



**STOCKHOLM** — The long-awaited museum dedicated to the '70s Swedish group ABBA finally opened its doors last week. **ABBA The Museum** shares the L-shaped building with the **Swedish Music Hall of Fame**, and History of Swedish Popular Music. Its on the island of Djurgården, a short bus or tram ride from the city center, but only a five minute walk from [Skansen](#) and the famous [Vasa Museum](#).

Members of ABBA were on hand at the dedication and opening of the museum which has the full backing of the group. Much of the material on display is from the group members' own private collections.

The Swedish platform-booted and sparkly supertroupers stormed the pop world between 1972 and 1983 and gave us the hits 'Dancing Queen', 'Summernight City' and 'Knowing me, Knowing you' among many others. It's also worth remembering that even though ABBA split up 30 years ago, *Mamma Mia!*, the movie featuring their music, is the most successful movie-musical ever, with almost 50 million people having seen the same named production.

This place is unique, ABBA fan or not. Together with the Swedish Music Hall of Fame, with history from the early 1920s to today, the content and activities in the museum put the group's musical achievements and influences in a historical context and helps to explain 'ABBA The Phenomenon' a little better.

—[www.visitsweden.com](http://www.visitsweden.com)

## Everyone in Iceland is related; but how closely?

For the last ten years, Icelanders have been able to access a genealogical database, called Íslendingabók, containing information about the 720,000 or so island-born inhabitants, dating back more than 1,200 years. The "Book of Icelanders" is available, free of charge, to all Icelanders via its website. Two-thirds of the nation's current population of 320,000 have applied for access to the database, which allows individuals to easily trace their lineage and determine how closely related they are to others on the island.

Íslendingabók is a collaboration project between deCODE genetics, a research company in the field of medical genetics, and Friðrik Skúlason, an anti-virus software entrepreneur. The project's goal is to trace all known family connections between Icelanders from the time of the settlement of Iceland to present times and register the genealogical information in a database.

Now, a new smartphone app enables two people to bump their phones together to quickly and easily determine if they are a little too closely related, and should remain "just friends." The app, ÍslendingaApp, was the winner of a contest amongst University of Iceland students, sponsored by deCODE genetics, so that the Íslendingabók could be accessed on the go, where people meet, to help avoid any uncomfortable situations.

—from [www.islendingaapp.is](http://www.islendingaapp.is)  
—and [www.newsoficealand.com](http://www.newsoficealand.com)

## Check Mate, Norway.

Twenty-two year-old **Magnus Carlsen** is a young man from **Norway**, who chess-great Gary Kasparov says has the ability to reignite interest in Chess.

Magnus became a grandmaster at the rare age of 13 years, 148 days, making him at that time the second youngest grandmaster in history, (although he has since become the third youngest). At the age of 19 years, 32 days, he became the youngest chess player in history to be ranked world No. 1.

This January, Carlsen reached a FIDE rating of 2861, thus surpassing Garry Kasparov's rating record of 2851 (set in 1999). Carlsen won the Candidates Tournament that took place in March–April, thus earning the right to challenge World Champion Viswanathan Anand in the World Chess Championship, going on right now, in Sandnes, Norway, a 10-player round-robin tournament.

Known for his attacking style as a teenage prodigy, Carlsen later developed into a more universal player. He does not focus on opening preparation as much as other top players, and plays a variety of openings, making it harder for opponents to prepare against him. Kasparov has said that Carlsen has a way of strangling an opponent.

Carlsen was born in **Tønsberg, Norway**, on 30 November 1990, to Sigrun Øen and Henrik Albert Carlsen, both engineers by profession. The family spent one year in **Espoo, Finland**, and then in Brussels, Belgium, and in 1998 returned to **Norway** and settled in **Lommedalen, Bærum**. They later moved to **Haslum**. Carlsen showed an aptitude for intellectual challenges at a young age: At two years, he could solve 50-piece jigsaw puzzles; and at four, enjoyed assembling lego sets with instructions intended for children aged 10–14. His father taught him to play chess at the age of five, although he initially showed little interest in the game. As a child, he also enjoyed football, skiing, and reading Donald Duck comics.

—from [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org)  
—see an [interview CharlieRose.com](http://interview.CharlieRose.com)



## V I K I N G S

"**Vikings**" is a new scripted television show airing Sunday evenings on The History Channel. The drama follows the adventures of Ragnar Lothbrok, the greatest hero of his age, and his band of Viking brothers and his family, as he rises to become King of the Viking tribes. As well as being a fearless warrior, Ragnar embodies the Norse traditions of devotion to the gods. Legend has it that he was a direct descendant of Odin, the god of war and warriors.

—[www.IMDb.com](http://www.IMDb.com)

However, critics have pointed out historical inaccuracies in the series' depiction of Viking society. These include a portrayal of Viking government (in the person of Earl Haraldson)

as autocratic rather than essentially democratic; the Vikings' supposed ignorance of the existence of the British Isles; and the use of the death penalty instead of outlawry (skoggangr) as a punishment for heinous crimes. Also questioned are character clothing, and a depiction of a temple at Uppsala as a stave church when records indicate that it was not.

—[www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

Midway through its first season, and already renewed for a second, "Vikings" does take some dramatic liberties. You may well enjoy this blood-thirsty adventure, but while you're watching, be sure to take many things you see in it with a historical grain of salt.