

# Welcome to Sweden

*Frozen wastelands, cosy cottages, virgin forest, rocky islands, reindeer herders and Viking lore – Sweden has all that plus impeccable style and to-die-for dining.*

## Swedish Style

In some ways, visiting Sweden feels like walking right into a fashion or home-decor magazine. There are no boring outfits on the streets of Stockholm, and the care with which houses, cottages, cafes and public spaces are decorated and kept up throughout the country is truly inspiring. But Swedish style is never too showy; form and function are tightly linked in this society known for valuing moderation, practicality, order, simple lines and clever designs. Whether you decide to shop for your own versions or just enjoy the scenery, it's hard not to fall for the cool aesthetics of this place.

## Landscape

Truth be told, the best thing about Sweden is its natural beauty. To really appreciate this country's charms, you have to leave the city behind. Whether that means sailing across an archipelago to visit a lonely island or trekking along a trail through the northern wilderness just depends on your preferences – why not try both? Hiking, camping, cycling, skiing, boating, fishing and foraging for mushrooms and berries are all major Swedish pastimes, and it's easy to get in on the action from just about anywhere in the country.

## The Sami

The northern part of Sweden is home to the indigenous Sami people, whose traditionally nomadic lifestyle is built around reindeer herding. Sami culture, including handicrafts, homes and villages, methods of transport and style of cooking, is one of the many things a visitor can become immersed in while spending time in Lapland. Don't miss the chance to learn about this unique group of people: spend a night or two in a Sami reindeer camp or take a dogsledding tour. If you're on a more limited schedule, have a meal in a Sami restaurant or pick up some handmade Sami woodwork or leather goods to take home as a souvenir.

## Vikings & History

Ancient rune stones poke up out of the grass in parks all over Sweden; huge stone-ship settings and unobtrusive burial mounds are almost as common. Walled medieval cities and seaside fortresses are regular stops on the travellers circuit. Viking ruins and the stories surrounding them are very much a part of the modern Swedish landscape, and it's easy to feel as if you're walking through history. In fact, you are.



## Why I Love Sweden

By Becky Ohlsen, Author

There's something so wholesome and healthy about Sweden. People here really know how to take advantage of their gorgeous country, from its scenic beauty to its edible bounty. My first trips here were to visit my grandparents, and no day was complete without a long walk on the forested trails around their apartments. Dinner was usually local fish and produce from one of Stockholm's market halls – and for dessert, Swedish strawberries from a Hötorget vendor. To this day, being in Sweden means being outdoors, camping or hiking or just happily wandering.

**For more about our authors, see page 352**