

# Getting Started

Travel in Sweden is extremely easy, and a bit of advance planning can help preserve your hip pocket. Booking ahead for accommodation and transport within the country will cut costs a lot; and in the major cities, look into discount travel cards before you leave (see p314). Once you arrive, you will find the cities easy to get around and well serviced by public transport, with almost everywhere accessible to wheelchairs.

## WHEN TO GO

Despite its northern location in Europe, Sweden isn't as cold as you might expect. The south has a year-round temperate climate and summer can be quite warm in the north. Sweden is at its best during summer and autumn (late May to September), but hikers and campers may wish to avoid the peak of the mosquito season (June and July).

Due to the country's high latitude, daylight hours are long in summer. Malmö gets 17½ hours of daylight at midsummer, and Sundsvall has constant light during the second half of June, but you have to travel north of the Arctic Circle to experience the true 'midnight sun' – in Kiruna, the sun remains above the horizon for 45 days, from 31 May to 14 July.

Swedes are big on holidays, and even Stockholm shuts down for two or three days around Christmas and midsummer, so plan accordingly. Most Swedes take their vacations from late June to mid-August, so hostels are crowded, but this is also when most hotels offer discounts of up to 50%.

Travel in winter is somewhat restricted and requires some planning as well as serious winter clothing, but there are good opportunities for activities like skiing, dogsledding and snowmobiling. The big cities are in full swing all year, but the smaller towns almost go into hibernation when the temperatures begin to drop (the notable exceptions being popular ski resort towns like Åre, and Jukkasjärvi, home to the Ice Hotel).

## COSTS & MONEY

Sweden has a very good standard of living, which means the travel experience is generally high quality but it does tend to be expensive. Careful planning in advance can help reduce costs.

During the low-price summer period (June through until August), if you stay in a midrange hotel (which usually includes a huge buffet breakfast), eat a daily special for lunch and have an evening meal at a moderately

See Climate Charts (p312) for more information.

### DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...

- Your ID, passport and visa (if applicable)
- Industrial-strength mosquito repellent in summer
- Good walking shoes
- Layers of warm clothing, just in case
- A swimsuit – again, just in case
- A map of Stockholm's tunnelbana (metro)
- A taste for pickled fish
- A fast-acting liver for *snaps*

## TOP TENS

### Must-Read Books by Swedish Authors

One of the best ways to get inside the collective mind of a country is to read its top authors. Below is a selection of some of the greatest and most popular works by Swedish authors.

- *The Long Ships*, Frans Gunnar Bengtsson (1954)
- *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*, Selma Lagerlöf (1906–07)
- *Pippi Longstocking*, Astrid Lindgren (1945)
- *Merab's Beauty*, Torgny Lindgren (1982)
- *The Emigrants* series, Wilhelm Moberg (1949–59)
- *Faceless Killers*, Henning Mankell (1989)
- *Markings*, Dag Hammarskjöld (1963–64)
- *Röda Rummet*, August Strindberg (1879)
- *The Evil*, Jan Guillou (1981)
- *Hash*, Torgny Lindgren (2004)

### Favourite Swedish Films

Sweden has long been an important force in the film industry. Listed here are some defining works by Swedish filmmakers.

- *The Seventh Seal*, Ingmar Bergman (1956)
- *I Am Curious: Yellow*, Vilgot Sjöman (1967)
- *All Things Fair*, Bo Widerberg (1995)
- *Lilja 4-Ever*, Lukas Moodysson (2002)
- *Songs from the Second Floor*, Roy Andersson (2000)
- *The Emigrants*, Jan Troell (1971)
- *My Life as a Dog*, Lasse Hallström (1985)
- *Ondskan*, Mikael Häfström (2003)
- *Kops*, Josef Fares (2003)
- *Daybreak*, Björn Runge (2004)

### Ten Swedish Festivals

If your trip coincides with one of these important annual festivals, don't miss it – the following list is a good sampling of traditional celebrations throughout Sweden (for more events, see p315).

- Kiruna Snow Festival, late January (p315)
- Vasaloppet, first Sunday in March (p266)
- Valborgsmässaöafton (Walpurgis Night), 30 April (p315)
- Swedish National Day, 6 June (p315)
- Midsummer, first Saturday after 21 June (p316)
- Stockholm Jazz Festival, 19–23 July (p86)
- Medieval Week (Visby), early August (p154)
- Stockholm Pride, first week in August (p86)
- Stockholm International Film Festival, mid- to late-November (p86)
- Jokkmokk Winter Market, first Thursday, Friday and Saturday in February (p304)

priced restaurant, you can expect to spend Skr800 per person per day if you're doubling up and Skr1200 if you're travelling alone. Staying in hostels, making your own breakfast, eating the daily special at lunchtime in a restaurant, and picking up supermarket items for dinner will probably cost you Skr350 per day. The cheapest way to visit Sweden is to camp in the woods for free, eat supermarket food, hitchhike and visit only the attractions that have free admission – this will cost less than Skr100 per day. If you stay in commercial camping grounds and prepare your own meals you can squeak by on around Skr250 per person per day. If there are a few of you, sharing car rental for a weekend in order to see some out-of-the-way places is worth considering (some petrol stations offer small cars for as little as Skr200 per day). Self-service pumps that take banknotes or credit cards are slightly cheaper, though many won't accept foreign credit cards.

## TRAVEL LITERATURE

Good books on travelling or living in Sweden are few and far between. Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* records the pioneering feminist author's journey to Scandinavia in 1795 in search of happiness. It's a classic of early English Romanticism and well worth a read.

The reliably hilarious Bill Bryson predictably had an entertainingly difficult time of it in Sweden, as described in two chapters of his European travel book *Neither Here Nor There*.

There are also a couple of good views of Sweden from within, including Selma Lagerlöf's *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*. This creative account of the country's history and geography is still taught in Swedish classrooms.

Get a taste of a thematic journey in the remotest parts of northern Sweden in Torgny Lindgren's wonderful novel *Hash*. Two odd characters set off on a motorcycle in search of the perfect, life-altering pot of hash (*pölsan*), a sort of potted-meat dish traditionally prepared in the rural north.

## INTERNET RESOURCES

Many Swedish towns and organisations have websites in both Swedish and English (although the English pages are often less detailed). Hotels, restaurants and museums throughout the country can also frequently be found online. The following websites are useful for preplanning:

**An introduction to the Sami people** ([www.itv.se/boreale/samieng.htm](http://www.itv.se/boreale/samieng.htm)) A good place to start learning about the indigenous people of northern Sweden and the issues they face, which include racism and habitat destruction.

**Smorgasbord** ([www.sverigeturism.se/smorgasbord/index.html](http://www.sverigeturism.se/smorgasbord/index.html)) A comprehensive website devoted to Swedish culture, industry, history, sports, tourism, environment and more, produced by the nonprofit FÖRST Föreningen Sverigeturism (Swedish Tourism Trade Association).

**Sweden.se** ([www.sweden.se](http://www.sweden.se)) All kinds of useful information about the country, in a variety of languages.

**Swedish Film Institute** ([www.sfi.se](http://www.sfi.se)) Loads of information on Swedish films and their significance within and outside the country.

**Swedish Institute** ([www.si.se](http://www.si.se)) The Swedish Institute publishes the best academic information on Sweden in English.

**Visit Sweden** ([www.visit-sweden.com](http://www.visit-sweden.com)) The official website for tourism in Sweden.

## HOW MUCH?

0.7L bottle of Swedish  
brännvin (vodka) Skr200

Coffee with saffron  
pancake Skr45

3cm souvenir *Dalahästen*  
(wooden horse) Skr80

Movie ticket Skr75

Weekend admission to a  
Stureplan disco Skr150

# Itineraries

## CLASSIC ROUTES

These three suggestions are popular travel routes that take in some of the classic highlights of Sweden. They can be adjusted or mixed-and-matched depending on how much time you have.

**AROUND THE CAPITAL & BEYOND** **One Week/Start & End in Stockholm**  
Start in **Stockholm** (p65), where mandatory attractions include the **Royal Palace**, **Gamla Stan** and **Skansen**. You can cover those in a couple of days if need be, which leaves an evening for enjoying some of the capital city's nightlife – try the clubs around Medborgarplatsen in **Södermalm** (p79). On day three, take a boat tour to the ancient settlement on **Birka** (p107); it's an all-day affair. The next day, check out the spectacular cathedral and palace at **Uppsala** (p236), and, if your schedule allows, peek into the illuminated-manuscripts display at the old university library, **Carolina Rediviva** (p239). Wander around the burial mounds at **Gamla Uppsala** (p238), allowing plenty of time to explore the museum. Spend the rest of the day exploring the adorable village of **Sigtuna** (p111), with its old-fashioned buildings, cute cafés and atmospheric church ruins. If you fancy a drive, head over to **Göteborg** (p200) and explore the **Bohuslän Coast** (p217) for the last couple of days. Alternatively, you could stay put and sample further from the cultural smörgåsbord that is Stockholm.

This trip takes you through some of Sweden's most accessible highlights in and around the capital city.



## THE MIDDLE WAY

Spend the first week as outlined above, checking out **Stockholm** (p65), **Birka** (p107), **Uppsala** (p236) and **Sigtuna** (p111). Then head north towards **Lake Siljan** (p262) to explore the surrounding villages, which are famous for being postcard-pretty and steeped in history. Don't miss the family home of noted Swedish painter Anders Zorn in **Mora** (p266), the town where the world's biggest cross-country ski race, Vasaloppet, ends. Tour a copper mine in **Falun** (p259) such as the World Heritage-listed, Falu Kopparbergsgruva. Stop at **Örebro** (p251) to see the fine castle and to wander through one of Sweden's most beautiful parks before continuing down through the heart of Sweden to **Göteborg** (p200). Spend a day or two in this engaging city, making sure to visit its theme park and taking time to relax and enjoy the atmosphere on the Avenyn. Spend the rest of your trip exploring the craggy coastline and picturesque fishing villages of the **Bohuslän Coast** (p217).

## Two Weeks/Stockholm to Göteborg



This journey cuts a swath through the belly of the beast, touching on two of the country's best cities and taking in some archetypal Swedish villages.

**TIP TO TAIL****One Month/Kiruna to Malmö**

This trip is a through-line from the northernmost city in Sweden to just shy of Denmark in the south. Fly in to **Kiruna** (p298), stopping to check out the Ice Hotel if the season is right. Take the train toward Narvik and stop at **Abisko** (p301), a hiker's paradise. Spend a day or two exploring the wilderness, either along the **Kungsleden** or via any of the shorter nearby trails in the area. Expert hikers may opt instead to spend their mountaineering time in the more challenging **Sarek National Park** (p305). From here, head to **Gällivare** (p303) and catch the historic Inlandsbanan railway to **Jokkmokk** (p304), home of probably the best museum to Sami culture anywhere, the **Åjtte** (p304). Continue on the railway through some of the most spectacular scenery in the country, stopping if your schedule allows at **Sorsele** (p306) and **Storuman** (p307) and **Östersund** (p292). From here, rent a car and cruise over to explore the breathtaking scenery of the High Coast, or **Höga Kusten** (p282). Continue southward, aiming towards **Lake Siljan** (p262) and the surrounding villages. Stop to see **Uppsala** and **Gamla Uppsala** (p238) with a detour into **Sigtuna** (p111) on your way to **Stockholm** (p65). The wonderful capital city will hold your attention for as many days as you can devote to it. When it's time to move on, angle southwest toward **Göteborg** (p200), then **Kalmar** (p124) with its enormous and fantastic Renaissance-era castle. Stop at the island town of **Karlskrona** (p133), which is on the Unesco World Heritage List. Wrap things up by exploring the vibrant southern towns of **Lund** (p171) and **Malmö** (p162).

There's a lot of territory to cover in Sweden, but in a full month you can see most of its highlights by following this top-to-bottom route.

**ROADS LESS TRAVELLED****REINDEER GAMES**

From **Luleå** (p288), cruise up to the historic military outpost of **Boden** (p291). Continue heading northwards and cross the Arctic Circle around **Jokkmokk** (p304), which is a Sami cultural centre and home to the excellent **Åjtte museum** (p304). If the weather's in your favour, branch off to **Kvikkjokk** (p305), next-door neighbour to the rugged **Sarek National Park** (p305). Then push on towards **Gällivare** (p303) and up to **Kiruna** (p298). Sweden's northernmost city is worth some exploring on its own, but it also has a charming neighbour in **Jukkasjärvi** (p301), home to the famous Ice Hotel. From here, you could dash over to **Abisko** (p301) for some hiking, or go straight north to the remote village of **Karesuando** (p297), on the Finnish border. Creep along the Sweden–Finland border toward **Pajala** (p292), keeping an eye out for stray Rudolfs – for entertainment, keep a log of the number of reindeer you have to follow at casual trotting speed along major highways. Stop in **Haparanda** (p291) for a picnic or drink with a view over the Gulf of Bothnia, then follow the curve of the coastline back to Luleå.

**Five to Seven Days/Start and End in Luleå**

Dodge herds of reindeer on this journey, where the domesticated critters outnumber cars on the highway.

## VICIOUS CYCLING

One to Two Weeks/Start and End in Visby

This journey starts directly behind the ferry station in Visby, where you can rent a bicycle and camping equipment at any number of outlets. Once you've got your equipment sorted, head north along the waterfront to catch the Gotlandsleden, the bicycle trail that circumnavigates the island. Follow it to the grotto at **Lummelunda** (p158), then continue northward past Stenkyrka and around to the inlet at Kappelshamn. From here it's an easy morning's ride to Färösund, where you can stock up on picnic items and catch the free ferry to the islet of **Färö** (p158). There's a tourist information centre in Färö town, near another grocery store and café. Take your time circling the islet, stopping at the gravesite of British troops who fought in the Crimean war at **Ryssnäs** (p159) and at any of the beaches or harbours that strike your fancy. Your goal is to reach **Langhammarshammaren** (p158) in time to watch the sunset over the eerie rock formations. Head back to Färösund, and follow the Gotlandsleden signs southward, stopping first at the **Bungemuseet** (p158). At Slite you can choose to stick to the coastline or head inland through the Kallgateburgs nature reserve; the coastal route is lined with nice beaches, while the inland option passes through some lovely, pastoral countryside. The less ambitious can easily loop back to Visby at this point. The paths converge further south to follow along the coast – don't miss the detour to the Bronze Age cairns at **Uggarderojr** (p159) – and go through **Öja** (p159), where there's a fine church. Then loop around to return through **Burgsvik** (p159). Around Sandhamn you'll have fine views of **Lilla Karlsö** and **Stora Karlsö** (p157). Continue along the bike path northward until you're back in **Visby** (p152). Make sure you leave time at the end of your trip to enjoy the beautiful medieval city itself.

Cycling the Gotlandsleden is an ideal way to see the best of this idyllic island, from sandy beaches to medieval churches.



## TAILORED TRIPS

### WORLD HERITAGE SITES

Culture hounds might enjoy a quest to see the best of Sweden as defined by Unesco. To start with there's the vast **Laponia area** (p304) in the north, an entire journey's worth of territory on its own. Then, working your way down, there's **Gammelstad Church Village** (p289) in Luleå. The High Coast, or **Höga Kusten** (p282), decorates the coastline from Härnosand up to Örnsköldsvik. In Falun there's the **Falu Kopparbergsgruva** (p260), and nearby are the **Engelsberg Bruk** (p250). In the suburbs of Stockholm you'll find the royal palace and grounds of **Drottningholm** (p104), as well as the unlikely beauty of the architect-designed **Skogskyrkogården** cemetery (p83). Also near the capital is the ancient Viking settlement of **Birka** (p107). Moving south, there's **Tanumshede Rock Carvings** (p222) and the well-preserved naval port of **Karlskrona** (p133). Off the coast are the Hanseatic town of **Visby** (p152) on Gotland, the agricultural landscape of **Southern Öland** (p141). There's also the historic **Varberg Radio Station** (p232) in Grimeton.



### ACTIVITIES

Outdoorsy types will be spoiled for choice in Sweden. There's excellent hiking and camping in any number of the country's national parks, especially **Abisko** (p301), as well as the more challenging territory of **Sarek** (p305), and the intermediate **Padjelanta** (p303) and **Skuleskogen** (p283). Closer to Stockholm is the very accessible wilderness of **Tyresta** (p110).

Cycling is another popular activity, and Sweden is well set up for it. The best areas are found in **Skåne** (p160) and **Gotland** (p152); see the cycle tour of Gotlandsleden above for one suggestion.

Wintertime brings another batch of activities to the sporting crowd, most notably alpine skiing in resorts such as **Åre** (p295), **Sälen** (p268), **Hemavan** (p307) and **Riksgränsen** (p302). Cross-country skiing is popular along the hiking trail **Kungsleden** (p49) and other long-distance tracks.

Ice skating is a popular activity for kids and adults alike, and is easy to do on the frozen winter surfaces of **Kungsträdgården** (p84) and other public areas in Stockholm.

Golf is huge in Sweden and there are more than 400 courses to choose from. The most popular options are in the south, but the quirkiest choices are up north, including **Björkliden** (p302), near Abisko – home to the country's northernmost course, 240km above the Arctic Circle – and the **Green Line course** (p291) at Haparanda, where playing a round means crossing the Sweden–Finland border four times.

Canoeing and kayaking are popular in a number of rivers and the canals that honeycomb **Stockholm** (p83).





# Snapshot

Though it's far from being what anyone would call a country in crisis, Sweden seems to have had its confidence shaken in recent years. After a long and steady history as what most would agree was something of a utopian society, the country famous for its 'middle way' has suddenly faced a number of changes, not just economic but also political and social. The changes have come about because of several modern-day realities such as European Union membership, globalisation and increased immigration. In June 2005 the Swedish government banned smoking in all public places. It's no wonder so many people are looking forward to the day when the EU forces Sweden to relax its strict alcohol policies!

The roots of change are fairly easy to trace. Without generalising too much, it's fair to say that Sweden spent decades as an essentially closed system, with a small population who more or less had similar backgrounds and equal financial standing. The famed Swedish welfare state took care of its citizens 'from erection to resurrection', as the saying goes. Since opening its borders in WWII, Sweden has taken in more immigrants than any other country in Western Europe relative to its population. Over half a million immigrants have come to Sweden from the Middle East, Africa and the Balkans alone. The benefits of this are obvious, but so is the economic impact.

One area in which the impact of immigration is easiest to see is the scarcity of housing, currently a hot-button issue in Sweden. The situation is particularly acute in the capital. According to statistics published by the property-owners organisation Fastighetsägarna, the average income of people living in central Stockholm is 25% higher than that of those who live in the suburbs. The corresponding difference in rent, however, is minimal – at the time of research, rents averaged Skr968 per sq metre in the middle of town, against Skr888 over the city as a whole. But even so the immigrant population is overwhelmingly moving to the suburbs rather than the city centre. The problem, housing experts say, is not so much that newcomers to Stockholm cannot afford central-city housing, but that they don't have the connections required to find the scarce properties available. Whatever the reason, the majority of the immigrant population is relegated to block housing in the suburbs. One unforeseen effect of this is that small centres of vibrant multicultural community life have consequently sprung up in places like Rinkeby and Botkyrka and themselves become destinations for central-city dwellers intent on exploring new cultures and artwork. Cultural centres in the suburbs, are, in fact, where visitors can find some of the most interesting cultural events in the city.

Sweden joined the EU in 1995 with a majority vote, but since then public opinion for the EU has cooled, and in September 2003 voters decided not to trade the krona for the euro.

At the time of writing, 85% of workers in Sweden belonged to a trade union. The unemployment rate was 6.5% of the workforce in August 2005, up from 5.9% a year earlier. The welfare state is the largest employer in the country. The majority party – the Social Democrats, led by Prime Minister Göran Persson, now in his ninth year of office – is already preparing for the September 2006 general election. The Social Democrats are the most successful political party in the world, having been in power for most of the past 73 years. The next election promises to be contentious; heavy

campaigning, including televised debates, had already started a full year in advance.

The contest is essentially between four conservative parties on the right, who emphasise job creation through tax cuts (campaign slogans include 'It should be profitable to work'), and the majority left – made up of the Social Democrats, the Greens and the Left Party – who advocate defending Sweden's traditionally high levels of unemployment benefits.

There are, of course, still plenty of utopian aspects to Swedish society. A study by the World Economic Forum found it to be the world's most gender-equal country. In the same study, Sweden came out on top for education, health and wellbeing. Another recent poll showed that nearly 90% of adults in the country read at least one newspaper a day. This would indicate that whatever direction their country goes, it will be the Swedish people, involved and empowered, who take it there.

**'There are still plenty of utopian aspects to Swedish society'**

## FAST FACTS

Population (estimated July 2005): 9 million  
 GDP (2004): US\$255.4 billion  
 Inflation rate (2004): 0.4%  
 Unemployment rate (2004): 5.6%  
 Area: 449,964 sq km  
 Life expectancy: men 78.19 years, women 82.74 years  
 Head of state: King Carl XVI Gustaf  
 Head of government: Prime Minister Göran Persson (up for election September 2006)

# The Authors



## BECKY OHLSEN

**Stockholm, Northern Sweden & Lappland, Gotland (Southeast Sweden)**

Becky has enjoyed travelling in Sweden since she was a little girl visiting her grandparents, when a desperate craving for Swedish chocolate motivated her to learn a few words in her mother's native language. Since then her tastes (and to some extent her vocabulary) have expanded and now include pickled herring in mustard sauce (*senapsill*), reindeer (*ren*) in tubes and cloudberry (*hjordron*) liqueur. She has an unhealthy fondness for long dark days but also an appreciation for the midnight sun. She's made a meal for dozens of insects while hiking in Norrland and spent enough time exploring the nooks and crannies of Stockholm to know the locations of several free public toilets.

Becky also updated the Destination, Getting Started, Itineraries, Snapshot, The Culture and Food & Drink chapters.

### My Favourite Trip

It's about 6 o'clock on a sunny afternoon, and I'm trying, as an adult, to relearn how to ride a bike. ('It's like riding a bike,' they say. Ha!) I've rented a three-gear cruiser that weighs at least 50kg and I'm off to ride the Gotlandsleden (see p24), a bicycle trail that winds through the fields and coastlines of Sweden's favourite holiday island. I decide to head north first, so as not to risk missing Fårö – home of Ingmar Bergman, whom I'm convinced I'll run into by chance. I don't see Ingmar, but I do see some amazing countryside, including dozens of medieval churches and a few spectacular, impossibly quiet beaches. Not a bad way for an old dog to learn a new trick.



## FRAN PARNELL

**Central Sweden, Southern Sweden, Southwest Sweden, Southeast Sweden**

Fran's love of Scandinavia developed while studying for a masters degree in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, and she has since been on pilgrimages to as many Viking sites as possible. She gets particularly blown away by Sweden's stone ship settings, and is particularly envious of the folk at the Foteviken Viking Reserve!

Fran also updated the Environment, History, Outdoor Activities, Transport and Directory chapters.

### LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

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### My Favourite Trip

Sweden is filled with so many wonderful places that it's difficult to choose a favourite, but there are some truly idyllic places along the southwestern coast. I would start in Strömstad with a visit to the atmospheric stone ship setting and prehistoric graves, frozen in time and utterly free from crowds. Other ancient mysteries lie a short zip south down the E6: you can't go to this part of the country and not visit the stunning World Heritage rock carvings at Tanumshede. After these silent enigmas, a trip to Ingrid Bergman's favourite holiday village, Fjällbacka, gives you a rousing blast of seaside mayhem: watch the sun setting from the balcony of one of Sweden's most distinctive hotels.

