



Stockholm & Around

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Best Places to Eat

- » Grands Veranda (p82)
- » Rosendals Trädgårdskafe (p83)
- » Operakällaren (p81)
- » Chokladkoppen (p81)
- » Vurma (p85)

Best Places to Stay

- » Grand Hôtel Stockholm (p76)
- » Rival Hotel (p79)
- » Hotel Hellsten (p76)
- » Columbus Hotell (p79)
- » Zinkensdamm Hotell & Vandrarhem (p79)

Why Go?

Stockholm's good looks and mad style could almost be intimidating. But this city is an accessible beauty, as easy to explore as it is rewarding. Its layout, spread across 14 islands connected by 57 bridges, sounds complicated, but it is compact and easily walkable. Each neighbourhood has a distinct character, yet they're close enough together that you can spend time in several of them on a single day.

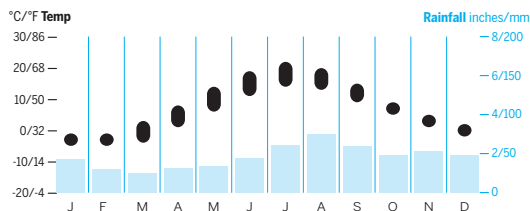
The old town, Gamla Stan, is one of Europe's most arresting historic hubs: a concoction of storybook buildings, imposing palaces and razor-thin cobblestone streets.

Meanwhile, just a few metres from this time capsule, the modern city centre shines like a fashion magazine come to life. Downtown is a catwalk, showroom and test kitchen all in one. Everything here is the very latest thing.

And it's all surrounded by pristine forests and an archipelago. What's not to love?

When to Go

Stockholm



Mid-Jun–mid-Aug Stockholm's long days, uncanonically pretty light and mild weather are dreamy.

Dec–Feb The city is a frosted cake, with holiday markets and mugs of *glögg* around every corner.

Sep–Oct Less-reliable weather, but minimal crowds and beautiful fall colours.

It's the Water

You'll see signs in many of Stockholm's hotels boasting that the city's tap water is among the cleanest on earth and perfectly good to drink. This is no exaggeration. There's virtually no excuse for buying bottled water in Sweden. Stockholm's tap water comes from Lake Mälaren in the middle of the city, itself clean enough that locals swim in it all summer and fish from it year-round.

Such close ties to the water may help explain Stockholmers' early and thorough embrace of 'green' environmental practices: when people walk past their water source every day on their way to work, it's difficult to ignore the importance of keeping it pure.

Water quality in and around the city is monitored by the Swedish National Food Administration; to learn more, visit www.stockholmvattnen.se/en. Meanwhile, carry your own refillable water bottle and don't hesitate to fill it up right from the tap.

DON'T MISS

Museums in Stockholm aren't cheap, but they're excellent value – this city knows how to enthrall. A handful you should investigate include the crowd-pleasing **Vasamuseet**, which tells the story of a sunken ship; the **Moderna Museet** for modern-art fans; the **Nationalmuseum** for students of any kind of art or design; and the **Historiska Museet** to get a solid grasp of Swedish history.

Regional Tours

From Stockholm it's easy to arrange various day or half-day tours, whether your interests run toward ancient history, royal palaces or seaside picnics. For something more ambitious, book a multiday journey along the **Göta Canal** (www.stromma.se; 4 days from Skr9775; ☺ May-early Sep) from coast to coast.

In just under two hours, the **Archipelago 'Race'** (www.stromma.se; tours Skr290; ☺ tours at 11.15am, 1.15pm & 3.15pm mid-Jun-Aug) whips you along on a guided tour among the islands nearest the city. Boats leave from Strömkajen outside the Grand Hôtel.

Just 25 minutes away by boat, **Fjäderholmarna** (Feather Islands; www.fjaderholmslinjen.se; adult/child round-trip Skr110/55; ☺ hourly 10am-midnight May-early Sep) make for an easy escape from the city and are a favourite swimming spot for locals. Boats depart from Slussen.

Other options include an atmospheric all-day trip from Stockholm to the Unesco World Heritage Site of Birka (p103) on the island of Björkö; and a romantic jaunt to Drottningholm (p95) via turn-of-the-century steam ship. Both boat trips depart from Stadshusbron.

TOP TIP

Stockholm is not a crack-of-dawn city. If you want a museum to yourself, arrive right when it opens. But if you're after clubbing crowds, consider a disco nap; chic places don't start hopping before 10pm and stay packed until 4am.

Fast Facts

- » Population: 847,073 (city proper)
- » Area: 216 sq km
- » Telephone area code: 08

Planning Your Trip

Book ahead for accommodation, car hire and big-ticket entertainment (touring exhibitions, film festivals, popular bands). Top-end restaurants require reservations, but usually only a day or so in advance. Do book if you're planning an excursion during summer (to Gotland, for example), especially if you're bringing a vehicle.

Resources

- » Official visitor guide: www.visitstockholm.com/en
- » Official Sweden blog portal: blogs.sweden.se
- » Aftonbladet newspaper guide: www.alltomstockholm.se
- » Swedish Film Institute: www.sfi.se
- » Lonely Planet: www.lonelyplanet.com/sweden