



# Åland Archipelago

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## Best Places to Eat

- » Indigo (p124)
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- » Bagarstugan (p125)

## Best Places to Stay

- » Hotell Arkipelag (p123)
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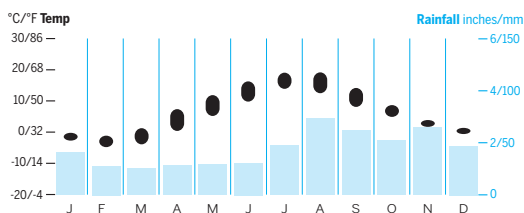
## Why Go?

The sweeping Åland archipelago is a kooky geopolitical entity: the islands belong to Finland, speak Swedish, but have their own parliament, fly their own blue-gold-and-red flag, issue their own stamps and have their own web suffix: 'dot ax'. Their 'special relationship' with the EU means they can sell duty free and make their own gambling laws.

The sunniest spot in northern Europe, in summer Åland attracts crowds of holidaying Swedes and Finns with its balmy weather and sandy beaches. The capital's bars, restaurants and ice-cream outlets teem with people; but once you get out of Mariehamn, a sleepy haze hangs over the islands' tiny villages. Finding your own remote beach among the 6500 skerries and islets is surprisingly easy. A lattice of bridges and free cable ferries connect the central islands, while larger car ferries run to the archipelago's outer reaches. Åland is also bicycle heaven, with flat, compact scenery and excellent cycle routes.

## When to Go

### ÅLAND ARCHIPELAGO

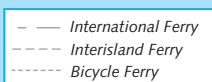


**Feb & Mar** Skate the frozen seas in the northern archipelago islands.

**Jun** Decorated poles are raised around the islands during Midsummer.

**Jul** Festivities at Kastelholms Slott on Gustav Wasa Days.

## GULF OF BOTHNIA



## Åland Archipelago Highlights

- 1 Running the ramparts and marvelling at the cannonball-scarred ruins at **Bomarsund** (p128)
- 2 Climbing aboard the pride of Mariehamn, the four-

- masted barque **Pommern** (p121)
- 3 Choosing your favourite church: is it the art nouveau glory of **Sankt Göran's Kyrka** (p122) or perhaps the quaint

- charm of **Sankta Maria Magdalena Kyrka** (p132)?
- 4 Watching history come to life with jousting and feasting at **Kastelholms Slött** (p128)