

# The Insider's Guide to Moving and Living in Sweden

## 01

### **Sweden essentials**

An introduction to Sweden and the people with a DNA built by the freedom to roam and digitalisation. The numbers, the traditions and the food.

## 02

### **Swedish history**

All you need to know about the sustainable identity of Sweden, the royal family, important years and a country heading towards a green and equal future.

## 03

### **Life in Sweden**

How to find and make friends, find a job opportunity, apply for a job and where to start your Swedish bucket list.



# Hej!

I am Sweden.

I carry thoughts and perspectives from ten million people.

My DNA is built by the freedom to roam, the way I am able to combine a career with being a parent, the love for spending time outdoors and the firm belief that a break for fika is always a good idea. I promise, I will explain what it is all about.

I am a country of flat organisations and of freedom within responsibility. I am a country with great trust in authority, and a country where freedom of speech is a constitutional right. I am proud of equal rights as well as an ongoing work with sustainability.

Sometimes my winters seem endlessly long and dark, but every now and then the dark night sky sparkles with northern lights. And when summer arrives, the days are long and the nights are far from dark. Up north - the sun will shine throughout the summer night.

I am happy to hear you consider staying in Sweden. I will try to teach you some of the bits and pieces that will make it easier to understand how life here works.

I also hope I can help you find the courage to think what you thought was unthinkable and do what you thought was undoable.

Welcome!

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01 Sweden essentials

# Staying in Sweden - the Essential Basics



Let's start with the essentials. You will need to get digital, check if you need a Swedish drivers licence, open a bank account and you need to find a job. Also - you need to learn Swedish and understand the basic parts of our culture.

This chapter is all about the necessary basics to start your life in Sweden.

Let me start you off with listing some of the most important things when you consider to stay in Sweden for a longer period of time:



1. **Move to Sweden in 10 steps:**  
[sweden.se](http://sweden.se)
2. **Apply for work permit:**  
[migrationsverket.se](http://migrationsverket.se)
3. **Apply for citizenship:**  
[migrationsverket.se](http://migrationsverket.se)
4. **Register yourself with Skatteverket in order to initiate the process of receiving a national identity number, get an ID-card and to pay taxes:**  
[skatteverket.se](http://skatteverket.se)
5. **Start looking for a place to stay - (Flip to page 43)**
6. **Register for BankID (electronic identity used online):**  
[bankid.com/en](http://bankid.com/en)
7. **Apply for an electronic Freja e-id card:**  
[frejaeid.com](http://frejaeid.com)
8. **Open a bank account (national identity number needed)**
9. **Find a job - (Flip to page 52)**  
[arbetsformedlingen.se](http://arbetsformedlingen.se)
10. **Spend time on LinkedIn:**  
[linkedin.com](http://linkedin.com)

11. **Start or register your own business:**  
[bolagsverket.se/en](http://bolagsverket.se/en)
12. **Start learning Swedish - (Flip to page 40)**
13. **Open a Kivra digital inbox for e-mail from authorities:**  
[kivra.se/en](http://kivra.se/en)
14. **Arrange daycare or school if you are accompanied by family members:**  
[utbildningsguiden.skolverket.se](http://utbildningsguiden.skolverket.se)
15. **Connect your bank account and mobile number to Swish for digital payments:**  
[swish.nu](http://swish.nu)
16. **Have a break for fika - (Flip to page 20)**
17. **Check if you need a Swedish drivers licence:**  
[bransch.trafikverket.se/en](http://bransch.trafikverket.se/en)
18. **Find different associations to get in touch with people who share your interests - (Flip to page 48)**
19. **Make sure your calendar shows Swedish holidays**
20. **Add a kräftskiva and days like Cinnamon Bun Day to the calendar:**  
[visitsweden.com/what-to-do](http://visitsweden.com/what-to-do)
21. **Research nature preserves, places to hike, outdoor gyms, mountain bike tracks and outdoor experiences:**  
[naturkartan.se](http://naturkartan.se)

# Important Phone Numbers and Websites



**SOS**, in case of emergencies: 112

**Police**, if not urgent: 114 14

**National information number** in case of other accidents and crisis: 113 13

**Healthcare** advice by phone 1177 or 1177.se - or use one of several online doctors

**Crisis Information** from Swedish Authorities:  
[krisinformation.se/en](http://krisinformation.se/en)

**Read more:** [sosalarm.se](http://sosalarm.se)

## **Let me start you off with a basic introduction to the Swedish language.**

Hej! - Hello or Hi

Hej då! - Goodbye

Ja - Yes

Nej - No

Tack - Thank you or please

Varsågod - You're welcome! / Here you are!

Snälla - Please

Hur är läget? - How are you? In quite an informal way. Sort of an icebreaker that always works.

Läget? - Hur är läget? Shortened into only one word

Bara bra, tack! - I'm fine, thank you.

Va? - A very short way of saying sorry, excuse me, what do you mean, I didn't quite hear what you said, I didn't understand what you just said and so on. Va? Is the reason Swedish people tend to be accidentally rude in English since we often translate it with the phrase "what?" Instead of a more appropriate "sorry?"

Fika - preferably coffee and a cinnamon roll, and time to sit together and chat. Fika break is expected from you at work and it is an easy way to spend time together wherever and whenever.

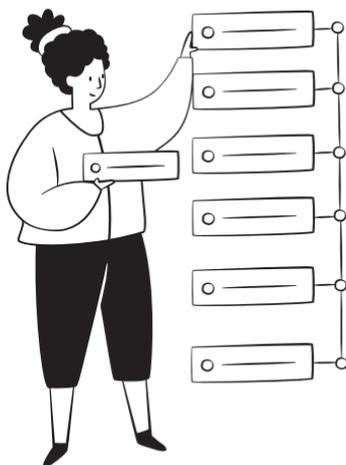
**Lagom** - Just right. A perfect amount of something. Not too much and not too little. Swedish people love lagom and also - we love informing everyone not Swedish about the word lagom. Far from lagom, we often speak proudly about how lagom actually works.

**Pratar du engelska?** - Do you speak English?

**Vilket väder vi har!** - What weather! Starting a conversation with something concerning weather is always an ice breaker.

# Swedish Bucket List

Varsågod, here is some inspiration to start creating your very own Swedish bucket list of things to do.



Mountains in the north, archipelagos at the seaside as well as in our large lakes, long white beaches and a vast, flat landscape in the south.

Sweden is a narrow but vast piece of land. 1572 kilometres from north to south and at its widest, 500 kilometres from east to west. The north polar circle crosses the northern part of Sweden creating something completely different from the southern parts of our country.

### **Fjällvärlden - the mountains and scenery in the north**

Imagine the Alps. But much older when it comes to geology - and therefore not as high. We call them fjäll, and they are found in the northwestern parts of Sweden. The most southern fjäll area is located in Dalarna, and the further north you get the higher the fjäll gets. For a mountain to pass as fjäll it is required to have trädgräns - where trees stop growing.

### **City areas**

We have three major cities. Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö.

**Stockholm** is our capital city. Tourists as well as locals appreciate a stroll through the Old Town. Stockholm is built on several islands, and is situated where the large lake Mälaren connects with the Baltic Sea.

**Gothenburg** is situated on the west coast. Public ferries take you out to the archipelago. On the tourist bucket list for Gothenburg you find the amusement park Liseberg, the fish market Feskekörka, and the art gallery Galleri Backlund.

**Malmö** is connected to the rest of Europe via Øresundsbron, a bridge for cars and trains between Sweden and Denmark. Malmö is a city with a continental touch. It is well known for its diversity; having plenty of restaurants, famous street food, markets and parks as well as classic and modern music scenes.

### **Towns & villages**

You will find towns and villages with a city feeling, and you will find towns and villages with almost no services at all, but still most of them have a strong sense of community. Some towns are home to plenty of people during summer or winter - depending on the area of tourism - and the very same towns and villages may feel a bit sleepy during off season. In a country where only three metropolitan areas count as cities, towns and villages are just as important. Size does not really matter!

### **Countryside**

The characteristic countryside varies a bit, but in many areas you see tiny villages with traditional red houses and farms. Small village shops sell groceries as well as products from local farms. Farm shops and cafés are important for the local community. They provide a simple way of finding and choosing locally produced food and products in order to support your neighbourhood and choose sustainability when shopping.

### **Archipelago**

There are several archipelagos in Sweden. Most of them are found by the seaside but there are also archipelagos in some of our larger lakes. Characteristics of Swedish archipelagos are plenty of smaller uninhabited islands. You are allowed to go by boat or canoe to visit any uninhabited island unless local restrictions apply different rules.

### **We are a country of lakes**

Nine percent of Sweden is covered by around 100 000 lakes. Only lakes larger than one hectare are counted and the amount varies due to changes caused by land rising. The six largest lakes are Vänern, Vättern and Mälaren, Storsjön, Torneträsk and Siljan.

Together these six cover two percent of the country's area. They are located in places where they represent a diverse variety of life and scenery.

### **Three large islands to visit**

There are 270 000 Swedish islands in various sizes. Gotland and Öland are located in the Baltic Sea. They both consist of a limestone foundation, agricultural landscape and their own characteristic accent.

Gotland is home to more sheep than people. You can travel to Gotland by ferry from Nynäshamn, Oskarshamn or Västervik.

Öland is connected to the mainland by Ölandsbron, a six kilometre long bridge between Kalmar and Färjestaden.

Another large island is Visingsö, situated in lake Vättern. It is connected to the mainland by ferry from the charming town of Gränna, also known for hand crafted red and white peppermint candy canes, polkagrisar.



A shack placed along the High Coast Trail for public use.  
Martin Edström/imagebank.sweden.se

### **Nature preserves and national parks**

We have a system of protecting valuable natural resources and at the same time making them accessible to people. In nature preserves and national parks, local restrictions may apply and affect how and what you can do. Nature preserves are a great way to explore the very best of the Swedish outdoors and scenery. Forests cover seventy percent of Sweden, and our wildlife is impressive but also quite harmless. There are not a lot of dangerous species. If you are an outdoor person, you will sooner or later get a glance of an elk, a smaller relative of the Canadian moose.

### **Biosphere preserves**

Sweden has seven biosphere preserves. They are areas that UNESCO pointed out as important role model areas when it comes to enhancing the relationship between people and their environment. They are also areas with extraordinary scenery as well as plenty of local entrepreneurship.

# Traditional Swedish Food

## 1. Köttbullar

Pan fried meatballs. Often served with potatoes, gravy, green peas and lingonberry jam.

## 2. Sill

Pickled herring comes in a variety of flavours. Traditionally served on a smörgåsboard during festive holidays such as Christmas, Midsummer and Easter. Also eaten during summer together with potatoes, sour cream and chives.

## 3. Surströmming

Fermented baltic herring. Smelly tradition from the 1600s that some Swedes enjoy every year. A valuable tip is to open the can outdoors and most preferably under water - you DO NOT want this smell on your clothes.

## 4. Yellow pea soup and pancakes

Traditional Thursday meal. Yellow pea soup should be topped with thyme and a dash of mustard. The savoury crepe-like pancakes are most often served for dessert with strawberry jam and whipped cream.

## 5. Lördagsgodis - Saturday sweets

This is the Swedish way of implementing lagom (flip to page 13) into our children's never ending love for the smågodis. Once a week, and once a week only, they can pick and mix their own choice of sweets in about any shop or gas station - the traditional Swedish way. Salty liquorice can never be eaten lagom enough though.



A traditional crayfish party.  
Anna Hållams/imagebank.sweden.se

## 6. Kräftor

Crayfish. Every August, Swedish people get together with friends and family for Kräftskiva, a crayfish party. It is compulsory to wear funny hats, sing silly songs and indulge in crayfish, toast and Västerbottenpaj, which is a pie filled with aged cheese from the northern county of Västerbotten.

## 7. Grillad korv med bröd

We love eating outdoors. And we love keeping it simple. A hot dog and a bun - grilled over open fire served ketchup and mustard is our favourite choice of outdoor food all year round.

## 8. What's for the holidays?

We do the smörgåsboard thing at Christmas, at Easter and at Midsummer. It's a pick and mix of pickled herring, seared ham with a mustard coating, meatballs, smoked salmon, gravlax salmon, bread and cheese. Same food - different decorations.

# Welcome to the Land of Fika

Fika is sort of having a coffee break, but also adding something sweet to go with the coffee and the time to sit down and talk.



## 1. Kaffe

Swedes love their coffee strong and are among the heaviest consumers of coffee in the world. However, coffee on its own does not make a complete fika. Fika consists of coffee, tea or fruit cordial accompanied by something sweet. You can fika on your own, with colleagues, family or friends.

## 2. Kanelbulle

Cinnamon rolls or buns are sweet baked wheat pastry whirls with plenty of cinnamon, plenty of butter and lagom of sugar. Kanelbulle can be homemade or bought at almost any coffee shop, supermarket or gas station. Also, they are the perfect dessert after grillad korv med bröd as they are delicious to eat if reheated over an open fire when outdoors.

### **3. Chokladboll**

Non-baked round chocolate balls, sort of an old fashioned raw ball where the main ingredient is oats. Swedish people love oats, and in the average Swedish kitchen you don't need to go shopping in order to make chokladbollar - the ingredients are always in our cupboards. To make chokladbollar is a quick fix for any occasion.

### **4. Semla**

It is absolutely essential to eat semla in February. Traditionally on Fat Tuesday, which we also call Semmeldagen. Most Swedes have forgotten that it is a tradition derived from preparing for Christian fasting. Nowadays we tend to start the overindulging of semla in January, and keep going until the end of March. At least. A semla has everything. It's a wheat bun with cardamom, filled with almond paste, covered in a layer of whipped cream and topped with icing sugar.

### **5. Prinsesstårta**

One of our favourites is a layered sponge cake covered with green marzipan and topped with a sugar paste rose. Prinsesstårta is perfect in order to celebrate just about anything. It was the favourite pastry of the three Haga princesses of Sweden in the early 1900s, and it's forever going strong.

### **6. Sju sorters kakor**

Småkakor are tiny cookies, most often with a crisp texture. They come in a variety of shapes; they might be round, square and sometimes layered, and usually in flavours of vanilla, chocolate or with a dash of strawberry, raspberry or apricot jam. Traditionally a good fika involves seven different types of cookies. Reasonable if you ask us.

### **7. Pepparkaka**

This might be confusing. Peppar simply means pepper but a pepparkaka contains no pepper at all. Pepparkaka is Swedish for gingerbread. We like our gingerbread thin crispy - more like a biscuit than a bread and they taste of ginger, cardamom, cinnamon and clove. Perhaps this is where the word pepper comes in - it is quite spicy compared to traditional Swedish food and in the old days, spicy was equivalent to peppery.

02 Swedish history

# The Sustainable Identity, our Royal Family & Important Years

I tried to choose some of the most important bits and pieces of Swedish history to share with you. We are heading towards a green, sustainable and equal future and we are digitalized by heart - but still, we are shaped by history and the brave Swedish people who brought change and new ideas before our time.

We are proud of our people, celebrities and inventions as well as of the political system and the historical events that created our identity.

I think history does several things. It defines who you are as well as where you are heading. Let me hit you with some Swedish basic history and numbers.

**Population:** 10 million

**Capital:** Stockholm

**Main language:** Swedish (Svenska)

**National minority languages:** Finnish, Sami, Meänkieli, Romani and Yiddish

**Political system:** Constitutional monarchy with parliamentary democracy

**Religion:** The Church of Sweden is Evangelical Lutheran. The country is considered one of the world's most secularised countries even though almost 6 million people are members of the Church of Sweden.

**Work hours:** Standard work week is 40 hours. Minimum paid vacation is 5 weeks (25 working days).

**Currency:** Swedish krona (SEK)

**GDP(Gross domestic product):** SEK 5,450 billion (2021)

**Investments in R&D:** 3% of GDP annually

**Most important exports:** Vehicles and machines, pharmaceuticals/chemicals, electronics, minerals, wood products, energy, food, shoes and clothes.

**Hours of daylight and average temperature**

	<b>January</b>	<b>July</b>
Malmö, south Sweden	7h -0,7°C	17h 16,5°C
Stockholm, sort of in the middle	6h -2,9°C	18h 17,2°C
Kiruna, north Sweden	0h -15,6°C	24h 12,8°C



# Years of Importance



**8000 BC** - When the inland ice slowly started to melt, the first inhabitants could settle down in Sweden. The very first people to inhabit the north were the Sami people, and their ancestors still remain.

**800 - 1050 AD** - This period of time is called The Age of Vikings. Some Vikings went on expeditions to plunder and trade along the Baltic coast and rivers, as well as the British Coast. Since there was no such thing as social media but still a need to express, the Vikings left messages of life and death inscribed in rune stones. However, the traditional image of Vikings wearing helmets equipped with horns is an invention by artists in the 1800s. And most Vikings did lead a quiet peaceful life on farms and in villages.

**1523** - Gustav Vasa was crowned. He turned out to be an important king since he brought on the Protestant Reformation. The king had absolute power over the state, and the church was nationalised.

**1850-1930s** - 1,5 million Swedish people emigrated to America due to the economic crisis brought on by the Napoleonic wars. The industry in Sweden began to grow rapidly at the end of the 19th century, starting the transformation of Sweden as one of the leading European industrial nations after World War II.

**1919** - Sweden gets general and equal rights to vote for men and women.

**1920** - Sweden joins the League of Nations.

**1944** - Homosexual relations are legalised.

**1946** - Sweden joins the United Nations.

**1972** - Sweden is the first country in the world to legally allow gender transition.

**1974** - The Swedish Abortion Act gives women the right to decide for themselves whether they want to end pregnancy within early weeks.

**1979** - Gender Equality Act.

**1987** - Ban on discrimination against homosexuals by businesses and government officials takes effect.

**1995** - Sweden joins the EU.

**2000** - The Swedish Church is separated from the state.

**2022** - Sweden applies to join Nato hand in hand with Finland after 200 years of freedom of alliance, and peace.

# The Swedish Royal Family

Sweden is a constitutional monarchy. Our King, Carl XVI Gustaf, is a non-political head of state and his duties are regulated by law. He serves as a representative of our country and a symbol of Sweden.

King Carl XVI Gustaf is our longest reigning monarch, celebrating 50 years of service in 2023. Our royal family derives from the French house of Bernadotte. To keep a long story short, Sweden was in need of a king. We found him in France. When Jean Baptiste Bernadotte arrived in Sweden in 1810 he was renamed Karl XIV Johan. Problem solved.

The royal family today consists of King Carl XVI Gustaf, Queen Silvia and their three children Crown Princess Victoria, Prince Carl Philip and Princess Madeleine and their families.

We have a full cognatic succession which means that the eldest child inherits the throne. Crown Princess Victoria is next in line. She is married to Prince Daniel, and they have two children; Princess Estelle and Prince Oscar.

Do you remember the Haga Princesses and that green layered cake topped with a rose? The Crown Princess and her family have an official residence in the Haga Palace in Stockholm. Princess Victoria and Prince Daniel are very interested in environmental issues and projects concerning crisis and conflict management as well as physical activity, especially for our younger citizens.

Crown Princess Victoria celebrates her birthday on the 14th of July, and the public is always invited to celebrate with her at the family summer residence on Öland.



Drottningholm Palace is the Swedish royal family's private residence and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Melker Dahlstrand/imagebank.sweden.se

# Swedish Icons



I am exceptionally proud of so many people, businesses and inventions. It was really hard to choose only some of them, but here it goes:

**Alfred Nobel** - inventor, chemist, engineer and entrepreneur. Except for his own inventions such as dynamite, the name is mostly associated with the Nobel prize. The Nobel Prize is among the most prestigious awards within its categories; physiology or medicine, physics, chemistry, literature, economic sciences and peace. A large banquet has been held in Stockholm and Norwegian capital Oslo every December 10th since 1901 in order to celebrate the winners.

**Nils Bohlin** - Whenever you fasten your seatbelt you get in touch with one of our most important inventions. The three-point seat belt was invented by Nils Bohlin, engineer at Volvo in 1959. Volvo decided to leave the patent open so that every car manufacturer could use it. It is estimated to have saved more than one million lives.

**Astrid Lindgren** - Do you recognise a young, red headed girl with braids? She lives on her own in a large house, without parents, but accompanied by a horse, a monkey and a large trunk filled with gold money? Her name is Pippi Långstrump in Swedish and she is one of many figures from the wonderful fairytales written by Astrid Lindgren.

Astrid started telling stories to her own children when they were young, and later she shared those stories with the world. The author did not only write popular books for children, she also used her power to address issues she really cared for. Children and their wellbeing was very important to Astrid. It is said that when she held a speech on children and child abuse it was one of the factors that led to Sweden being one of the first countries to ban corporal punishment of children in 1979.

**Caroline Farberger** - Born as Carl Farberger, she decided to be open and transparent with her gender transition in order to encourage others to be brave enough to do the same. She became Caroline with the Swedish people whilst being chief executive at a large Swedish insurance company.

### Here are a few more famous Swedish people

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Avicii	Chart-topping Swedish DJ and producer.
ABBA	Iconic Swedish pop group.
Zara Larsson	Swedish pop singer with international hits.
Armand Duplantis	Swedish-American world record-holding pole vaulter(2023).
Zlatan Ibrahimovic	Legendary Swedish footballer.
Ebba Årsjö	Swedish alpine skier with paralympics and world cup medals.
Jonna Sundling	Swedish cross-country skier and world champion.

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### Swedish inventions

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Pacemaker	Medical device that regulates the heartbeat.
Adjustable wrench	A versatile hand tool used for turning nuts and bolts.
Zipper	Fastening device used to join fabric edges.
Einride	Swedish company producing electric and autonomous freight vehicles.

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### Some Swedish companies I think you might recognize already:

Volvo, Spotify, Klarna, Minecraft, Swish, Ericsson, Assa, H&M, Electrolux, SAAB and IKEA.



Bergaliv Loft House is a mountain getaway in northern Sweden.  
Martin Edström/imagebank.sweden.se

## **I am heading towards a green, sustainable and equal future.**

Sweden was the first country in the world to pass an environmental protection act back in 1967. Our ambition is constant pioneering as well as taking the lead within the area of environmental development.

There is an ongoing collaboration where the public, companies and politicians strive for a green and equal future. Still, we are not flawless. We have plenty to learn and adjust and we do have a politician or two who still persistently denies that there is an ongoing climate change.

Swedish people care for the environment. We separate and recycle our waste at home as well as in most offices and public areas. We strive to make all aspects of living and working in Sweden more green and sustainable.

Our industries are turning towards green solutions. Individuals are drilled since childhood to care for simple as well as more complicated environmental issues. We bring our litter back home, and eco driving is a compulsory part of the drivers licence exam. By the way - bring your own reusable bag when you go shopping, no matter if you head towards H&M or your local grocery store.

We are quite sure you have heard of Greta Thunberg. She went on a school strike for climate change back in 2018. Since then she has educated and inspired people all over the world when it comes to climate change issues. She is an important and respected voice of the young generation.

An act giving women equal rights to vote was passed in 1919. In the forthcoming election of 1921, five women were elected into the Swedish parliament. In 2021 we had our first female prime minister, Magdalena Andersson, leader of the Social Democratic Party.

The challenges we face in the future require great shifts considering the way we live our lives and run our companies. It applies to Sweden as well as the world. It is our true belief that continuous development in new technologies will lead to a bright, equal and sustainable future.

Industries producing typical Swedish products like steel, batteries and concrete are changing into green energy in production. We tend to choose wooden materials in buildings. We are exploring how buildings can be used together with solar cells or converted to wind turbines. The latter might soon be constructed from the wood we can take out of our forests. Our organic waste is turned into gas or heat and distributed by district heated systems. It is a system dating back to 1948.

Do you remember that we mentioned Gotland? The large island which is home to more sheep than people has a really cool innovation. We built a road on Gotland that actually charges your electric vehicle as you drive. We love exploring and inventing environmentally friendly business.

## **Green industries are attractive**

“One of our colleagues said that he made the calculations and in terms of reduced CO2 per working hour there is no better place to work. We hear that a lot from the talent we talk to; our purpose attracts people who want to make a real difference. Both younger talent who wouldn’t necessarily have chosen to work in this industry a few years ago, but also those who have been in the industry and want to make up for a CO2-heavy past.

## **Sustainability and digitalization are both built into our DNA.**

The operators and international experts that we need for our green hydrogen-, green iron- and green steel plant, will join a modern industrial impact startup that is unlike any existing steel mills. We work very closely with the local society in which we operate and as we expect to grow with up to 2.000 employees, we see that the growth and the opportunity in the bigger region will add some 10.000 to job opportunities in total.”

Philip Alsén, Head of Talent Acquisition, H2 Green Steel

# Find a Home, Get Outdoors and Join the Club



When you decide to stay in Sweden you need to find somewhere to live, you need to prepare yourself for four very different seasons and you need to know how outdoor life works.

In this chapter I am going to try to explain how you can find somewhere to live, how the freedom to roam works and how you can dress for the outdoors.

I am also trying to explain how to get a Swedish friend, the importance of language and how to join the club.

# Swedes in General

**I know you are curious, what are Swedish people like?  
And how on forest covered earth can you get to know us?**

There are over 10 million people in Sweden. You will meet quite a lot of different types of Swedish people, and they are taught not to do what we are about to do now: generalise.

We address each other by first name. Yes, that's true. Let's use Anna Andersson since it's a combination of the most popular first name and the most common surname. Anna Andersson might be a miss, mrs, or whatever - we don't care, to us, she will be just Anna. We rarely use titles to address anyone apart from members of the royal family or an extraordinary old and stubborn aunt.

Cash is not a Swedish king thing. We are extraordinary digital when it comes to money transactions, banking and finance. In fact, we have come to a point where most shops stopped handling cash. We pay by card, Apple Pay or the Swedish invention Swish. It is almost impossible to manage without Swish since it is used in shops, restaurants, fruit or flea markets as well as to transfer money between individuals.

We are outdoor people by heart. You will learn more about Swedish outdoor life and turning your face towards the sun in winter if you continue reading.

It may not be our first step, but in time we might invite you to our home. Be careful not to enter with your shoes on though - when invited to a Swedish home, shoes go off as soon as you enter. You'll probably see a pile of shoes for different outdoor activities next to the front door - put your own there as well and trust us when we ask you to feel at home.

## Swedish workplaces and Nordic values

“The Swedish workplace is a very consensus driven environment. It may seem quite strange at first that so much time is dedicated to decision making, even concerning small matters. Over time you will learn that things do move forward and Swedish businesses have a proven record of being pioneers in many fields. Buckle down, listen and learn and you will find a way of understanding the Nordic values and processes that will make things a lot easier during the settling down phase.

Life outside of work is very organised, planned and compartmentalised. Swedes can tell you where they will be during each individual week of the year for the next five years with a high degree of accuracy. It is truly amazing to experience this being played out by an entire nation. Spontaneity is not really a ‘thing’. Which also means that many who move to Sweden also find it almost impossible to have a relationship or even an experience with Swedes outside of the workplace. However, if they let you into their circle, they are very warm and gracious hosts.”

Patrick Hamilton Walsh, Co-Founder, Glotalco



## Language

**I am good at English. Still - it is really important to make an effort to learn Swedish.**

Learning Swedish is essential. We do not expect your Swedish to be perfect in any way. When you decide to stay in Sweden you will notice that language is key. If you let us - we are keen to help you. We have already been through the lagom and fika and smla, and we would like you to learn the rest as well.

Even though we consider ourselves to be brilliant in English, and are happy to speak English to you - you need to make the effort of learning Swedish in order to truly integrate. Learning Swedish is key to understand and to be able to navigate through our society. If you try your very best with learning Swedish we will find you lagom (flip to page 13) and try our very best to make you feel at home. However, don't forget to tell us that you would like to practise Swedish - otherwise we will take every opportunity to practise English. A bit contradictory, ursäkta!

## **Work life balance**

An important part of our DNA is parental leave and combining career and kids. Your Swedish colleagues will stay home for VAB.

An important part of the Swedish DNA is our 480 days of paid parental leave, paid out by Försäkringskassan. Coupled with five weeks paid vacation, it gives us the opportunity to enjoy parenthood and family life without taking away the privilege of having a career from any parent.

We are proud to be able to grant women and men the access to both being a parent and having a career. Couples are encouraged to share parental leave as equal as possible in order for children to be able to spend time with both their parents.

Then again - career and small children can be a challenge when parental leave has come to an end and therefore we have VAB. It's short for vård av barn which means that a parent has the right to stay at home and take care of their little ones when needed. Flues, colds or chicken-pox are inevitable when children are young. Parents can stay at home getting paid from Försäkringskassan if their children are not well enough to attend daycare or school.

If you are not sure whether you are entitled to parental leave or VAB, check with the Social Insurance Agency, Försäkringskassan: [forsakringskassan.se](http://forsakringskassan.se)

# So You're Staying?



Cool, let's find somewhere you can live! In order to settle in nicely you have to find somewhere to live. Finding a home can turn out at different levels of trickiness depending on where in Sweden you would like to live.

## **Renting a home**

If you are looking for a home to rent there are two types of contracts available. First hand contracts, förstahandskontrakt, and second hand contracts, andrahandskontrakt. The first hand contract is preferred but can be almost impossible to find in some of our larger cities. There are both local and national, private and public web sites where you can look for a place to rent. You may have to join a queue. It might be smart to start your search at the public municipalities website, they usually list both private and public well renowned landlords.

The most common way of renting homes is unfurnished. IKEA as well as our many second hand shops will help you when it comes to keeping your costs down. In Sweden it is not uncommon to have a lot of second hand furniture.

## **Buying a home**

Would you like to buy a home? Welcome to the world of Hemnet. Hemnet.se is a service where real estate agents list every home for sale. Choose your area, find an object for sale, attend a house showing and join the bidding process.

Don't forget to have a chat with your bank in advance, you need to have something called lånelöfte. It is an appreciation by the bank on how much money you can borrow and you need this in order to join the bidding process.

## **How to survive my four seasons when the seasons start to show off with weather**

Have you ever heard of the three layer principle? If not, it is time because no matter how cold and grey it might be on a winter's day - you need to get outside. The further up north you live, the greater the importance. You need to try to catch daylight at any given opportunity between November and March, since winter is a bit of a challenge when it comes to daylight.

What about the three layers then? Well, it is the best way of staying warm and comfy when outdoors during winter. Start with wool, choose something that can breathe and at the same time keep you warm. Continue with a midlayer in fleece or wool or any other outdoorsy material that works for you. Top it all up with a shell layer. A jacket that is made for the current temperature, preferably windproof and a bit water repellent. Your outfit is complete when wearing gloves, hat and winter boots. You know you are about to get as Swedish as ever possible when you turn your face towards the sun during your lunch walk.

The thing about turning your face towards the sun is actually an essential ingredient in a Swedish survival kit. You get daylight, and the rays of sun are the only natural fuel for your built-in vitamin D factory. During the darkest of winter months, the sun is too low to make D vitamins, but you still need light. Your body will build a D vitamin stock during spring, summer and early autumn.

Lack of vitamin D will make you feel tired and in the worst case, depressed. Lack of daylight will do the same. If sunshine, spending time outdoors and exercise doesn't help - get an appointment to see a doctor to check if you need supplements. You can book appointments and see doctors online.

## **A transparent & safe country**

“I came to northern Sweden and Luleå in October 2010 directly from Iraq. Of course there was a big difference with a lot of things between Luleå and Mosul, including the really bright summers and dark long winters. But for me it has always been ok, sometimes I have felt a bit down in the midst of winter, but you get used to living here and embracing the different seasons. If I am looking for a job now, I am only applying for jobs here in the north!

**I am not interested in leaving Sweden,  
I want my children to grow up in this  
transparent and safe country. Here they will  
have huge opportunities for getting a good  
education and creating great lives.”**

Hussan Saed Hamodi Al Chalabi, PhD in operation and maintenance engineering from Luleå University of Technology.



## How to make a Swedish friend

The typical Swedish friend-to-be is at first very polite, interested, talkative and curious to know where you are from and how you ended up here. Please note that the amount of talkativeness may vary from south to north. However, after the initial talkative curiosity, the Swedish friend-to-be steps back and might “disappear”. This is the tricky part - your Swedish friend-to-be is probably a bit shy and keen not to be too much, since we tend to strive for lagom (flip to page 13).

This sudden shyness has probably nothing at all to do with you. Your Swedish potential friend might feel a little uneasy with speaking a foreign language. It does also take a little bit of time for a Swedish-friend-to-be to trust you well enough to let you come close.

We are used to the idea of having a large amount of personal space. That means we are not used to people being too eager to enter that space. If you are persistent however it might end up quite contradictory - you will have a friend who appreciates that you were the one who dared to step into the personal space.

Do not give up! Get in touch again and again. Ask for help and advice. Ask to go for fika or to spend some time outdoors during the weekend. If you get through the initial phase where it feels like every single initiative comes from you - your Swedish friend-to-be is your Swedish friend for life.

## **The freedom to roam, Allemansrätten, is forever in our hearts!**

We are exceptionally proud of Allemansrätten. The freedom to roam is the general public's right to access most public or privately owned land, lakes, and rivers for recreation and exercise.

It comes with great responsibility though - but when you learn the basics, it is really a sense of freedom.

So, how does it work? You are allowed to spend time in public as well as in privately owned forests. You are allowed to swim and go by boat almost anywhere. You can even pick yourself a bunch of wild flowers to bring home - but you are required to be sure you do not pick flowers that are protected. Taking branches from trees or shrubberies is prohibited. You may pick mushrooms and berries but not hazelnuts or leaves. You can walk on or off paths, you are allowed to make fire if you follow a few regulations. You can spend one night in a tent without asking the landowner for permission. You can go fishing in our five largest lakes and by the coast, with the exception of some restricted areas. In smaller lakes you need to pay a fee to go fishing.

However you have to be careful to pay respect to what we call hemfridszonen - you are not allowed to roam too close to people's houses or gardens.

You can walk, bike and hike almost anywhere but you are not allowed to drive a car or motorcycle off road. You may not make fire on cliffs, directly on the beach or on sensitive ground.

Local restrictions apply in nature preserves - you are not allowed to make fire unless there is a fireplace, you are not allowed to pick flowers or camp and you must be extra careful.

Basically; do not harm, do not disturb, do not litter and do not damage neither wildlife nor crops. Leave the places you visited in the very same condition as when you arrived. If you feel unsure - don't hesitate to ask!

## **Join the club, attend the events and find your kind of Swedish people!**

Now here is the easy part of integrating, but you have to invite yourself. The same rules apply to Swedish people actually, anyone is free to join clubs and social events but it is quite unlikely that you will receive an invitation since anyone can apply for a membership. Just go ahead! Once you are a member, the club or association is most often a second family. In rural areas you will find that activities and get-togethers often are arranged by any of the churches, and they will also take good care of you if you ask to join, whether you share their beliefs or not.

Decide what you would like to do. Is football your thing? Do you prefer sewing, orienteering, painting, cooking, running, singing, reading, coding, building things, cosplay or something else? Let Google help you find your local club for anything you'd like to do and apply. Most often a great sense of community awaits you no matter what your interests are.

Would you like to try out different outdoor activities together with others? A recommendation is to join your nearest local Friluftsförbundet. Most activities with Friluftsförbundet are free for members and you can borrow equipment like ice skates.



A picnic by the sea during a kayak tour on the West Coast of Sweden.  
Anna Hällams/imagebank.sweden.se

# How to Find and Apply for a Job & What is Expected When You're Hired

A Swedish job won't find you - you need to find the opportunities. I am going to explain how to find somewhere to work and how the process of applying for a job works.

When you get hired you will probably notice that you are expected to understand how freedom within responsibility works and that most Swedish organisations are flat rather than based on hierarchy.

And - never underestimate the power of networking and the great ideas that might pop up during fika break with colleagues.

# Finding a Job

**Find vacant jobs in Swedish tech and specific areas of progress.**

Sweden needs you and your skills. We are experiencing a shortage of talent in many areas of employment. A recent report from TechSverige points out that by 2024, Sweden will be around 70 000 talents short in the tech sector alone.

We are a highly digitalized country and with digitalization comes the need for competence in that area of expertise. Between 2006 and 2016, six out of ten new jobs created in Sweden were within the tech industry.

Tech is an important sector in Sweden but there are also other sectors looking for talent. According to Arbetsförmedlingen, The Swedish Public Employment Service, these are the most attractive sectors now and in coming years:

- System analysts and IT-architects
- Software- and system developers
- Occupational therapist
- Specialist doctors
- Midwives
- Specialist nurses
- Dentists
- Teachers in vocational and professional subjects
- Preschool teachers
- Police officers

## **TechSverige needs global tech talents**

"TechSverige is a member organisation for companies of all sizes within the tech sector. We represent over 1,400 members who employ over 100 000 talents. That might sound like a lot, but our members are about to increase fast. At least, that is IF our members can find the talent that they need to keep their companies expanding and developing.

**The market for talents in Sweden is not large enough, we and our members have our eyes far behind Swedish borders.**

We believe that the international talent market is crucial for us. That means both getting talents to choose to come to Sweden and also getting them to choose to stay in Sweden."

Quote from Åsa Zetterberg, Federal Director, TechSverige.

## **Take leadership and ownership of your situation. We call it freedom within responsibility**

In Sweden we are generally not fans of any work structure based on hierarchy. Most companies prefer flat organisations and you might find that grades and titles are less important than what you are used to.

The reason for this is our strong belief in the freedom of individuals. We think that it is your own personal level of ambition that decides where you are heading in life. The term for this way of trusting each other is “frihet under ansvar” which freely translates into “acting freely within your area of responsibility”.

During the pandemic the freedom within responsibility was put to the test for real. The Swedish restrictions were much lighter than in other countries and therefore also much more questioned in media coverage outside Sweden. The thing is that the freedom within responsibility is so imprinted in the Swedish DNA we didn't have the ability to create strict restrictions, nor did we need to. If we are advised to keep our distance, most of us do so even if there is no law saying we are required to.

**“I believe that because of the flatter hierarchies at the workplace in Sweden, you have more freedom to shape your own path of how you would like to develop but will also need to take more initiative to pursue it. It really helps to be aware of and enjoy this, as it is both a great opportunity, but can also be frustrating if you rely too much on receiving directions from others.”**

Tabea Schroth, CMO at MIMSI Materials.

## **Tabea decided to stay in Sweden. Here is her best advice to you.**

- When you are considering staying in Sweden, make sure you know your why: What intrigues you about Sweden? Does Sweden align with your values? If you think Sweden could be a good match for you, start planning your path - it's never too early to start exploring your options and to network.
- Start practising Swedish. Swedes speak really good English, but let your Swedish friends help you learn Swedish. I started with a Swedish Class for international students at the university and would also recommend letting your Swedish friends help you learn Swedish!
- Network as soon and much as possible. Knowing people and being able to ask for help has been really important to me in studies, life and work.
- Find your community or association! This is a great way to have fun, find friends and as a student sometimes even to build your CV! There are lots of communities you can be part of, both to connect with people that share the same interests or goals as you and also to connect with others that have moved to Sweden from abroad and can help each other navigate life in Sweden from the perspective of an international.
- Give it some time - It can take time to get close to Swedes, but once you become friends, you have found a friend for life!
- Find fun ways of experiencing Sweden apart from studies and work. I really like being outdoors no matter the season, every season has its perks. The winters are cold and dark, but the beautiful light installations in many cities and really making your home cozy are great ways to embrace the season.

## **A job won't find you. You will need to find the opportunity yourself - let me try to explain how!**

Sweden is, as mentioned before, quite an informal country. Applying for a job at a Swedish company is therefore quite informal as well. You might already have a resume or a CV, Curriculum Vitae, with an overview of your studies, experience, skills and overall achievements. Try to keep it short, no more than two pages, and make sure to put contact information on top of the first page.

A Swedish company also wants to get to know the person behind the CV, therefore you should include a cover letter. This is your opportunity to communicate what kind of person you are and why you are the best suited applicant for the job and how you will match your colleagues. Do not hesitate to ask a Swedish person for help or advice when it comes to creating a cover letter and CV the Swedish way. There is also always a person in charge of the recruitment process who is available to answer any questions concerning the job or application process.

When you have sent in all the documents requested in the job ad, it is a good idea to follow up by making a phone call to the company in question. Be prepared with a relevant question to ask when making the call. You want to show initiative and not just make small talk.

Hopefully you will be asked to attend a physical or digital interview.

Never underestimate the power of networking. Try to attend events and job fairs arranged by science parks, local business associations and universities.

LinkedIn networking is always a good idea, in Sweden we really like digital opportunities and friends.

**It is not just the talent that needs to understand the culture in Sweden, Swedish companies need to understand and evolve to fit their international talents.**

Linköping-based company Softube's head of HR, Lorna McGeown, originally comes from Great Britain. She emphasises the importance that Swedish companies need to create a strong community in order to retain their international talents.

**“Sharing experiences and new perspectives helps the company to gather new ways of thinking and improves inclusivity at the same time.**

**To support this, Softube offers Swedish classes during working hours for its international employees”**

Lorna McGeown, Head of HR, Softube



# Thank You for Reading!

Now, I am curious. Are you going to stay? Are you ready to make the effort of learning Swedish to get the chance to live life the Swedish way?

Are you up for a life in a country with four very different seasons? Would you like to be friends with people who like spending time outdoors? Are you ready for having fika breaks with colleagues in an organisation where freedom within responsibility comes natural?

Are you prepared to take the lead and ownership of your life? Would you like to explore everyday life in a country where it is considered natural to choose your own way in life?

Welcome to stay in Sweden, I wish you the best of luck!

By the way - a small disclaimer might come in handy. We do generalise a bit when it comes to how Swedish people are and act. We do not claim this to be a complete guide to a life in Sweden. We might have missed something, we might be wrong, but we thought it was our responsibility to try our best to give you a good start.

## Personal Notes

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.











## Sources:

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**Publisher:** Linköping Science Park

**Graphic design:** Söderhavet

**Written by:** Placebrander

**Research by:** Placebrander & Future Place Leadership

**Proofreader:** Andrea Fors

**Printing:** By Wind

## **Thank you to the following for being helpful with information and quotes:**

Tabea Schroth

Åsa Zetterberg

Hussan Saed Hamodi Al Chalabi

Lorna McGeown

Oscar Öberg

Philip Alsén

Patrick Hamilton Walsh

Caroline Farberger

Christian Biller, Swedish Institute

This book has been produced by Linköping Science Park within the framework of the national program Switch to Sweden. Switch to Sweden is a program with a focus on international, academic talents who are already in Sweden and who want to be matched with recruiting companies.

This is your guide to life in Sweden in general as well as to life in your region. It is an introduction to food, language, career and some other bits and pieces that will make it a bit easier to understand how things work when you decide to stay in Sweden.

In this book you get an introduction to the Swedish DNA. It is a mix of fika, freedom within responsibility and the freedom to roam as well as how to find and apply for a job. You will get advice from people who decided to stay in Sweden after their studies. This book also provides you with ideas on how to meet new people and make friends and what to put on your Swedish bucket list.

Välkommen!



LINKÖPING  
SCIENCE  
PARK