



Photo by Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images

## Mamma mia – what a museum!



**No formal introduction is really needed for the pop group ABBA. We adults were fed ABBA in our mother’s milk. But what about children? Can they have fun at a museum dedicated to a pop group who made their breakthrough eons ago? The kids patrol pay a visit to ABBA The Museum to check things out.**

“Where’s all the stuff?” asks the youngest of the bunch, as soon as we reach the entrance of the ABBA museum in Royal Djurgården park. Expectations are high. The kids patrol consists of brothers Isak, age 10, Noah, age 8 and Liam, age 6. They also brought along their little brother Joel, age 3 1/2. In fact, the fun started even before we went in. Out in the yard in front of the museum they all had a ball sticking their heads into holes in life-sized cut outs of the group. Laughing loudly, the older kids took photos nonstop in various wacky constellations with their mobile phones. At the entrance, we are met by Sophie Larsson, who works at the museum. She explains how everything works and what we can expect. You see, the ABBA museum is no ordinary museum. It’s built on audience engagement and a participatory culture, promoting visitor interaction and experience. The idea, quite simply, is to feel like the fifth member of ABBA. “Cool,” says Noah, whose eyes gleam with excitement when he finds out that the entrance ticket has a bar code that works as a key to try out different stuff. And that a lot of the activities are actually recorded and available via the museum’s website. What could be better?!?

### Super fun in the music studio

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# ABBA<sup>®</sup> THE MUSEUM



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The first part of the museum deals with childhood and early years of the four ABBA members, an area that the kids patrol passes through pretty fast. But the noise level picks up when we get to Stikkan Andersson's Polar Music Studios. "Check this out Liam, there's a mixer!" Noah shouts in delight. You can compete mixing different songs. Even more fun is when the guys find an audition room with various "song booths." Here it's all about singing as well as you can in order to be selected as the fifth member of ABBA. Isak throws himself into his own pretty special version of "Mamma Mia," and when he starts inserting words like "poop" and "fart" into the lyrics, the brothers laugh along. "Did people really sing in Swedish at the Song Contest before?" wonders Isak, when he hears the Swedish version of the winning Waterloo entry. The actual ABBA museum is largely underground and entering the museum is like stepping into your own little fantasy world. It's a labyrinth of mazes. Rooms open up here and there, and the lack of windows really shuts out reality. Suddenly you find yourself in a disco, glittering with lights and sequins. Another room houses a cinema, where Björn Ulvaeus tells a pop story about a music group called...you've got it...ABBA. The kids listen to it attentively at first – a rest from all that dancing isn't bad – but half way through they're ready to move. What else is there to explore?

## An ABBA with a pacifier!

As said, interactive is the name of the game if the kids get to decide. Rooms with a lot of text, clothes and stuff are quickly ploughed through – except for the room with the 'Arrival helicopter' from the classic album cover of course. This is absolute best part of Lil' Joel's visit. You get to climb into the helicopter and it has real controls. Another kids patrol favourite is a room where ABBA avatars mirror your dance steps – sort of like when you play "wii". What's more, the avatars take on your face, becoming a sort of hybrid of you and ABBA. Things reach a climax when the youngest brother gets stuck on an image and the dancing ABBA figure suddenly has a red pacifier in its mouth. The others howl with laughter. And who doesn't dream about being on stage, singing in front of a cheering audience? Naturally you can do that here! Isak, the oldest kids patrol member, as well as big brother and entertainer, gets his fill, performing Dancing Queen alongside holograms of ABBA. The brothers applaud wildly and decide to do a group performance. Time flies in Abba land and suddenly a security guard comes up and kindly tells us that the museum will be closing shortly. But that's actually not a problem. The kids patrol want to get home quickly to check out all their cool downloads online.

## Words: Åsa Fridman

Isak, age 10: The hologram room was the most fun. And the ABBA figure with a red pacifier in its mouth was totally goofy. Being able to download your recordings at home is awesome. I'm going to post mine on Facebook,

Noa, age 8: Best was all the cool stuff you get to do with your ticket. Scanning and stuff – so much fun. And that you can download and save all your recordings.

Liam, age 6: Everything was fun! Being able to play outside is also cool.

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