

Sweden

Geography

- Sweden is a part of Scandinavia. With its 450,000 square km (about 170,000 square miles), Sweden is the third largest country in Western Europe – almost the same size as Spain or France, and bigger than California.
- Sweden is a long country: 1,574 km (about 980 miles) stretching from north to south. About the same distance as Seattle -Los Angeles (1,541), Berlin -Moscow (1,619) or Mumbai-Calcutta (1,665).
- Sweden is, however, a small country in terms of population, with only 9.2 million inhabitants – which is about 0.1 percent of the world population.
- Consequently, Sweden is sparsely populated with roughly 22 inhabitants per square km. This can be compared to the population density in China (134/sq km), Hong Kong (6,688/sq km), India (318/sq km), European Union (112/sq km), Germany (231/sq km), Spain (87/sq km), UK (246/sq km).
- Almost 90 percent of the population live in southern Sweden, where we also find the three largest cities, Stockholm (capital, 1.2 million inhabitants), Göteborg, and Malmö.

People

- Historians have disagreed over the years, but nowadays most of them agree that the Sami are entitled to call themselves the original Scandinavians. The Sami are one of the world's smallest groups of indigenous people. The Sami population in Sweden is estimated to some 15,000 (out of the total of 50 -60,000 in the whole of Scandinavia).
- Not more than one hundred years ago Sweden was a country of poor peasants and emigrants. From the end of the 19th century to 1930 1.5 million Swedes (a fourth of the population) emigrated, most going to North America.
- Today Sweden is a rich and well-educated country with large annual investments made in education and research.
- Sweden has also become a multicultural country over the past fifty years. This is due to the fact that hundreds of thousands of people from different parts of the world have migrated to Sweden, as refugees or on other grounds.
- Today, almost one fifth of the nine million inhabitants were born abroad or have parents who were born abroad.
- Swedish is the main language in Sweden, but almost all Swedes speak fluent English.

History

- Swedish ancient history is violent and dramatic, filled with war and conquests.
- It began with the Viking plunderings around the 11th century, and continued as time went by with endless military campaigns under warrior kings like Gustav II Adolf and Karl XII.
- In the 17th century, Sweden was a great power in Europe, its territories stretching over large parts of the Baltic Sea region.
- By the 18th century, Sweden had become so impoverished by all its fighting that peace had to be achieved if the country was to survive. Sweden has lived in peace since 1814, that is, almost 200 years.
- Sweden is one of the few European countries that was not involved in the two world wars.
- In the post-war period, Sweden has become renowned for its role in international peace work.
- The fact that there has been peace for so long is one of the most important factors for the development and well-being of the country.

Education

- The Swedish Education Act states that all children shall have equal access to education, regardless of gender, where they live or social or economic factors. All education in the public school is free of charge.
- Sweden has nine years of compulsory schooling, which begins at the age of seven. Today almost all children attend non-compulsory pre-school classes at the age of six, which is supposed to prepare children for compulsory school. In practice this means ten years of schooling in total.
- Around 98 percent of the students who finish compulsory school start high school, which is also offered free of charge. High school programs run for three years. Students can choose from some 20 different programs that provide general qualifications to study at universities and university colleges.

Climate

- What is it like living in Sweden? Over the coming slides we will give you a better understanding of everyday life in Sweden, starting with the climate.
- Sweden is a long country that stretches from north to south. The climate therefore varies within the country and the changes in seasons are dramatic. A warm and light summer is followed by a colorful fall, a long, dark winter and a bright and longed-for spring.
- The average daytime temperature in the summer ranges from around +12°C in the north (Kiruna) to +18°C in the south (Malmö). The average daytime temperature in the winter ranges from around -15°C in the north to +1°C in the south.

- The summers in Sweden are known to be bright. On the brightest day of the year in mid-June, there is an average 20 hours of sunlight throughout the country, the sun never setting in Kiruna, north of the Arctic Circle (this is known as the midnight sun). In contrast, on the darkest day of the year (mid-December), the average sun time in Sweden is about 6 hours, the sun in Kiruna not reaching above the horizon at all.

Mountains (Fjällen = the fells)

- Is a mountain range that runs through the Scandinavian Peninsula.
- Very popular place to travel to during holidays.
- Naturvårdsverket – Swedish EPA (Environmental protection agency)

Public holidays and traditions

- Traditional Christian holidays such as **Christmas** and **Easter** are big in Sweden, as is **New Year**. The other main public holidays, however, usually have a strong connection to the seasons.
- After a long and dark winter, Swedes celebrate the arrival of spring at **Walpurgis eve**, April 30. This is not a family occasion, rather a public celebration. People gather around the local Walpurgis bonfire. Since Walpurgis is celebrated on April 30 and May 1 is a public holiday, many choose to party all night long.
- Summer in Sweden is short. It explodes into life in June when everything is green and the sun barely sets. Around the June 20, Swedes celebrate the lightest day of the year – **Midsummer**. This is usually done in the countryside and is a family and friend occasion. You gather around long tables and eat herring, potatoes, dill, salmon and drink snaps (*nubbe*).
- By December Sweden has very few hours of daylight. The first Sunday of **Advent** comes as a sign that Christmas is approaching. Throughout the country Swedes put electric candlesticks and stars in their windows to keep the dark away.
- During the darkest time of the year in mid-December, the Swedes celebrate **Lucia**. Lucia is an ancient mythical figure with a traditional role as a bearer of light in the dark Swedish winter.

Wrap-up

- Over the past 100 years Sweden has made an extraordinary journey from a poor nation of peasants to one of the strongest economies in the world.
- The long distance between the northern and southern parts of Sweden creates dramatic contrasts in the landscape and nature across the country. Sweden offers mountains and glaciers up north, dense forests and thousands of lakes and rivers in the central parts and fertile farmlands in the south. Along the extensive coastline, of more than 2,700 kilometers (about 1,700 miles), lies a large number of unique archipelagos with tens of thousands of islands and rocks of various sizes.

- To sum up you can say that: Sweden is a country of opportunities offering a high quality of life with the human and nature in mind.