with your hosts over a sumptuous three-course feast.

Now, wouldn't that be a travel story to bring home?

It's exactly this sense of adventure, and intrigue, that Henrik Tidefjärd is bringing to travel experiences with his new concept, Sverigeagenten. Already renowned as a tour guide to the rich and famous in Berlin, with his unconventional take on lifestyle tours, Henrik is known for showing stars like Tara Reid, Adele and Lourdes some of the most hidden and exclusive sights in the city. As he tells us, "I especially remember a young couple from Los Angeles who had booked me for some days in Berlin. I decided to showcase the more rough, authentic and edgy side of the city. I took them for Sunday lunch in a crazy bar where people lose their sense of time and reality – because the place runs 24 hours non-stop, a kind of Tarantino *From Dusk Till Dawn* experience. We ended the day in the world's smallest discotheque inside a converted telephone booth."

He is now heading back to Sweden to offer travellers to his home country the kind of unique and exceptional experiences you would only usually read about in travel magazines – those that border on the bizarre and altogether implausible.

"I love to create new things; it's my strength," he explains. "I'm a travel entrepreneur. I work in the luxury travel industry, and have very good connections with international top writers there. I've noticed after hearing their stories the past few years, the latest trend is *very* VIP. And that is connected to the propensity for story telling in the travel industry, where the travel agency is actually looking to create a theatre for its guests, something they can't wait to tell their friends and family about."

But Henrik's new travel concept is not just about creating a unique travel experience. "I also bring in people. I bring in famous entrepreneurs and celebrities, because you can never copy a person, a person's energy, their creative way of thinking. I didn't just want it to be like Berlin, where I was just creating bespoke tours for jetsetters and VIPs. After 23 years, I've established a big network of people from all kinds of industries, especially in Sweden. If I could pull together famous people – filmmakers, dancers, ultra-athletes, health gurus, ghosthunters, artists, famous chefs, gardeners – I could create a different kind of concept."

It is here where Henrik's idea really begins to take shape. Because ultimately, it's the telling of any good story that really brings it to life. And who better to tell Sweden's stories than its most celebrated visionaries and acclaimed entrepreneurs? Not only can they bring an element of behind-the-velvet-rope excitement to any travel experience, they also have some of the most fascinating professions and hobbies to share with guests. "I have about 15 story tellers who I'm going to launch with first, because it requires a lot of time to reach famous people," Henrik confesses. "Everyone is super busy and entrepreneurs are working 20 hours in the day. But they know me, so they hear me out. They know what I'm doing in Berlin and that I have a great target audience. They ask what I want from them, and I tell them – I want to do this company doing storytelling and that I think you are a great story teller.

Mogens Amstrup Jacobsen and Lena Malm are two entrepreneurial priests

"HENRIK IS KNOWN FOR SHOWING STARS LIKE TARA REID, ADELE AND LOURDES SOME OF THE MOST HIDDEN AND EXCLUSIVE SIGHTS IN THE CITY."

"They ask what they have to do – but that's what we have to find out. I have to sit down with them for about two or three hours and dig into their lives. You might automatically think a workshop with a filmmaker or producer is going to be about that, but they have hobbies too. It doesn't necessarily have to be about their profession. I want to think outside the box. Every person has a hobby, an interest, a passion for something, and I have to find a story that speaks to that passion. They have to love the idea. Most of the time, they are blind to their own talents. I have always been very good at stepping into people's lives and pulling out the best of them."

It's easy to get wrapped up in this enchanting world of celebrities and storytelling, one where travelling a country is about getting right down into the insular lives of those that live there. There's also something very authentic and captivating about the talent Henrik has for finding inspiration. The word unique is generally overused in the travel industry, but it is certainly applicable to workshops offered by Sverigeagenten – the majority of which are born of Henrik's unfailing intuition for crafting exceptional experiences.

"Most of the time I know the storytellers, so I already know what they're good at. For example, there's a filmmaker, and he loves doing cocktails – he's a mixologist actually – so I told him; you work in an interesting industry, you love cocktails and people love that! Why don't we do a mixology experience with you in a hidden location, or speakeasy-type place, or even at your private home, because that would be very exclusive."

Of course, ever the enterpriser, Henrik knows there's no one-size-fits-all for travel experiences. While some might be interested in mixing drinks with film moguls, there are others that would prefer spending time in the great outdoors. Another example of a workshop offered by the new company is led by Linda Vagnelind, who recently brought out a bestselling book called *Cold Bath* – the sort of design book you might display on your coffee table. The workshop involves participants taking one of her famous cold baths, followed by painting; because the idea of the bath is that it activates the brain and leads to greater creativity. "It's a good example of a workshop that combines her passion with what she's famous for, and she's also super funny and charismatic," Henrik adds.

"A truly great story is built on lots of emotions. The unforgettable emotions are often caused by extreme happiness, shocking moments, surprises, scary happenings, unexpected achievements or feeling loved . We never forget strong personalities with crazy stories."

But what about those that don't want that kind of experience at all? Those that believe travelling is about discovering a place all on your own? Well, Henrik has them covered too. "There are two categories. There are the actual story tellers themselves and then you have storytelling locations; places that are so unique that they tell their own story. The more adventurous and daring you are, the better the story will be to tell your friends and family once you are home."

Andreas Österlund with his ghost hunter team

Cold bath workshop with the artist Linda Vagnelind

Launching early 2021, there's no end to the unconventional and remarkable experiences offered by Sverigeagenten. The featured stories are simply a way of explaining the concept, but every story can have a different beginning, middle or ending, depending on the individual requirements of the client. Additionally, every experience is undertaken by a single group or individual only, never mixed.

Henrik explains; "Featured stories are ready-to-go packages to which adjustments can be made, and of course there will also be travel activities on request, which are based on the wishes and desires of the client." These itineraries are completely bespoke, but will inherit much of the same characteristics of featured stories; they will be exclusive, unforgettable and of course, out-of-the-ordinary.

Sverigeagenten: Fast facts

What is it? A unique travel company offering storytelling experiences throughout Sweden, led by celebrities and entrepreneurs. For example; go on a ghost hunting adventure with Andreas Österlund, one of Sweden's most respected mediums, and leading paranormal investigator at The LaxTon. You'll head to one of the most exclusive haunted venues in the country, not usually open to the public, where even the biggest sceptics have been known to experience the supernatural. Anything is possible if you open your senses…

Where is it? Throughout Stockholm and Sweden, with a focus on going off-the-beaten-track. Sverigeagenten can create bespoke itineraries for clients to any location, while featured stories usually take place in a set location.

How much does it cost? As every tour is bespoke, prices depend on a variety of factors. The focus is on high-end exclusivity and opening doors, which is likely to cost more than your average package holiday.

Who can do it? Anyone who is curious about meeting a high profile professional or celebrity and learn from him/her. In particular, high-end travellers who want to collect an experience with similar minded people.

When does it launch? The anticipated launch will be in early 2021. Watch this space!

What the story tellers had to say

Trend Stefan: I am super passionate about my home town. Stockholm is such a cultural hub where people like Robyn, Fredrik Ekelund and Acne are born. I get to show my hidden gems and secrets –and talk about how it all started. I love to entertain guests so Henrik's exclusive storytelling concept is very fun.

Linda Vagnelind: Sverigeagenten is a brilliant and genuine concept with a collection of creative people, hand-picked by the social travel guru, Henrik. You will never have a boring moment if Henrik comes up with a cool idea, and that is why I love to be part of his new entrepreneurial travel agency.

Måns Herngren: I've been exploring the infamous scene of Berlin together with Henrik and Berlinagenten throughout many years. His curiosity and lack of prejudice always takes us to exciting places and people. When he asked me to be a storyteller in Stockholm I didn't hesitate to join his entourage of Swedish creatives. It's going to be fantastic to share my stories with people!

TREND STEFAN

LINDA VAGNELIND

MÅNS HERNGREN