

Stockholm is built on fourteen islands and was founded by Birger Jarl in 1250. Sweden is a neutral country and has not been involved in wars since the early 19th century.

Country:	Kingdom of Sweden
Capital:	Stockholm
Other major cities:	Göteborg, Malmö and Uppsala
Population:	9,111,575 (2007)
Language:	Swedish (English is widely spoken)
Religion:	87% Lutheran
Currency:	Swedish krona (1 USD ~ 6.14 SEK) For most up to date exchange rates, please check: www.forex.se
Government:	Constitutional Monarchy (Prime Minister/Head of Government: Fredrik Reinfeldt King/Head of State: King Carl XVI Gustaf)
Holidays:	<u>Christian Holidays:</u> Christmas (December 24) Epiphany (January 6) Easter Ascension Day (39 days after Easter) Pentecost (7 weeks after Easter) All Saints (November 1) <u>Non-christian Holidays:</u> New Year's Day International Workers Day (May 1) National Day/Flag Day (June 6) Midsummer (Friday between June 19-25)

National traditions:

August-September

August is the month when Swedes have special parties to celebrate the crayfish and the baltic herring.

As the nights begin to darken after long light evenings, some Swedes decorate their balconies and terraces with pretty lanterns and serve boiled bright red crayfish and aquavit to their friends. The Crayfish season starts at midnight on the second Wednesday in August; a law forbids fishing crayfish before this time.

Particularly in the northern Sweden, many people like "surströmmingen" - Baltic Herring that has been allowed to ferment. On the third Thursday of August the year's supply of this delicacy is put on the market. People have parties featuring this fish served with crisp thin hard bread, potatoes, chopped onions and beer or aquavit.

The main activities of this time of the year have to do with harvesting and food gathering. Some Swedes enjoy picking berries, the most common being lingon berries and

blueberries. They also take up potatoes and other vegetables they have grown themselves. "Pick-it-yourself" possibilities are available for the person who doesn't have a garden. Moose hunting puts a damper on the berry picking. Many men save a week's vacation and use it for a week of hunting. It can even be hard to do business in Norrbotten the second week of September. Later on some people take vacation at the end of September to fish the "löja" a little fish that has marvelous (and very expensive) caviar.

October-November

All Saint's day, "Alla helgons dag": at the end of October Swedes celebrate All Saint's Day. This like many other holidays has an eve that is either celebrated or is a shortened working day. The Friday before All Saint's Day is a short day at the university and School children have vacation.

December-January

Christmas dominates this time of year. It starts with the first of Advent, four Sundays before Christmas Day and ends with the Twentieth Day of Christmas (Tjugondag knut), the day when Swedes traditionally take down their Christmas Trees. One of the Christmas highlights is Saint Lucia Day, "Sankta Lucia", December 13. A day of celebration featuring a very early morning visit from Sankta Lucia. People get up early for a cup of hot "glögg", a Lucia bun and singing.

Christmas itself starts with Christmas Eve followed by Christmas Day and boxing day, "annandag jul".

After a few ordinary days comes New Year's Eve and New Year's Day., also vacation days and a few weeks later comes the Epiphany holidays, the eve of the thirteenth day of Christmas and Epiphany itself. This Eve is also a shortened work day. School starts again the first weekday after Epiphany.

February - March - April.

For parents of school children it is worth noting that schools have a winter sports week of vacation at the end of February or the beginning of March. The weeks are different for the various parts of Sweden. Many Swedish families take skiing trips at this time.

Easter comes in March or April, depending on the year. The three Easter holidays are Good Friday, Easter Day and Easter Monday. Maundy Thursday (the day before Good Friday) is a shortened workday. Shopping can only be done with difficulty after the middle of this day. Schools have Easter vacations either the full week before Easter or the full week after Easter.

April ends with a Swedish celebration of the coming of spring; it is called "Valborgsmässoafton" (Walpurgis Night) and is on April 30:th. Festivities vary a bit in different parts of Sweden, but involve speeches, a bonfire and choirs singing to welcome the spring.

May - June - July

May 1st is a political holiday, is celebrated with parades and speeches.

Two church holidays are celebrated in May and early June. First comes Ascension Day, a Thursday, 39 days after Easter followed by "Pingst" (Pentecost).

At the end of June the celebrations of "Midsommar" (Midsummer) honors the longest day of the year. Once again it is the eve of this holiday that is the most important. This is the most Swedish of all Swedish celebrations. Many Swedes decorate maypoles with flowers and then dance around them.

Famous/known Swedish people:

Ingrid Bergman, Greta Garbo, Dolph Lundgren, Anita Ekberg, Britt Ekland
(Actors/Actresses)

Ingmar Bergman (Film Director)
Carl Larsson (Painter)
Carl Milles (Sculptor)
Anders Zorn (Painter)

Dag Hammarskjöld (Secretary General of the UN)
Raoul Wallenberg (Diplomat)

Alfred Nobel (Invented the Dynamite and instituted the Nobel Prize – all (but the Peace Prize, which is handed out in Oslo) are handed out on December 10 in Stockholm followed by a Nobel Banquet in the Stockholm City Hall)

Music:
ABBA
Ace of Base
The Cardigans
Europe
Roxette
Robyn

Swedish Companies:

Asea Brown-Boveri (Swedish-Swiss)
Alfa Laval
AstraZeneca (Swedish-British)
Atlas Copco
Ericsson
Electrolux
Hennes & Mauritz
Husqvarna

IKEA
SAAB
Sandvik
Volvo

“Logistic” information:

Airport: Arlanda Airport (40 km north of city center)
To/From airport: Cab ride (only authorized taxi companies operate out of Arlanda airport, approximate fare one way is SEK 450)
Arlanda Express Train: takes 20 minutes from the airport to Stockholm City Center. Tickets can be purchased on the platform (lower level of Arlanda airport) with cash or credit card prior to boarding the train. Cost one way: SEK 220. The train departs every 15 minutes. www.arlandaexpress.com
Weather: High: 50 degrees F (10 degrees C)
Low: 41 degrees F (5 degrees C)
For latest forecast, please check out:
<http://www.wunderground.com/global/stations/02485.html>

Other Swedish inventions/good to know facts:

Absolute vodka is from Sweden. “Skål” is the word for cheers/toasting.

“Fika” is a coffee break and most companies have morning and/or afternoon “fika” where you will gather and sit around and chat with a cup of coffee and a cookie/pastry. “Fika” is also a way of meeting up after work.

Swedish Crystal/Glass has is renowned over the world. “The Kingdom of Crystal” is found in southern Sweden and companies such as Orresfors and Kosta Boda are located there.

“Smörgåsbord” (Smorgasbord) is a Swedish word that has found its way in to dictionaries and restaurants in other countries.