

Doors of Old Town Stockholm

by Terry LeBlanc

Join me in a small journey on the island of Old Town (Gamla Stan), Stockholm.
“Travel” with it from your favorite living room chair, or take it with you as a guide when you travel to Stockholm.

This ***Wander & Discover*** ebook leads you to places off the beaten track. Along the way, there are more treasures to be discovered.



An English printed version of ***Doors of Old Town Stockholm*** is available.
Order directly from Terry LeBlanc or through shops in Stockholm. [CLICK FOR INFO.](#)

You can also surf to www.leblanc.se/doorways.

A Wander & Discover © Guide



Door locations in time sequence

1 Prästgatan 38 • 1500s



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2 Staffan Sasses gränd 6 • ca 1630



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3 Västerlånggatan 64 • 1660



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4 Bollhusgränd 3A • 1635



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5 Själagårdsgatan 3 • ca 1643



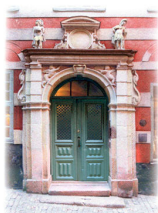
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13 Österlånggatan 49 • 1936



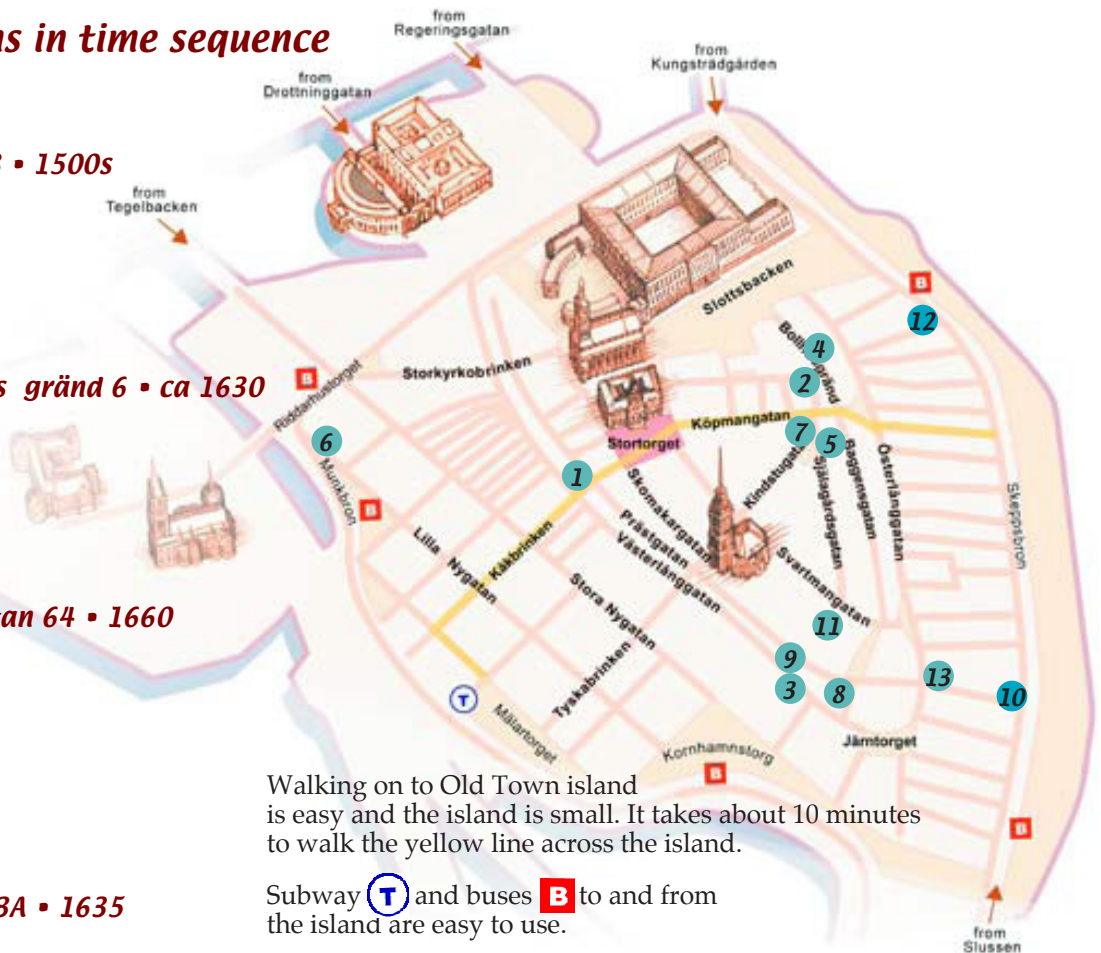
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Walking on to Old Town island is easy and the island is small. It takes about 10 minutes to walk the yellow line across the island.

Subway **T** and buses **B** to and from the island are easy to use.

You can also come by car, but parking is limited and quite expensive.



Why was this book written?

It all began with a search for a small handy English book or map that would guide my guests around the Old Town (Gamla Stan) of Stockholm. I wanted to share the treasure of this island where Stockholm began in the 1200s.

I found maps, but they were full of advertisements. I also found several beautiful books, but they were large and expensive. This led to my first decision to produce a simple illustrated map with some descriptive text.

As I worked on this map, I discovered that the old island was fascinating. I found more and more interesting architectural details. I also began to hunt for information. The map was the beginning of the **Wander & Discover** series.

Artwork of architectural motifs on the island became my primary interest. Other projects developed: note cards, posters and the production of giclée prints of my Old Town art. Then the idea of a book began to evolve. The decision was made to focus on some of the doors of the island. Choice was also driven by doors that had history or know stories. They are chosen and used as a means of looking over the centuries—from Medieval to modern times.

Dates are shown with each door title. They can refer to known dates of construction (within a few years) or to doorway parts that can be dated archaeologically, as in the case of Staffan Sasses gränd 6. I found snippets of historical information that were interesting and thought that others might enjoy them.

You will be captivated by the charm of Old Town and I am sure that you will discover much more than the doors.

Enjoy your visit to Old Town Stockholm!

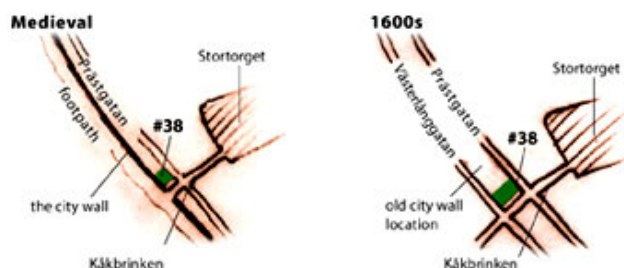


The 13th-century island superimposed on today's island.strandlinjer.

As I looked for interesting architectural details in Old Town, I noticed this well-preserved many-holed door. There is no opening in the wall. It's clearly from older times, well designed and crafted. What had it been?

My search led me to the discovery of *källarhals*, which literally translates to cellar-throat—a way to or from a cellar. It dates from Medieval times, probably the late 1500s. There are three other *källarhals* in Old Town, but they are not easily seen.

The purpose of these doors was to have quick access to a cellar. Supplies could easily be unloaded, such as wood for heating. They were also used to throw out household rubbish. It's easy to imagine how this looked and smelled just beside the entrance. Use of these cellar openings was eventually outlawed. Besides the disturbance from the rubbish, people and traffic were unable to get by during unloading.



Prästgatan 38 • 1500s



In Medieval times, Prästgatan 38 was a small building against the city wall. There was a footpath outside the wall. In the early 1600s, the footpath became Västerlånggatan. At sometime in the 1600s, No. 38 was reconstructed to span the two streets.

This doorway, considered to be the oldest on the island, is hidden away in Staffan Sasse's Lane. It's called Rosenporten, which means Rose doorway. Why? The answer is connected to Staffan Sasse, a German skipper who led a fleet in the service of Gustav Wasa.

Sasse's coat of arms included roses, and the upper corners of the doorway have a rose motif. But the connection could be weak. Sasse did not live here but in a property at the entrance to the lane. And known dates don't make sense. Archaeological studies dated some elements to 1585, and Sasse died in 1540. The same studies suggest that the doorway was put together from fragments of a fireplace. Could they have come from Sasse's house that was on the corner? We'll probably never know.



Throughout the centuries, street names were often connected with people who lived there—so names changed quite often. For several centuries, the lane was called Ignatius Lane, but that's another story.

This sketch is from a photo I found in a 1915 reference book. It shows a somewhat different use of the space within the portal. The door opening was partially closed. It seems to be walled up and plastered to the left and above. Another puzzle.

Staffan Sassesgränd 6 • 1585



Only one part of this building can be dated to the 1630s—the beautiful stone portal.

This doorway was created after the devastating fire of 1625, which was a turning point for Stockholm construction practices. Medieval towns and cities were predominately built of wood, and fire often ravaged them. There were many major fires. Some destroyed a great deal of past history. An early guild house burned in 1330. In another guild house fire in 1419, all the city archives were lost. Records speak of many more destructive fires. In 1625, an extensive fire destroyed most of the southwestern part of the island. This must have been the last straw for Stockholm authorities, because they decided that all future construction on the island had to be in stone. This is why so much remains from the 1600s.

In 1907, renovations were made to Västerlång-gatan 64. Any traces of the past were taken away except for this portal. It

is characteristic of the style of the 1600s. S shapes and curved ornamentation often decorated the outer edges of the pillars and vaulted structures.

True, the wooden door is a modern replica of the original, and the window within the archway is surely a modern interpretation—but the doorway retains a feeling of Old Town.

Västerlånggatan 64 • ca 1630



The extent of the 1625 fire.*

This street name translates to Ball Court Lane. The name originates from a sports hall that stood at the start of the street: the corner to the west and closest to the castle. The hall is drawn on maps from the 1630s. No one knows what type of ball game was played there.



The entrance at Bollhusgränd 3A leads to apartments. This sketch is from an 1800 photograph. It shows that earlier, No. 3A was an open passageway. It led to inner rooms in which a variety of activities and enterprises took place: a café, a bookshop, and a hostel for travelers, in which 8 – 10 people slept in the same room.

This property belonged to the Banér family during the 16th and 17th centuries. Privy Councilor Per Banér was the owner in the 1630s. The stonemason Banér commissioned is unknown.

Some consider it to be clumsily put together, not in perfect symmetry. Did the land settle? Was the renovation work faulty? In any event, the two sleepy lions looking down from the lintel, the faces that peer at us, and all the sculptured ornamental effects have enormous charm.

The coat of arms of Per Banér and his wife Hebbila Fleming appear centered above the doorway and also above a back doorway located at Österlånggatan 2.

Bollhusgränd 3A • 1635



Records trace this building back to the 1400s, but again, fires probably destroyed most of the information about it.

Renovations were made in 1643. A floor was added to the existing building, and a German-Dutch Renaissance portal was added. It is the work of Johan Wendelstam, a stonemason and immigrant from Germany, who was becoming a prominent artisan. His workshop produced many of the doorways of the 1600s. He was also involved in the development of the first stonemason's guild.

Renovation and expansion took place in the 1820s. The structure became six stories with the façade that we see today. The lower portion of the doorway was changed at that time. The top lintel portion is all that remains of Wendelstam's

work. The cartouche shows the year 1643 and the initials of the owner and his wife, AG and BSD. No one seems to know who the owners were, but you can see that they liked birds.



No. 3 faces into a lovely park called Brända Tomten (*burned site*). This area was named after a fire in 1728. Instead of rebuilding, it was decided to leave an open space so that carriages could turn. Today it's one of the island's breathing spaces, where you can sit under a magnificent chestnut tree.

Själagårdsgatan 3 • ca 1643



This building was a gatehouse that belonged to the palace that still stands at Stora Nygatan 2. Admiral Erik Ryning created the entire block in the mid-1600s.

Munkbron 1 • 1644

The Atomena block was given to Admiral Erik Ryning in 1641. It was compensation for relinquishing four buildings that stood in the way of the reconstruction of Stora Nygatan. He might have been pleased until he found out that he had to demolish all the structures that stood on Atomena—a part of the old city wall, the Greyfriars Tower and his four buildings—at his own expense.

Ryning received some compensation by being able to use the stone material from the old wall for his building project. Walk around the Atomena block to see the splendid German-Dutch-style palace with its impressive entrance on Stora Nygatan, its architectural ornamentation, and elegant iron ties.



These buildings stand on land that began to be filled in and reclaimed in the 13th century. The fill wasn't the best, and settlement has occurred over the centuries. This is obvious when you look at the side buildings from Riddartorget and Stora Gråmunkegränd. There are many irregularities in the windows and the doors.

Renovations in the 1970s have been extensive. The entire block is reinforced, and the buildings have been restored to their former glory.

Throughout the centuries this stately doorway clearly indicated wealthy middle-class owners from the 1600s. The doorway is pleasant to behold and is the work of Johan Wendelstam, the stonemason already mentioned for work done on this street.

But when renovations were made in the 1900s, a treasure was unfolded—a well-preserved building from the 1600s.

This corner property was filled with small buildings until 1658 when a prominent burgher, Hans Bartels, bought it. He was a merchant, a builder, and an owner of many properties—more than 30. Early records and descriptions indicate that Bartels and his son Lydert had decorated the exterior and interior of the building.

During the centuries that followed, various owners renovated the building, and experts thought that all was lost. But luckily the decorations were not destroyed, they were only covered in a variety of ways. In 1969 the building underwent extensive renovation and many surprises surfaced. Hidden decorations saw daylight, and evidence of the early exterior design was discovered. This led to exterior restoration in the pink and gray style that we see today.

Själagårdsgatan 2 • 1650



The interior treasures that unfolded include: a Medieval cellar, a variety of well-preserved pieces of inlaid carpentry work, decoratively painted ceilings, and ornate stucco ceilings.

This Baroque sandstone portal is dated through studies to 1656 when Welam Leuhusen was the owner and mayor. The style of the doorway fits with others in this period, with its scrolled ornamentation and structure. Experts believe that figures were standing at the top of each of the columns. The Rococo-styled doors were probably inserted during renovation in the 1700s.

Prästgatan 78 • 1656

A bronze plaque on the wall to the left of this doorway states that Carl Larsson, the famous and much-loved Swedish artist, was born here in 1853. Larsson's parents opened a temperance hostel in this building. The enterprise was short lived, and the family was evicted. In his memoirs, Larsson refers to this childhood time and indicates that there was nothing cozy about living at No. 78, because at that time the area was a slum.



One could guess that Larsson's paintings were a way for him to cope with his unhappy memories, because they depict a happy home life that is full of light—which is what he and his wife created for themselves.

To the left of the building, you'll find Mårten Trotzig's Lane. It's the smallest lane in Old Town, only 90 centimeters wide at the top. In earlier times, there were several lanes of this type, which were called stair lanes. This is the only one remaining.



Västerlånggatan 65 • 1660

Many German merchants immigrated to Stockholm in the 1600s. One was Peter Hanssen, a Holstein clothing merchant and superintendent of the German church on the island.

The plaque over the doorway tells of Hanssen's ownership. The year indicated is 1660 and in the bottom half his insignia is encircled with his and his wife's initials: PH and ASH. The inscription states: "To God alone the Glory".

Hanssen was quite wealthy and important. He wanted the entrance to his home to convey these facts. It certainly comes across as big, magnificent, and commanding.

It is carved of red sandstone and is again thought to be the work of Johan Wendelstam. The lintel has similarities to other Wendelstam work. Take a look at the one at Stortorget 20.

Hanssen was also a generous man and wanted to be remembered. He donated a grandiose pulpit to the German church. It's still there today.

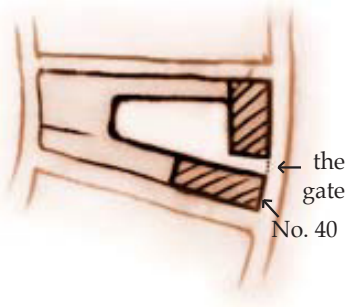


A simple half-timbered building stood on this land in the 1600s. In 1693, Roland Eliäson bought the property.

Though it is not recorded, the design of this building is attributed to Nicodemus Tessin the Younger, the city's most prominent architect at that time.

Little is known about the people who lived behind this impressive doorway. But when there were disputes, interesting details appear in recorded minutes from meetings. It would seem that a lengthy dispute took place between Eliäson and the director of the Customs House next door.

It had to do with a gate that led to the courtyard behind both buildings. Eliäson built a wooden gate to keep out the general public. The director insisted that it be torn down because it was not fireproof. Eliäson complied and built a gate mostly of brick so that it would be safer from fire. This did not satisfy the director. So this time, Eliäson built more of a wall, with a small opening that only allowed people to pass.



The dispute ended when the king ordered the wall to be removed. Eliäson did this and decided to move to another of his residences at Järntorget.

Skeppsbron 40 • ca 1698



This entrance leads into a courtyard. The house to the left is the Ehrenstrahlska House built in the 1600s by David Klöcker, later ennobled to Ehrenstrahl.

David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl came from a simple background, the son of a German shoemaker. His first work in Sweden as a Swedish chancellery scribe seems to have connected him to royalty. It is not known why, but the royal family became his patron while he studied art. He became an acclaimed Baroque painter. His work includes: royal family portraits, large canvases that are in the old Stockholm cathedral (Storkyrkan), and a magnificent ceiling painting in Riddarhuset.



It's natural to look for Ehrenstrahl's initials in the decorative iron grating above the entrance.

However, no E is found—only PHFMG.

These are the initials of Peter Hinrich Fuhrmann and his wife, Margareta Götz, who bought the property in the 1750s. Fuhrmann was a wealthy restaurant owner and a wine specialist for the royal household.

Fuhrmann was very generous to the German community. He bequeathed the house to the German church in 1772. He also created a foundation that financed the Fuhrman School of German. There are commemorative plaques in German.

Svartmangatan 20-22 • 1757



I've jumped forward to the 20th century to show the last two doorways. They are totally new, beautifully done, and I feel that the architects succeeded in blending them into the island—although some controversy surrounds them.

A structure from the 1650s was demolished in 1901 and replaced with this bank building. The architect Erik Josephson created the building and this magnificent doorway. We are looking at a completely new doorway, but it feels like Old Town. The sculptured ornamentation is reminiscent of Wendelstam's work—as seen at Stortorget 20 and Själagårdsgatan 2. The doors repeat the Rococo style found in other places on the island. The architect retained the style of Old Town and managed to add a new elegance. I really admire this doorway.



And who was chosen to adorn the doorway in such a prominent position? The Hermes figure with its tall winged hat and lace cravat represents Jonas Alströmer (1685-1761), a successful Swedish textile industrialist.

Can we guess that the bank chose Alströmer because of his success in the development of Swedish industry? He had encouraged industrialists to

understand the value of producing and selling their wares in Sweden—keeping money in the country.

Skeppsbron 8 • 1901



This doorway is the entrance to an office building at Österlånggatan 49, which is connected to the Customs House. Walk around the block and see the main building at Skeppsbron 38, which Erik Palmstedt designed in the 1780s.

There was a great deal of uproar when this doorway was finished and the sculpture put in place. The sculpture's central motif, the old customs shield, which consists of a lion rampant, was acceptable. But the two figures flanking the shield, a naked man and a mermaid, were the cause of the commotion. There were scathing comments in the evening tabloids, from which I shall spare you.

The sculptor, Stig Blomberg, explained these figures as symbols of customs on land and at sea. *Svenska Dagbladet*, one of Stockholm's top newspapers, responded to his explanation with a tongue-in-cheek poem. The Swedish is very cleverly written. The word alluding to customs officials (*publikan*) was used in Roman times to refer to custom officers who were disliked. The poem seems to poke fun at the sculptor and those in the Customs House. I'm not sure the translation does it justice, but here it is.

On Österlånggatan it is for us a shameful insult
to be exhibited nude on land and sea.

Customs officials never show themselves so publicly,
no, not even at home on the darkest nights.

Österlånggatan 49 • 1936



About Terry LeBlanc



The author, Terry LeBlanc, is an American/Swede that has lived in Stockholm for about 24 years. Her studio and home in a suburb of Stockholm. She has worked as an illustrator, a designer and an artist—and has now begun to write.

The medium of the door portraits in this book is called mixed media. Base images are digitally created from Terry's digital photography. Then the images are further developed by hand using colored pens, pencils, and watercolor.

Visit www.gicleestockholm.com to see Terry's artwork.

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