

Destination Sweden

There's something almost otherworldly about Sweden – and we mean that in the most flattering way possible. It's just a bit skewed, a bit removed from the norm, and one gets the sense that Sweden likes being that way. For travellers, too, it's a delight to visit somewhere that, while it may not *look* terribly outlandish, still feels distinctly and wonderfully foreign.

This sense of strangeness is partly a result of Sweden's out-there position on the map. But there's more at work than geographical isolation. Sweden's literature and cinema favour a weighty, Gothic sense of drama blended with gallows humor and stark aesthetics – all of which, in some form, at some point, will confront the visitor. For instance, it's hard not to see something faintly hilarious, yet also quite lonely and sad, in the image of a single reindeer wandering crookedly along an all-but-abandoned Lapland highway in the murk of a winter afternoon. There's also something poignant about a capital city that's so far from the middle of anything, yet is so determined to be the centre of everything. Regardless of how it presents itself, the visitor will notice a particular tone in Sweden that hints at many things: depth of feeling, awareness of doom, absence of sentimentality, strength of principle, avoidance of conflict, a somber conviction that certain things simply matter. Of course, such intangibles won't likely make it into your post-trip slide show, but nevertheless the mysterious Swedish sensibility enhances every aspect of a traveller's experience.

It's an exciting time to visit Sweden, too – the small country with its long history of consistent moderation just happens to be in the middle of a whirlwind of change. Swedish music, fashion, film, art and food couldn't be more vibrant, and it's even shaking things up in the often rather stolid world of politics. Don't miss the chance to get in while it's hot.

FAST FACTS

Population: 9.1 million

GDP (2007 estimate):
US\$300.2 billion; per
capita US\$41,100

Inflation: 0.9%

Unemployment: 2.5%

Labour force (2008
estimate): 4.4 million

Literacy rate: 99%

Getting Started

Travel in Sweden is extremely easy, and a bit of advance planning can help smooth over any rough patches. Historically an expensive place to travel, it's now more or less in line with the UK in terms of cost. Still, booking ahead for accommodation and transport within the country will help save money, and look into discount travel cards for the major cities before you leave (see p322). Once you arrive, you will find the cities easy to get around and well serviced by public transport, with almost everywhere wheelchair-accessible.

WHEN TO GO

Despite its north European location, 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 (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 holidays from late June to mid-August, so hostels are crowded, but this is also when most hotels offer discounts of up to 50%. Loners and misanthropes should travel between seasons, in May or early June, when everything is closed and no one's about.

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 are the 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 doesn't come cheap. Careful planning can help reduce costs.

During the low-price summer period (June to August), if you stay in a mid-range hotel (which usually includes a huge buffet breakfast), eat a daily special for lunch and have an evening meal at a moderately priced restaurant, you can expect to spend Skr1000 per person per day if you're doubling up, and Skr1500 if you're travelling alone. Staying in hostels, making your own breakfast, eating the daily special for lunch, and picking up supermarket items for dinner will probably cost you Skr450 per day. The cheapest way to visit Sweden is to camp in the woods for free, eat supermarket food, hitchhike or cycle to get around, and visit only the attractions that have free admission – this will cost less than Skr200 per day, depending on your supermarket choices. If you stay in commercial camping grounds and prepare your own meals you can squeak by on around Skr300 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 Skr300 per day). Self-service pumps that take banknotes or credit cards are slightly cheaper, though many won't accept foreign credit cards without a PIN code.

See Climate Charts (p320)
for more information.

HOW MUCH?

0.7L bottle of Swedish
brännvin (vodka) Skr225

Coffee and saffron
pancake Skr45

Souvenir *Dalahäst*
(wooden horse)
Skr70-3000

Cinema ticket Skr90

Nightclub admission
Skr150

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
- Sunglasses – when the sun does shine, it's bright
- A map of Stockholm's tunnelbana (metro)
- A taste for pickled fish
- A fast-acting liver for *snaps* (Swedish liquor)

TRAVELLING RESPONSIBLY

Sweden makes it easy to be a responsible traveller: recycling, for example, is practically effortless, as bins and sorting instructions are everywhere, from inside hotel rooms to near highway rest stops. There's a high level of general environmental consciousness in the country. Two organisations that set standards for labelling products as ecologically sound are the food-focused **KRAV** (www.krav.se), a member of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, and **Swan** (www.svanen.nu), which has a wider scope and certifies entire hotels and hostels.

Aside from environmental concerns, one of Sweden's biggest challenges is protecting the cultural heritage of the Sami people. The two issues are closely linked: the harnessing of rivers for hydroelectric power can have massive (negative) impact on what has historically been Sami territory, whether by flooding reindeer feeding grounds or by diverting water and drying up river valleys.

In general, the mining, forestry and space industries have wreaked havoc on Sami homelands. Travellers interested in learning more and experiencing Sami culture are encouraged to look for the 'Natures Bäst' logo, which indicates that an excursion or organisation has been approved by **Svenska Ekoturismföreningen** (www.ekoturism.org, in Swedish), the country's first ecotourism regulating body.

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 always hilarious Bill Bryson 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.

TOP 10



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. Following is a selection of some of the greatest and most popular works by Swedish authors.

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

FEEL-BAD FILMS

The Swedish film industry is active and varied (see p41), but most people associate it with the godfather of gloom, Ingmar Bergman. Many filmmakers have followed in his grim footsteps, including these:

- *Songs from the Second Floor* (2000), Roy Andersson – a post-apocalyptic urban nightmare in surreal slow motion; it's not for everyone.
- *Lilya 4-ever* (2002), Lukas Moodysson – a grim tale of human trafficking.
- *Ondskan* (Evil; 2003), Mikael Håfström – violence at a boys' boarding school.
- *Zozo* (2005), Josef Fares – a Lebanese orphan makes his way to Sweden alone, then has culture shock.
- *Darling* (2007), Johan Kling – harsh economic realities bring together a shallow, privileged party girl and a sweet old man in an unlikely friendship.
- *Let the Right One In* (2008), Tomas Alfredson – an excellent, stylish, restrained take on the horror-film genre that gets at what it's like to be a lonely preteen in a cold, hostile world.

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 pre-planning:

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

Smorgasbord (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) All kinds of useful information about the country, in a variety of languages.

Swedish Film Institute (www.sfi.se) Loads of information on Swedish films and their significance within and outside the country.

Swedish Institute (www.si.se) The Swedish Institute publishes the best academic information on Sweden in English and offers scholarships for study in Sweden.

Visit Sweden (www.visitsweden.com) The official website for tourism in Sweden.

Events Calendar

Swedes love their holidays. Most towns and cities have frequent summer festivals and concerts (usually May to September). Books on festivals include Monica Rabe's *Sweden (Festivals of the World)* and Jan-Öjvind Swahn's *Maypoles, Crayfish and Lucia – Swedish Holidays and Traditions*. Visit www.musikfestivaler.se for many more music festivals. Towns hosting large rock concerts include Sundsvall, Östersund and Skellefteå; see town websites for details. For a list of public holidays, see p323.

JANUARY

KIRUNA SNOW FESTIVAL last week of Jan
Based around a snow-sculpting competition, this annual fest (www.kiruna.com/snowfestival) began in 1985 to celebrate a rocket launch and now draws artists from all over to carve ever-more elaborate and beautiful shapes out of the snow. It also features reindeer-sled racing, with Sami traditions also emphasised.

FEBRUARY

JOKKMOKK WINTER MARKET 1st Thu-Sat in Feb
A large annual gathering of Sami people from across Scandinavia, this festival (www.jokkmokksmarknad.se) includes a market, meetings, craft shows, performances and more.

HOUSE OF METAL early Feb
An annual hardcore music festival (www.houseofmetal.se, in Swedish) in Umeå at Folkets Hus, House of Metal features big-name artists as well as local bands.

MARCH

VASALOPPET 1st Sun in Mar
This huge annual ski race (www.vasaloppet.se) between Sälen and Mora, started in 1922, commemorates Gustav Vasa's history-making flight on skis in 1521; it has grown into a week-long ski fest and celebration with several different races: short, gruelling or just for fun.

APRIL

VALBORGSMÄSSOFTON (WALPURGIS NIGHT) 30 Apr
This public holiday, a pagan holdover that's partly to celebrate the arrival of spring, involves lighting huge bonfires, singing songs and forming parades; parties are biggest in the student towns.

MAY

FÖRSTA MAJ (MAY DAY) 1 May
Traditionally a workers' marching day in industrial towns and cities, it's observed with labour-movement events, brass bands and marches.

JUNE

SWEDEN ROCK FESTIVAL early Jun
This large annual three-day summer rock festival is held in Sölvesborg (www.swedenrock.com) and features huge metal and hard-rock bands like AC/DC, In Flames and Dragonforce, with camping available on site.

SWEDISH NATIONAL DAY 6 Jun
Known merely as Swedish Flag Day until 1983, this public holiday commemorates the crowning in 1523 of King Gustav Vasa and Sweden's independence from the Danish-led Kalmar Union.

SMAKA PÅ STOCKHOLM 1st week of Jun
Taste samples from some of Stockholm's top kitchens in manageable quantities, and watch cooking duels at this week-long annual fest in Kungsträdgården (www.smakapastockholm.se).

MIDSUMMER'S EVE & MIDSUMMER DAY 1st Fri-Sat after 21 Jun
Arguably the most important Swedish holiday, Midsummer starts on Friday afternoon/evening with the raising of the maypole, followed by lots of singing and dancing, drinking and the massive consumption of pickled herring with potatoes and sour cream.

HULTSFRED FESTIVAL

mid-Jun

This is a large annual three-day summer rock festival (www.rockparty.se) at Hultsfred, a small southeastern village reachable by train from Stockholm-Arlanda Airport. Artists have included Regina Spektor, Dropkick Murphys and Timbuktu.

ÖJEBY CHURCH MARKET

last weekend in Jun

This market near Piteå attracts some 20,000 visitors each year.

JULY**PITEÅ DANSAR & LER**

late Jul

One of Sweden's biggest street festivals (www.pdol.se), the PDOR draws 120,000 visitors for music, dance, crafts, food and a carnival.

STOCKHOLM JAZZ FESTIVAL

19-23 Jul

Held on the island of Skeppsholmen, this internationally known jazz fest (www.stockholmjazz.com) brings artists from all over, including big names like Van Morrison and Mary J Blige; evening jam sessions at famed Stockholm jazz club Fasching are a highlight.

MUSIC VID SILJAN

early Jul

A midsummer music festival (www.musikvidsiljan.se), it takes place in the towns around Lake Siljan, and includes chamber, jazz and folk music; local tourist offices will have up-to-date schedules.

ARVIKA FESTIVALS

mid-Jul

This large annual three-day summer rock festival (www.arvikafestivalen.se, in Swedish) is held in western Värmland near Glafsforden, and features mostly Scandinavian rock bands.

FALUN FOLKMUSIK FESTIVAL

mid-Jul

Falun has a popular folk and world-music festival (www.falufolk.com), but funding has been troublesome in recent years and the festival's future is uncertain; check online for the latest news.

RÄTTVIK FOLKLORE FESTIVAL

late Jul

An annual celebration of international folk dance (www.folklore.se) on the shores of Lake Siljan.

CLASSIC CAR WEEK

late Jul-early Aug

Rättvik hosts this gathering of motorheads and the objects of their devotion (www.classiccarweek.com, in Swedish); there are monster truck battles, drive-in movies, laid-back cruising and lots of chrome.

STORSJÖYRAN

late Jul-early Aug

Östersjön hosts this annual three-day music festival (www.storsjoyran.se), which features international artists and crowds of up to 55,000 people.

AUGUST**MEDIEVAL WEEK, VISBY**

early Aug

Find yourself an actual knight in shining armour at this immensely popular annual fest (www.medeltidsveckan.se), which puts Gotland's medieval city to great use with a market, games, costumes and a huge banquet.

DALHALLA

early Aug

The stunning Dalhalla venue in Rättvik hosts an opera festival (www.dalhalla.se), with the awe-some acoustics of the venue allowing for mostly unamplified performances.

STOCKHOLM PRIDE

1st week in Aug

This annual parade and festival (www.stockholmpride.org/en/) is dedicated to creating an atmosphere of freedom and support for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.

WAY OUT WEST

mid-Aug

Göteborg hosts this music fest (www.wayoutwest.se) that features the likes of Broder Daniel, Sigur Rós, Grinderman and Franz Ferdinand.

TJEMILEN

31 Aug

Sweden's biggest sporting event for women (www.tjemilen.se) features 24,000 runners of all ages in a race that begins from Gärdet in Stockholm.

KRÄFTSKIVOR**(CRAYFISH PARTIES)**

late Aug

Swedes celebrate the end of summer by wearing bibs and party hats while eating lots of crayfish and drinking *snaps* (usually aquavit). In the north similar parties take place but with *surströmming* (strong-smelling fermented Baltic herring), while in the south similar gatherings in September feast on eels and *snaps*.

SEPTEMBER**GÖTEBORG INTERNATIONAL****BOOK FAIR**

late Sep

Scandinavia's biggest book fair, this event (www.bokbibliotek.se) brings together authors, readers, publishers, agents, teachers, librarians and the media.

**ÖLAND'S HARVEST
FESTIVAL**

late Sep

This celebration of the local harvest (www.skordefest.nu) takes place each autumn in Borgholm, Öland.

LIDINGÖLOPPET

late Sep

Enshrined in the *Guinness World Records* as the world's largest terrain race, this annual event (www.lidingoloppet.se) takes place on Lidingö, just northeast of Stockholm.

OCTOBER**STOCKHOLM OPEN**

early Oct

A huge event among the international tennis crowd, this annual tournament (www.ifstockholmopen.se) draws its share of top-100 male players from all over the world.

**HOME: INTERIOR
DESIGN FAIR**

early Oct

'Hem' in Swedish, this is the country's largest interior decor and design fair, drawing more than 60,000 visitors eager to check out new furniture trends, textiles, lighting schemes, and arts and crafts. The event (www.hemmassan.se), held in Stockholm, includes displays, lectures and of course shopping.

UPPSALA SHORT FILM FESTIVAL

late Oct

Approaching its 30th anniversary, this annual film festival (www.shortfilmfestival.com) screens more than 300 short films at four cinemas in central Uppsala.

**UMEÅ INTERNATIONAL
JAZZ FESTIVAL**

late Oct

International jazz musicians have filled Umeå's stages for this annual event (www.umeajazzfestival.se) 40 years running.

NOVEMBER**STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL FILM
FESTIVAL**

mid-late Nov

Screenings of new international and independent films, director talks and discussion panels draw cinephiles to this important annual festival (www.stockholmfilmfestival.se); tickets go quickly, so book early if you're interested.

**STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL
HORSE SHOW**

late Nov

This annual horse show (www.stockholmhorshow.com) advertises itself as the largest indoor equestrian event in the world. It takes place in the Globe in southern Stockholm.

DECEMBER**LUCIADAGEN (ST LUCIA DAY)**

13 Dec

Wearing a crown of lit candles, Lucia leads a white-clad choir in traditional singing in a celebration that seems to merge the folk tradition of the longest night and the story of St Lucia of Syracuse.

JULAFTON (CHRISTMAS EVE)

24 Dec

The night of the smörgåsbord and the arrival of *jultomten*, the Christmas gnome, carrying a sack of gifts, this is the biggest celebration at Christmas time.

Itineraries

CLASSIC ROUTES

AROUND THE CAPITAL & BEYOND **One Week / Start & End in Stockholm**

Start in **Stockholm** (p67), where mandatory attractions include the **Kungliga Slottet** (p74), **Gamla Stan** (p74) and **Skansen** (p78). You can cover those in a couple of days, which leaves an evening for enjoying some of the capital city's nightlife in **Södermalm** (p81) – try the clubs around Medborgarplatsen, and bars in the SoFo district. On day three, take a boat tour to the ancient settlement on **Birka** (p117); it's an all-day affair. The next day, check out the spectacular cathedral and palace at **Uppsala** (p242) and delve into early Swedish history via the burial mounds and museum at **Gamla Uppsala** (p244). Spend the rest of the day exploring the adorable village of **Sigtuna** (p123), with its old-fashioned buildings, cute cafes and atmospheric church ruins. If you fancy a drive, head over to **Göteborg** (p206) and explore the **Bohuslän Coast** (p224) 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 high-lights in and around the capital city.



THE MIDDLE WAY

Two Weeks / Stockholm to Göteborg

Spend the first week as outlined above, exploring the sights around **Stockholm** (p67). Then head north toward **Lake Siljan** (p268) to take in 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** (p272), the town where the world's biggest cross-country ski race, **Vasaloppet** (p19), ends. Tour a copper mine in Falun, home of the World Heritage-listed **Falu Kopparbergsgruva** (p266). Stop at **Örebro** (p258) 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** (p206). Spend a day or two in Sweden's engaging second city, making sure you visit its theme park and take time to enjoy the city's hip cafes and bars, as well as its eclectic museums. Spend the rest of your trip exploring the craggy coastline and picturesque fishing villages of the **Bohuslän Coast** (p224).



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 takes you from the northernmost city in Sweden to just shy of Denmark in the south. Fly in to **Kiruna** (p306), stopping to check out the Ice Hotel if the season is right. Take the train toward Narvik and stop at **Abisko National Park** (p309), a hiker's paradise. Spend a day or so exploring the wilderness, either along the **Kungsleden** (p60) 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** (p313). From here, head to **Gällivare** (p311) and catch the historic Inlandsbanan railway to **Jokkmokk** (p312), home of the world's best museum of Sami culture, the **Åjtte** (p312). Continue on the railway through some of the most spectacular scenery in the country, stopping, if your schedule allows, at **Sorsele** (p314), **Storuman** (p316) and **Östersund** (p290). From here, rent a car and cruise over to explore the breathtaking scenery of **Höga Kusten** (High Coast; p287). Continue southward toward **Lake Siljan** (p268) and the surrounding villages. Stop to see the pre-Viking burial mounds **Gamla Uppsala** (p244) with a detour to stroll Sweden's oldest main street in cute **Sigtuna** (p123) on your way to **Stockholm** (p67). 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, head towards dynamic **Göteborg** (p206), and **Kalmar** (p144) with its fantastic Renaissance-era castle. Visit the island town of **Karlskrona** (p199), which is on the Unesco World Heritage List. Stop and take a deep breath in the beautiful **Österlen area** (p189). Wrap things up by exploring the vibrant southern towns of **Lund** (p179) and **Malmö** (p170), from where it's a cinch to cross the **Öresund bridge** (p171) into Copenhagen.

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.

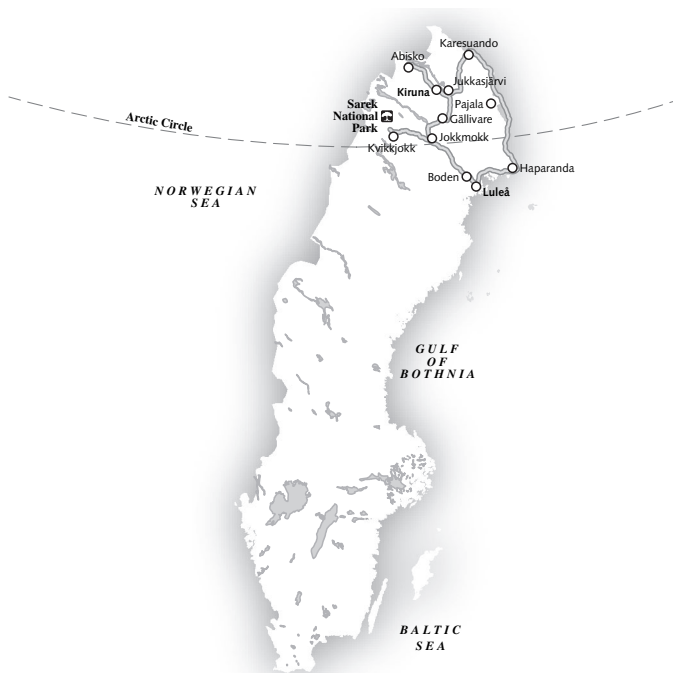


ROADS LESS TRAVELLED

REINDEER GAMES

Five to Seven Days / Luleå to Luleå

From **Luleå** (p302), cruise up to the historic military outpost of **Boden** (p303). Continue heading northwards and cross the Arctic Circle around **Jokkmokk** (p312), which is a Sami cultural centre and home to the excellent **Åtte Museum** (p312). If the weather's in your favour, branch off to **Kvikkjokk** (p312), next-door neighbour to the rugged **Sarek National Park** (p313). Then push on toward **Gällivare** (p311) and up to **Kiruna** (p306). Sweden's northernmost city is worth some exploring on its own, but it also has a charming neighbour in **Jukkasjärvi** (see boxed text, p308), home to the famous Ice Hotel. From here, you could dash over to **Abisko National Park** (p309) for some spectacular and easily accessible hiking, or go straight north to the remote village of **Karesuando** (p306), on the Finnish border. Make your way along the Sweden-Finland border toward **Pajala** (p305), keeping an eye out for stray Rudolphins – for entertainment, keep a log of the number of reindeer you have to follow at casual trotting speed along a major highway. Stop in **Haparanda** (p305) for some serious shopping, then follow the curve of the coastline back to Luleå.



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

VICIOUS CYCLING

One to Two Weeks / Visby to Visby

This journey starts directly behind the ferry station in Visby, where you can rent a bicycle and camping equipment from various outlets. Once you've sorted your equipment, head north along the waterfront to catch **Gotlandsleden**, the bicycle trail that circumnavigates the island. Follow it to the grotto at **Lummelunda** (p166), 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** (p166), home of Ingmar Bergman. There's a tourist information centre in Färö town, near another grocery store and cafe. Take your time circling the islet, stopping at the gravesite of British troops who fought in the Crimean war at **Ryssnäs** (p166) and at any of the beaches or harbours that strike your fancy. Your goal is to reach **Langhammarshammaren** (p166) in time to watch the sunset over the eerie rock formations. Afterwards, head back to Färösund and follow the Gotlandsleden signs southward, stopping for a peek at **Bungemuseet** (p165). At Slite you can choose to stick to the coastline or head inland through the Kallgateburgs Nature Reserve; the coastal route is lined with pretty beaches, while the inland option passes through pastoral countryside. (The less ambitious can easily loop back to Visby and wrap up their tour 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** (p167) – and go through **Öja** (p167), where there's a fine church. Then loop around to return through **Burgsvik** (p167). Around Sandön you'll have fine views of Lilla Karlsö and **Stora Karlsö** (p164). Continue along the bike path northward until you're back in **Visby** (p158). 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 there's the vast **Laponia area** (p312) in the north, an entire journey's worth of territory on its own. Working your way down, there's **Gammelstad church village** (p302) in Luleå. **Höga Kusten** (High Coast; p287) decorates the coastline from Härnösand to Örnsköldsvik. In Falun there's the **Falu Kopparbergsgruva** (p266), and the nearby picnic-friendly **Engelsberg Bruk** (p257). In the suburbs of Stockholm you'll find the royal palace and grounds of **Drottningholm** (p115), plus the unlikely beauty of the **Skogskyrkogården cemetery** (p85). Also near the capital is the ancient Viking settlement of **Birka** (p117). Moving south, there's **Tanumshede rock carvings** (p224) and the well-preserved naval port of **Karlskrona** (p199). Off the coast are the Hanseatic town of **Visby** (p158) on Gotland and the agricultural landscape of **southern Öland** (p157). There's also the historic **Varberg Radio Station** (p238) in Grimeton.

ACTIVITIES

Outdoorsy types are spoilt for choice in Sweden. There's excellent hiking and camping many of the country's national parks, especially **Abisko** (p309), as well as the more challenging territory of **Sarek National Park** (p313), and the intermediate **Padjelantaleden** (p62) and **Skuleskogen** (p288). Closer to Stockholm is the very accessible wilderness of **Tyresta** (p123).

Cycling is another popular activity, and Sweden is well set up for it. The best areas are found in **Skåne** (p170) and **Gotland** (p158); see the cycle tour of **Gotlandsleden** (opposite) for one suggestion.

For diving, rock climbing and caving, head south to **Kullaberg Nature Reserve** (p197).

Wintertime brings another batch of activities to the sporting crowd, most notably alpine skiing in resorts such as **Åre** (p293), **Sälen** (p274), **Hemavan** (p315) and **Riksgränsen** (p310). Cross-country skiing is popular along the hiking trail **Kungsleden** (p60) and other long-distance tracks.

Ice skating is a popular activity for kids and adults alike, and it's easy to do on the frozen winter surfaces of **Kungsträdgården** (p86) and other public areas in Stockholm.

Golf is huge in Sweden – there are more than 400 courses to choose from. The most popular options are in the south, but the quirkier choices are up north, including **Björkliden** (p310), near Abisko – home to the country's northernmost course, 240km above the Arctic Circle – and the **Green Line Golf Course** (p305) at Haparanda, where playing a round means repeatedly crossing the Sweden–Finland border.

Both canoeing and kayaking are popular in a number of rivers and the canals that honeycomb **Stockholm** (p85).



The Authors



BECKY OHLSEN

**Coordinating Author, Central Sweden,
Northern Sweden, Lappland & the Far North**

Becky grew up with a thick book of Swedish fairy tales illustrated by John Bauer, so the deep, black forests of Norrland hold a particular fascination for her. When hiking through them, she's constantly on the lookout for *tomtes* and changelings, green-haired witches and moss-covered trolls (which, to the untrained eye, look just like enormous rocks). Though raised in Colorado, Becky has been a frequent explorer of Sweden since childhood, while visiting her grandparents in Stockholm and her great-aunt in Härnösand. She loves the music of the Swedish language, although she can't really dance to it. She loves herring and gravlax, Swedish potatoes and *aquavit*. But mostly she loves getting lost in those forests, among the trolls and *tomtes*.



CRISTIAN BONETTO

**Stockholm, Southeast Sweden,
Southern Sweden, Southwest Sweden**

Considering his soft spot for blondes, it's not surprising that Cristian Bonetto calls Sweden his 'Nordic nirvana'. Despite his many returns, the crush is yet to mellow; nor is his fondness for *glögg* and Swedish pop. Born and bred in Australia, the reformed TV-soap scribe is smitten with Sweden's sense of space, its enlightened attitudes and its fascination with the new. Cristian's musings on Sweden have appeared in both Australian and UK magazines and he is also the author of *Stockholm Encounter*. When he's not scouring Nordic streets for the next big thing, you might find Cristian in his home town of Melbourne, listening to his first ever album, ABBA's *Arrival*. Cristian also wrote the Culture and Food & Drink chapters in this guide.

LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

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