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# Primer

## The Kingdom of Sweden

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Sweden is a traveler's paradise. The air and water are crystal clean, and there are thousands of acres of unspoiled forests and majestic lakes to explore, not to mention vast archipelagos along its coasts. With its rich history and varied landscapes, Sweden is a traveler's paradise.

Sweden is officially known as the Kingdom of Sweden, a name that it has used since 1397, when Sweden's first King was crowned. Unlike most countries in Europe, Sweden's boundaries have stayed relatively stable during this time making it one of Europe's oldest nations. Sweden is Europe's fifth largest country and is approximately the size of the east coast of the United States. Sweden shares a land border with Finland and Norway,

and is connected to Denmark by a bridge.

Forests cover over 50% of Sweden, there are also around 100,000 lakes and over 24,000 islands throughout the country. Sweden's right to public access laws allows these areas to be fully accessible to the public.

Sweden has remained neutral in all wars since 1814, including World Wars I and II. Despite the country's peaceful nature all Swedish citizens over the age of 19 have to complete 15 months of military service.

A number of prominent manufacturing and technology companies were founded in Sweden including Volvo, Saab, Spotify and IKEA.

Sweden is a constitutional monarchy and King Carl XVI Gustaf is the head of state, but the role of the monarch is mostly ceremonial. The Prime Minister is the head of government in Sweden. The current Prime Minister of Sweden is Stefan Löfven.

## Stockholm

Stockholm is the capital and largest city in Sweden. Built on 14 islands connected by 57 bridges, it's known for restaurants, bars, museums and amazing architecture.

The Royal Palace in Stockholm is the official residence of His Majesty the King of Sweden, with over 600 rooms. The Palace is open to the public and has five museums. The Palace was built in the Italian Baroque style during the eighteenth century.

Stockholm's Old Town is known as Gamla Stan, a small concentrated area where the city began in the middle of the 13th century. The narrow winding cobblestone streets, with buildings painted in different shades of gold, give Gamla Stan its unique character. There are several beautiful churches and museums in Gamla Stan, including Sweden's national cathedral, Stockholm Cathedral and the Nobel Museum.

The Vasa Museum in Stockholm is Sweden's most popular museum and attracts a million visitors annually. The Vasa ship capsized and sank on its maiden voyage to Stockholm in 1628. After 333 years on the sea bed

the mighty warship was salvaged. The ship lay below the icy waters for more than three centuries until a salvage operation took place in 1961. The museum offers a look at life aboard a 17th century ship.

### Did you know?

A sub-culture known as raggare keeps the American greaser culture alive in the middle-Swedish countryside. Raggare translates to Greaser in Swedish. Who knew?

In the 1950s, Raggare took hold in post-World War II Sweden, with Swedish teens falling in love with the cars, films and music that were flooding in from America. Raggare dress the part of 1950s guys and girls, with slicked-back pompadours, leather jackets, and often a pack of smokes tucked into the sleeve of a t-shirt.

However, the cars are the most important feature of raggare style. Hotrods from the 1950's are seen so regularly around Sweden, blasting American 50's tunes, that it is common place. Today Sweden has one of the largest collections of 1950s and '60s American made cars in the world.

## Northern Sweden

The northern part of Sweden is one of the best places in the world to catch sight of the Northern Lights, also known as the Aurora Borealis. Aurora season in the north of Sweden runs roughly from the end of September until the start of April.

Usually, the northern lights are only visible in Sweden's northern reaches. A tour through this part of Sweden offers the chance to see the northern lights and spot wild reindeer. The northern lights are a phenomenon of color. The most common sort is a pale green arc that appears to hang high in the air and at the other end of the scale, you'll see bold curtains of multi-colored light dancing from one side of the night sky to the other, with wispy trails of green and red light spinning off towards the horizon.

Kiruna is Sweden's northernmost town and shares the same latitude as central Greenland. Far enough away from the bright lights of Kiruna and with an icy river running right past it, Jukkasjärvi is a great spot for seeing the northern lights. This town, just 10 miles outside of Kiruna is home to the

world's first ever Ice Hotel. The hotel, is re-created each year in a new design, built from ice in the river Torne.

### What Causes the Northern Lights?

The northern lights appear when tiny particles stream out from the Sun and hit Earth's atmosphere. The particles give some of their energy to atoms and molecules of gases in the upper atmosphere. But the atoms and molecules cannot hold the energy. They quickly give it off as another kind of energy, the colors of light that we call the aurora. These lights occur most often around the North Pole and South Pole because the incoming particles have an electric charge. As the particles arrive, Earth's magnetic field guides them toward the poles.

## Learn a little Swedish:

### Kräftskiva

Kräftskiva is a crayfish party that is a traditional summer eating and drinking celebration in August. It involves boiled crayfish served with boiled potato and dill.

### Swedish expressions:

A Swede doesn't say "no worries" if everything is alright... he tells you there is "*no cow on the ice.*" (*Ingen ko på isen*)

A Swede is not "dressed to the nines"... he is "*dressed up to his teeth.*" (*Klädd up till tänderna*)

A Swede has not had too much to drink he is "*on the cinnamon.*" (*På kanelen*)



Above: Sweden's Royal Palace (Kungliga slottet)

Below Northern Lights



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