Which ferry should we take from Germany back to Denmark? Oh, it's this one, except for that one word I don't understand

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Writing that entry last Friday reminded me that I never did share my stories of that emergency vacation, save for a cryptic list of learnings. Here's a little story about the ferry crossing. Part of the trip involved driving from Copenhagen (*København*) to Munich (*München*), which means taking a ferry. (It's faster than driving down the peninsula.) Realizing that we would also have to take the ferry on the return trip on Saturday, we grabbed a ferry schedule during a rest stop in Denmark. What we didn't realize until it was time for the return trip was that the schedule was (naturally) in Danish, a language none of us could read or speak. As the closest thing in the car to an expert in northern European languages (it wasn't a close vote), I was called upon to do my best to puzzle out the timetable. The choice was between the Puttgarten–Rødby ferry and the Rostock–Gedser ferry. If we could make it, the Rostock–Gedser ferry would have been a better choice since it is a more direct route. I was able to decode that the Puttgarten–Rødby ferry ran every half hour around the clock, whereas the Rostock–Gedser ferry stopped running at 11:30pm. (This sounds like a no-brainer, except that the Puttgarten–Rødby timetable didn't give the actual run times; it just said *afgang hver halve time, sejltid 0:45*.) We consulted the map, estimated our driving time, and calculated that if we stayed focused and didn't dawdle at the rest breaks, we could make the 11:30pm Rostock–Gedser ferry. In the fine print of the schedule I was able to translate that the late-night Rostock–Gedser ferry run does not operate on ... um ... *lørdag*. What's *lørdag*? We decided to play it safe and go to Puttgarten. It was a good call, because *lørdag* is Danish (and as I later learned, Swedish) for Saturday. **Bonus ferry story**: After paying the fare on the Danish side for the morning crossing into Germany, the toll booth agent quickly mumbled, "*Syv*, *sieben*, seven" as we pulled away. He said it so quickly and unexpectedly, the English-speaking people in the car didn't hear the "seven" since they tuned out what the guy said once they determined that it wasn't English. I was paying more attention, figuring there was an off-chance the agent would speak German to us, and I picked out the *sieben*, and then upon mentally rewinding and replaying what he said, I also recognized the "seven." But why did he keep saying "seven" in various languages? As we reached the waiting area, we figured it out: Because he was telling us to line up in row

number seven. **Bonus ferry storylet**: As we waited for the ferry, I noticed that the car behind us had a sticker saying that it was purchased from… a town just a few miles from where I grew up! How the heck did a car from a small town in New Jersey end up in Denmark? We asked the people standing next to the car—it was a nice day, so people stood outside—and they explained that they bought it from somebody who moved to Denmark from the States, and he brought his car with him. Strange coincidences abound.

Of course, an even stranger coincidence would have been if I happened to have known the original owner. (Not the case here.)

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