

History

EARLY HISTORY

Sweden's human history began around 10,000 years ago at the end of the last ice age, once the Scandinavian ice sheet had melted. Tribes from central Europe migrated into the south of Sweden, and ancestors of the Sami people hunted reindeer from Siberia into the northern regions.

These nomadic Stone Age hunter-gatherers gradually made more permanent settlements, keeping animals, catching fish and growing crops. A typical relic of this period (3000 BC to 1800 BC) is the *gångrift*, a dolmen or rectangular passage-tomb covered with capstones, then a mound of earth. Pottery, amber beads and valuable flint tools were buried with the dead. The island of Öland, in southeast Sweden, is a good place to see clusters of Stone Age barrows.

As the climate improved between 1800 BC and 500 BC, Bronze Age cultures blossomed. Their *hällristningar* (rock carvings) are found in many parts of Sweden – Dalsland and Bohuslän are particularly rich areas (see p222). The carvings provide tantalising glimpses of forgotten beliefs, with the sun, hunting scenes and ships being favourite themes. Huge Bronze Age burial mounds, such as Kiviksgraven (p182) in Österlen, suggest that powerful chieftains had control over spiritual and temporal matters. Relatively few bronze artefacts are found in Sweden: the metals had to be imported from central Europe in exchange for furs, amber and other northern treasures.

After 500 BC, the Iron Age brought about technological advances, demonstrated by archaeological finds of agricultural tools, graves and primitive furnaces. During this period, the runic alphabet arrived, probably from the Germanic region. It was used to carve inscriptions onto monumental rune stones (there are around 3000 in Sweden) well into medieval times.

By the 7th century AD, the Svea people of the Mälaren valley (just west of Stockholm) had gained supremacy, and their kingdom ('Svea Rike', or Sverige) gave the country of Sweden its name. Birka, founded around 760 on Björkö (an island in Mälaren lake), was a powerful Svea centre for around 200 years. Large numbers of Byzantine and Arab coins have been found there, and stones with runic inscriptions are scattered across the area; see p107 for more details.

VIKINGS & THE ARRIVAL OF CHRISTIANITY

Scandinavia's greatest impact on world history probably occurred during the Viking Age (around 800 to 1100), when hardy pagan Norsemen set sail for other shores. In Sweden, it's generally thought that population pressures were to blame for the sudden exodus: a polygamous society led to an excess of male heirs and ever-smaller plots of land. Combined with the prospects of military adventure and foreign trade abroad, the result was the Viking phenomenon (the word is derived from *vik*, meaning 'bay' or 'cove', and is probably a reference to their anchorages during raids).

The Vikings sailed a new type of boat that was fast and highly manoeuvrable but sturdy enough for ocean crossings, with a heavy keel, up to

16 pairs of oars and a large square sail (the *Äskekärr Ship*, Sweden's only original Viking vessel, is in Göteborg's Stadsmuseum (p204). Initial hit-and-run raids along the European coast – often on monasteries and their terrified monks – were followed by major military expeditions, settlement and trade. The well-travelled Vikings penetrated the Russian heartland and beyond, venturing as far as America, Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul) and Baghdad.

In Sweden, the Vikings generally cremated their dead and their possessions, then buried the remains under a mound. There are also several impressive stone ship settings, made from upright stones arranged in the shape of a ship. If you're interested in Viking culture, Foteviken (p175) on the southwestern Falsterbo Peninsula is a 'living' reconstruction of a Viking village.

Early in the 9th century, the missionary St Ansgar established a church at Birka. Sweden's first Christian king, Olof Skötkonung (c 968–1020) is said to have been baptised at St Sigfrid's Well in Husaby (p228) in 1008 – the well is now a sort of place of pilgrimage for Swedes – but worship continued in Uppsala's pagan temple until at least 1090. By 1160, King Erik Jedvarsson (Sweden's patron saint, St Erik) had virtually destroyed the last remnants of paganism.

RISE OF THE SWEDISH STATE

Olof Skötkonung was also the first king to rule over both the Sveas and the Gauts, creating the kernel of the Swedish state. During the 12th and 13th centuries, these united peoples mounted a series of crusades to Finland, Christianising the country and steadily absorbing it into Sweden.

Royal power disintegrated over succession squabbles in the 13th century. The medieval statesman Birger Jarl (1210–66) rose to fill the gap, acting as prince regent for 16 years, and founding the city of Stockholm in 1252.

King Magnus Ladulås (1240–90) introduced a form of feudalism in 1280, but managed to avoid its worst excesses. In fact, the aristocracy were held in check by the king, who forbade them from living off the peasantry when moving from estate to estate.

Magnus' eldest son Birger (1280–1321) assumed power in 1302. After long feuds with his younger brothers, he tricked them into coming to Nyköping castle (p244), where he threw them into the dungeon and starved them to death. After this fratricidal act, the nobility drove Birger into exile. They then chose their own king of Sweden, the infant grandson of King Haakon V of Norway. When Haakon died without leaving a male heir, the kingdoms of Norway and Sweden were united (1319).

The increasingly wealthy church began to show its might in the 13th and 14th centuries, commissioning monumental buildings such as the *domkyrka* (cathedral) in Linköping (founded 1250; see p149), and Scandinavia's largest Gothic cathedral in Uppsala (founded 1285; see p238).

However, in 1350 the rise of state and church endured a horrific setback, when the Black Death swept through the country, carrying off around a third of the Swedish population. In the wake of the horror, St Birgitta (1303–73) reinvigorated the church with her visions and revelations, and founded a nunnery and cathedral in Vadstena, which became Sweden's most important pilgrimage site.

The Vikings by Magnus Magnusson is an extremely readable history book, covering their achievements in Scandinavia (including Sweden), as well as their wild-natured doings around the world.

The Roman historian Tacitus (AD 56–120) first mentions the Svea, a 'militant Germanic race' strong in men, ships and war-gear.

TIMELINE c 10,000 BC

Ice sheets melt and hunters follow reindeer into a newly uncovered Sweden

c 1000 BC

The petroglyph 'The Lovers' is carved into the rocks at Vitlycke, Tanum

1050s

Unknown Viking scratches runic graffiti onto a statue in Athens

1252

Birger Jarl founds the city of Stockholm

HANSEATIC LEAGUE & THE UNION OF KALMAR

A strange phenomenon of the time was the German-run Hanseatic League, a group of well-organised merchants who established walled trading towns in Germany and along the Baltic coast. In Sweden, they built Visby (p152) and maintained a strong presence in the young city of Stockholm. Their rapid growth caused great concern around the Baltic in the 14th century: an allied Scandinavian front was vital. Negotiated by the Danish regent Margrethe, the Union of Kalmar (1397) united Denmark, Norway and Sweden under one crown.

Erik of Pomerania, Margrethe's nephew, held that crown until 1439. High taxation to fund wars against the Hanseatic League made him deeply unpopular and he was eventually deposed. His replacement was short-lived and succession struggles began again: two powerful Swedish families, the unionist Oxenstiernas and the nationalist Stures, fought for supremacy.

Out of the chaos, Sten Sture the Elder (1440–1503) eventually emerged as 'Guardian of Sweden' in 1470, going on to fight and defeat an army of unionist Danes at the Battle of Brunkenberg (1471) in Stockholm.

The failing Union's death-blow came in 1520: Christian II of Denmark invaded Sweden and killed the regent Sten Sture the Younger (1493–1520). After granting a full amnesty to Sture's followers, Christian went back on his word: 82 of them were arrested, tried and massacred in Stockholm's main square, Stortorget in Gamla Stan (p83), which 'ran with rivers of blood'.

The brutal 'Stockholm Bloodbath' sparked off a major rebellion under the leadership of the young nobleman Gustav Ericsson Vasa (1496–1560). It was a revolution that almost never happened: having failed to raise enough support, Gustav was fleeing for the Norwegian border when two exhausted skiers caught him up to tell him that the people had changed their minds. This legendary ski journey is celebrated every year in the Vasaloppet race (p266) between Sälen and Mora.

In 1523, Sweden seceded from the union and installed Gustav as the first Vasa king: he was crowned on 6 June, now the country's national day.

VASA DYNASTY

Gustav I ruled for 37 years, leaving behind a powerful, centralised nation-state. He introduced the Reformation to Sweden (principally as a fundraising exercise): ecclesiastical property became the king's, and the Lutheran Protestant Church was placed under the crown's direct control.

After Gustav Vasa's death in 1560, bitter rivalry broke out among his sons. His eldest child, Erik XIV (1533–77), held the throne for eight years in a state of increasing paranoia. After committing a trio of injudicious murders at Uppsala Slott (p238), Erik was deposed by his half-brother Johan III (1537–92) and poisoned with pea soup at Örbyhus Slott (p243). During the brothers' reigns, the Danes tried and failed to reassert sovereignty over Sweden in the Seven Years War (1563–70).

Gustav's youngest son, Karl IX (1550–1611), finally had a chance at the throne in 1607, but was unsuccessful militarily and ruled for a mere four years. He was succeeded by his 17-year-old son. Despite his youth, Gustav II Adolf (1594–1632) proved to be a military genius, recapturing southern parts of the country from Denmark and consolidating Sweden's

control over the eastern Baltic (the copper mine at Falun financed many of his campaigns: see p260). A devout Lutheran, Gustav II supported the German Protestants during the Thirty Years War (1618–48). He invaded Catholic Poland and defeated his cousin King Sigismund III, later meeting his own end in battle in 1632.

Gustav II's daughter, Kristina, was still a child in 1632, and her regent continued her father's warlike policies. In 1654, Kristina abdicated in favour of Karl X Gustav, ending the Vasa dynasty.

For an incredible glimpse into this period, track down Sweden's 17th-century royal warship *Vasa* (commissioned by Gustav II in 1625), now in Stockholm's Vasamuseet (p77).

PEAK & DECLINE OF THE SWEDISH EMPIRE

The zenith and collapse of the Swedish empire happened remarkably quickly. During the harsh winter of 1657, Swedish troops invaded Denmark across the frozen Kattegatt, a strait between Sweden and Denmark, and the last remaining parts of southern Sweden still in Danish hands were handed over at the Peace of Roskilde. Bohuslän, Härjedalen and Jämtland were seized from Norway, and the empire reached its maximum size when Sweden established a short-lived American colony in what is now Delaware.

The end of the 17th century saw a developing period of enlightenment in Sweden; Olof Rudbeck achieved widespread fame for his medical work, which included the discovery of the lymphatic system.

Inheritor of this huge and increasingly sophisticated country was King Karl XII (1681–1718). Karl XII was an overenthusiastic military adventurer who spent almost all of his reign at war: he managed to lose Latvia, Estonia and Poland, and the Swedish coast sustained damaging attacks

You can see Erik XIV's bedroom at Kalmar Slott (p125) complete with a secret passage to escape from his brother Johan.

'The brutal Stockholm Bloodbath sparked off a major rebellion under the leadership of Gustav Vasa'

QUEEN KRISTINA

Queen Kristina (1626–89) lived an eccentric and eventful life. Her father, Gustav II, instructed that the girl be brought up as though she were a prince, then promptly went off and died in battle, leaving his six-year-old successor and his country in the hands of the powerful Chancellor Oxenstierna.

Kristina did indeed receive a boy's education, becoming fluent in six languages and skilled in the arts of war. Childish spats with Oxenstierna increased as she grew older; after being crowned queen in 1644, she delighted in testing her power, defying him even when he had the country's best interests at heart.

Envious of the elegant European courts, Kristina attempted to modernise old-fashioned Sweden. One of her plans was to gather leading intellectuals for philosophical conversation. She's often blamed for the death of Descartes, who reluctantly obeyed her summons only to die of pneumonia in the icy north.

Kristina's ever-erratic behaviour culminated in her abdication in 1654. After handing over the crown to her beloved cousin Karl X Gustav, she threw on men's clothing and scarpered southwards on horseback. Kristina finished up in Rome, where she converted to Catholicism.

Contrary, curious and spoilt, accused of murder and an affair with one of the Pope's cardinals, bisexual, rule-bending Kristina was a fascinating and frustrating character, too huge and colourful to do justice to here. If you want to know more, an excellent biography is *Christina, Queen of Sweden* by Veronica Buckley.

1350s

The Black Death kills a third of the population

1477

Founding of Scandinavia's oldest university, at Uppsala

1523

Gustav I becomes the first Vasa king

1628

The royal warship *Vasa* sinks on her maiden voyage

King Gustav III wrote his own plays and frequently arrived at formal dinners in fancy dress, to the horror of his more conservative courtiers.

from Russia. Karl XII also fought the Great Nordic War against Norway throughout the early 18th century. A winter siege of Trondheim took its toll on his battle-weary army, and Karl XII was mysteriously shot dead while inspecting his troops – a single event that sealed the fate of Sweden’s military might.

LIBERALISATION OF SWEDEN

During the next 50 years, parliament’s power increased and the monarchs became little more than heads of state. Despite the country’s decline, intellectual enlightenment streaked ahead and Sweden produced some celebrated writers, philosophers and scientists, including Anders Celsius, whose temperature scale bears his name; Carl Scheele, the discoverer of chlorine; and Carl von Linné (Linnaeus), the great botanist who developed theories about plant reproduction (see p240).

Gustav III (1746–92) curtailed parliamentary powers and reintroduced absolute rule in 1789. He was a popular and cultivated king who inaugurated the Royal Opera House in Stockholm (1782), and opened the Swedish Academy of Literature (1786), now known for awarding the annual Nobel Prize for literature. His foreign policy was less auspicious and he was considered exceptionally lucky to lead Sweden intact through a two-year war with Russia (1788–90). Enemies in the aristocracy conspired against the king, hiring an assassin to shoot him at a masked ball in 1792.

Gustav IV Adolf (1778–1837), Gustav III’s son, assumed the throne and got drawn into the Napoleonic Wars, permanently losing Finland (one-third of Sweden’s territory) to Russia. Gustav IV was forced to abdicate, and his uncle Karl XIII took the Swedish throne under a new constitution that ended unrestricted royal power.

Out of the blue, Napoleon’s marshal Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte (1763–1844) was invited by a nobleman, Baron Mörner, to succeed the childless Karl XIII to the Swedish throne. The rest of the nobility adjusted to the idea and Bernadotte took up the offer, along with the name Karl Johan. Karl Johan judiciously changed sides in the war, and led Sweden, allied with Britain, Prussia and Russia, against France and Denmark.

After Napoleon’s defeat, Sweden forced Denmark to swap Norway for Swedish Pomerania (1814). The Norwegians objected, defiantly choosing king and constitution, and Swedish troops occupied most of the country. This forced union with Norway was Sweden’s last military action.

INDUSTRIALISATION

Industry arrived late in Sweden (during the second half of the 19th century), but when it did come, it transformed the country from one of Western Europe’s poorest to one of its richest.

The Göta Canal (p146) opened in 1832, providing a valuable transport link between the east and west coasts, and development accelerated when the main railway across Sweden was completed in 1862. Significant Swedish inventions, including dynamite (Alfred Nobel) and the safety match (patented by Johan Edvard Lundström; see p116), were carefully exploited by government and industrialists; coupled with efficient steel-making and timber exports, they added to a growing economy and the rise of the new middle class.

However, when small-scale peasant farms were replaced with larger concerns, there was widespread discontent in the countryside, exacerbated by famine. Some agricultural workers joined the population drift from rural areas to towns. Others abandoned Sweden altogether: around one million people (an astonishing quarter of the population!) emigrated over just a few decades, mainly to America.

The transformation to an industrial society brought with it trade unions and the Social Democratic Labour Party (Social Democrats for short), founded in 1889 to support workers. The party grew quickly and obtained parliamentary representation in 1896 when Hjalmar Branting was elected.

In 1905, King Oscar II (1829–1907) was forced to recognise Norwegian independence and the two countries went their separate ways.

WORLD WARS & THE WELFARE STATE

Sweden declared itself neutral in 1912, and remained so throughout the bloodshed of WWI.

In the interwar period, a Social Democrat–Liberal coalition government took control (1921). Reforms followed quickly, including an eight-hour working day and suffrage for all adults aged over 23.

Swedish neutrality during WWII was somewhat ambiguous: allowing German troops to march through to occupy Norway certainly tarnished Sweden’s image. On the other hand, Sweden was a haven for refugees from Finland, Norway, Denmark and the Baltic states; downed allied aircrew who escaped the Gestapo; and many thousands of Jews who escaped persecution and death.

After the war and throughout the 1950s and ’60s the Social Democrats continued with the creation of *folkhemmet*, the welfare state. The standard of living for ordinary Swedes rose rapidly and real poverty was virtually eradicated.

MODERN SWEDEN

After a confident few decades, the late 20th century saw some unpleasant surprises for Sweden, as economic pressures clouded Sweden’s social goals and various sacks of dirty laundry fell out of the cupboard.

In 1986, Prime Minister Olof Palme (1927–86) was assassinated as he walked home from the cinema. The murder and bungled police inquiry shook ordinary Swedes’ confidence in their country, institutions and leaders. The killing remains unsolved, but it seems most likely that external destabilisation lay behind this appalling act. Afterwards, the fortunes of the Social Democrats took a turn for the worse as various scandals came to light, including illegal arms trading in the Middle East by the Bofors company.

By late 1992, during the world recession, the country’s budgetary problems culminated in frenzied speculation against the Swedish krona. In November of that year the central bank Sveriges Riksbank was forced to abandon fixed exchange rates and let the krona float freely. The currency immediately devalued by 20%, interest rates shot up by a world-record-breaking 500% and unemployment flew to 14%; the government fought back with tax hikes, punishing cuts to the welfare budget and the scrapping of previously relaxed immigration rules.

Although not history textbooks, Vilhelm Moberg’s four novels about 19th-century Swedish emigration are based on real people, and bring this period to life. They’re translated into English as *The Emigrants*, *Unto A Good Land*, *The Settlers* and *The Last Letter Home*.

On his death, it was discovered that Frenchman Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte (king of Sweden for 26 years) had a tattoo that read ‘Death to kings!’

The Olof Palme International Center (www.palmecenter.org) has taken up the former prime minister’s baton, working for cross-border cooperation.

1700

Peak of the Swedish empire

1766

Swedish parliament passes the world’s first Freedom of the Press Act

1832

The Göta Canal opens, linking Sweden’s west and east coasts

1930s

The worldwide Depression sparks off plans for the Swedish welfare state

The Southeast Asian tsunami on Boxing Day 2004 killed more people from Sweden than from any other nation outside Asia, with almost 600 Swedes still unaccounted for.

With both economy and national confidence severely shaken, Swedes narrowly voted in favour of joining the European Union (EU), effective from 1 January 1995. Since then, there have been further major reforms and the economy has improved considerably, with falling unemployment and inflation.

Another shocking political murder, of Foreign Minister Anna Lindh (1957–2003), again rocked Sweden to the core. Far-right involvement was suspected – Lindh was a vocal supporter of the euro, and an outspoken critic of both the war in Iraq and Italy’s Silvio Berlusconi – but it appears that her attacker had psychiatric problems. Lindh’s death occurred just before the Swedish referendum on whether to adopt the single European currency, but didn’t affect the eventual outcome: a ‘No’ vote.

1986

Prime Minister Olof Palme is assassinated as walks home from the cinema

2000

The Öresund Bridge links Sweden and Denmark

The Culture

THE NATIONAL PSYCHE

There's a prevailing view of Swedes as cold and reserved, or at least shy – until the *snaps* comes out, at any rate. Like any stereotype it has some basis in truth, but the national character is, of course, a good deal more complex than popular myth suggests.

Two key concepts that anyone spending a substantial amount of time in Sweden will come to understand are *lagom* and *ordning och reda*. Both are vital components in the mindset of the typical Swedish character. *Lagom* means just right – not too little, not too much. A good example is *mellanöl* (medium ale) – it's not strong, but not as weak as a light ale. An exception to *lagom* is the smorgåsbord.

Ordning och reda connotes tidiness and order, everything in its proper place in the world. A good example is the queuing system; every transaction in all of Sweden requires its participants to take a number and stand in line, which everyone does with the utmost patience. An exception to *ordning och reda* is Stockholm traffic.

Get a two-for-one blast of Swedish culture with Alf Sjöberg's 1951 film version of August Strindberg's play *Miss Julie*, which won the Grand Prix at the Venice Film Festival that year.

LIFESTYLE

Swedes are a friendly sort, though sometimes in a way that strikes outsiders as stiff or overly formal. The handshake is used liberally in both business and social circles when greeting friends or meeting strangers. Introductions generally include full names. *Var så god* is a common phrase and carries all sorts of expressions of goodwill, including 'Welcome', 'Please', 'Pleased to meet you', 'I'm happy to serve you', 'Thanks' and 'You're welcome'. Swedes are generous with their use of 'thank you' (*tack*) to the point that language textbooks make jokes about it.

Most Swedes go on holiday for several weeks in the summer, often in rural or wilderness areas of their own countryside. The *sommarstuga* (summer cottage) is almost *de rigueur* – there are 600,000 second homes in the country.

TRACING YOUR ANCESTORS *Fran Parnell*

Around a million people emigrated from Sweden to the USA and Canada between 1850 and 1930. Many of their 12 million descendants are now returning to find their roots.

Luckily, detailed parish records of births, deaths and marriages have been kept since 1686 and there are *landsarkivet* (regional archives) around the country. The national archive is **Riksarkivet** (☎ 08-737 63 50; www.ra.se; Box 12541, Fyrverkarbacken 13-17, SE-102 29 Stockholm).

SVAR Forskarcentrum (☎ 0623-725 00; www.svar.ra.se; Kägelbacken 6, Box 160, SE-880 40 Ramsele) holds most records from the late 17th century until 1928. You can pay the staff here to research for you (Skr400 per hour) or look for yourself.

Utvandrarnas Hus (Emigrant House), in Växjö, is a very good museum dedicated to the mass departure (see p122). Attached is **Svenska Emigrantinstitutet** (Swedish Emigrant Institute; ☎ 0470-201 20; www.swemi.se; Vilhelm Mobergs gata 4, Box 201, SE-35104 Växjö), with an extensive research centre that you can use (Skr150/200 per half/full day).

Also worth a look is *Tracing Your Swedish Ancestry*, by Nils William Olsson, a free do-it-yourself genealogical guide (40 pages). Get a copy by emailing your name and address to info@sweden-newyork.com, or download it from the New York **Consulate-General of Sweden's** website: www.swedeninfo.org/tracing.htm (under Press & Information in the menu).

Sweden has about 105,000km of paved highways – compared to nearly 4 million km in the US.

Traditional folk dress is still seen regularly at midsummer, on Swedish National Day, and for weddings, birthdays and other celebrations. Styles vary depending on the region. The national version was designed in the 20th century: women wear a white hat, yellow skirt and blue sleeveless vest with white flowers on top of a white blouse; men wear a simpler costume of knee-length trousers (breeches), white shirt, vest and wide-brimmed hat.

POPULATION

Sweden's population is relatively small given the size of the country – it has one of the lowest population densities in Europe. Most people are concentrated in the large cities of Stockholm, Göteborg, Malmö and Uppsala.

Most of Sweden's population is considered to be of Nordic stock, thought to have descended from central and northern European tribes who migrated north after the end of the last Ice Age, around 10,000 years ago.

About 30,000 Finnish speakers form a substantial minority in the north-east, near Torneälven (the Torne River). More than 160,000 citizens of other Nordic countries live in Sweden.

Over 20% of Sweden's population are either foreign-born or have at least one non-Swedish parent. Most immigrants have come from other European countries. The largest non-European ethnic group is made up of Middle Eastern citizens, primarily from Iraq, Turkey and Iran. Other countries with a sizeable presence include Poland, Chile and Somalia. There are also an estimated 25,000 Roma.

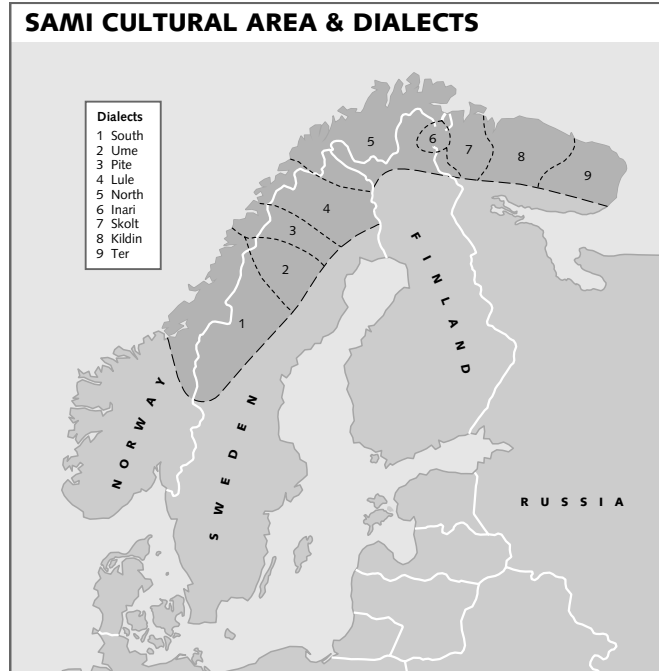
Sami

Sweden's approximately 17,000 indigenous Sami people (sometimes known by the inappropriate term Lapps) are a significant ethnic minority. These hardy nomadic people have for centuries occupied northern Scandinavia and northwestern Russia, living mainly from their large herds of domestic reindeer. The total population of around 60,000 Sami still forms an ethnic minority in four countries – Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. In Sweden, they're mainly found in the mountain areas along the Norwegian border, northwards of mid-Dalarna. The Sami people refer to their country as Sápmi.

As in many countries with an indigenous minority, the history of relations between the Sami and Nordic peoples is often a dark one. Since at least the 1600s, the Sami religious practice of shamanism was denigrated, and *noaidi* (Sami spiritual leaders) were persecuted. Use of the Sami language was discouraged, and Sami children were coerced into school to learn Swedish.

Sami religious traditions are characterised by a relationship to nature. At sites of special power, such as prominent rock formations, people made offerings to their gods and ancestors to ensure success in hunting or other endeavours. Another crucial element in the religious tradition is the singing of the *yoik* (also spelt *joik*), or 'song of the plains'. A *yoik* or *joik* is a traditional song of the Sami folk; an emotion-laden storytelling song. They were briefly banned as part of the suppression of the Sami religion, but are now enjoying a resurgence in popularity.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the Lutheran Church of Sweden set up schools to educate Sami children in their own language, but from 1913 to 1930 the emphasis changed to providing a basic education in Swedish. Nowadays, Sami education is available in government-run Sami schools or regular compulsory nine-year municipal schools, providing identical schooling to that received by Swedish children but taking into account the Sami linguistic and cultural heritage.



Generally speaking, the Sami in Sweden do not enjoy the same rights as Sami people in Norway and Finland; this is partly because hydroelectric developments and mining activities, that are of great importance to the Swedish economy, have been established on traditional Sami land.

The English-language booklet *The Saami – People of the Sun & Wind*, published by Ájtte, the Swedish Mountain and Saami Museum in Jokkmokk, does a good job of describing Sami traditions in all four countries of the Sápmi region and is available at tourist shops around the area.

SPORT Football

Football is the most popular sporting activity in Sweden and there are 3320 clubs with over one million members. The domestic season runs from April to early November. The national arena, Råsunda Stadium in Solna, a suburb in Stockholm's northwest, has the capacity to hold 37,000 spectators.

Swedish footballcoach, Sven Göran Eriksson, has achieved fame and notoriety as the head coach of England's national team and for rumours of several scandalous affairs. Perhaps the best-known Swedish football player was Gunnar Nordahl (1921–95), who helped Sweden win gold at the 1948 Olympics, and went on to be the all-time top scorer at AC Milan.

Ice Hockey

There are amateur ice-hockey teams in most Swedish communities. The national premier league, Elitserien, has 12 professional teams; there are also several lower divisions. Matches take place from autumn to late spring, up to four times a week in Stockholm, primarily at Globen arena (see p100).

Read the news from the underground (mostly in Swedish) at www.sweden.indymedia.org.

Skiing

Alpine skiing competitions are held annually, particularly in Åre (Jämtland, p295), where events include the Ladies World Cup competitions in late February or early March, and Skutskjutet, the world's greatest downhill ski race (with up to 3000 competitors) in late April or early May.

Vasaloppet (www.vasaloppet.se), the world's biggest nordic (cross-country) ski race, takes place on the first Sunday in March, when 15,000 competitors follow a 90km route. For further details, see the sections on Sälen (p268) and Mora (Dalarna; p266) or check out the website.

Well-known Swedish skiers include four-time Olympic gold-medal winner Gunde Svan and giant slalom icon Ingemar Stenmark, who won a total of 86 races in the Alpine Skiing World Cup.

Other

Swedish men have excelled at tennis, including Björn Borg, Mats Wilander and Stefan Edberg (all three have now retired). Borg won the Wimbledon Championships in England five times in a row.

Golf is a similarly popular sport in Sweden with more than 400 courses throughout the country. Annika Sörenstam, ranked as one of the game's leading female players, hails from Sweden.

Bandy, though similar to ice hockey, is played on an outdoor pitch the size of a football field and teams are also the same size as in football.

Sailing is very popular, around Stockholm in particular, where almost half the population owns a yacht.

For more on participating in sports in Sweden, see the Outdoors Activities chapter.

MULTICULTURALISM

During WWII, Sweden, which had essentially been a closed society, opened its borders to immigration. For a time, immigrants were expected to assimilate into Swedish society and essentially 'become Swedish', but in 1975 Parliament adopted a new set of policies that emphasised the freedom to preserve and celebrate traditional native cultures. These days some 200 languages are spoken in Sweden, as well as variations on the standard – the hip-hop crowd around Stockholm, for example, speak a vivid mishmash of slang, Swedish and foreign phrases that's been dubbed 'Rinkeby Swedish' after the immigrant-heavy suburb of Rinkeby.

Asians are predicted to constitute one quarter of all foreign-born residents in Sweden in the near future. Many are Muslim, and some disturbing anti-Islamic sentiment has begun to crop up. In 2004, arsonists set fire to the mosque in Malmö, where one quarter of the population is Muslim. As hip-hop artist Timbuktu (himself the Swedish-born son of a mixed-race American couple) told the *Washington Post*, 'Sweden still has a very clear picture of what a Swede is. That no longer exists – the blond, blue-eyed physical traits. That's changing. But it still exists in the minds of some people'.

MEDIA

Domestic newspapers are published only in Swedish, but a wide variety of English-language imports are available at major transport terminals and newsstands – often even in small towns.

Nearly 90% of Swedish adults read at least one daily newspaper and most people subscribe for home delivery. *Dagens Nyheter* is a politically independent paper with a liberal bent, while *Svenska Dagbladet* is the more conservative daily; both are distributed across the country though based in Stockholm. The evening papers (*Aftonbladet* and *Expressen*, the Social

Democrat and liberal papers respectively) also have national coverage. The Swedish government subsidises the second most popular newspaper in a given market, but never more than 3% of the paper's revenue.

RELIGION

Christianity arrived fairly late in Sweden, and was preceded by a long-standing loyalty to Norse gods such as Odin, Thor and their warlike ilk. Some of the outer reaches of Sweden, particularly in the far north, were among the last areas to convert to Christianity in Europe.

According to the country's constitution, Swedish people have the right to practise any religion they choose. Complete separation of church and state took place in 2000; prior to that, Evangelical Lutheranism was the official religion. Since 1994 citizens do not legally acquire a religion at birth but voluntarily become members of a faith. Only about 10% of Swedes regularly attend church services, but church marriages, funerals and communions are still popular.

ARTS Literature

The best known members of Sweden's artistic community have been writers, chiefly the influential dramatist and author August Strindberg (1849–1912), who wrote *Miss Julie* and *The Red Room* among other things, and children's writer Astrid Lindgren (1907–2002). Lindgren's book *Pippi Longstocking* was first published in English in 1950.

During WWII, some Swedish writers took a stand against the Nazis, including Eyvind Johnson (1900–76) with his *Krilon* trilogy, completed in 1943, and the famous poet and novelist Karin Boye (1900–41), whose novel *Kalloccain* was published in 1940.

Vilhelm Moberg (1898–1973), a representative of 20th-century proletarian literature and controversial social critic, won international acclaim with *Utvandrarna* (The Emigrants; 1949) and *Nybyggarna* (The Settlers; 1956).

The powerful imagination of Göran Tunström (1937–) is reflected in *Juloratoriet* (The Christmas Oratorio; 1983), which was made into a film, and *Skimmer* (Shimmering; 1996), set in Iceland during Viking times. Other recent authors of note include Torgny Lindgren (1938–), whose magic-realist short stories and novels, such as *Pölsan* (Hash; 2004), are set in his native Norrland, and the popular Henning Mankell (1948–), whose novels feature the moody detective Kurt Wallander.

The poet Carl Michael Bellman is perhaps the dearest to the Swedish soul. Born in Stockholm in 1740, Bellman completed one of his best-known writings, *Fredmans Epistlar* (Fredman's Epistles) at age 30. Greek themes,

Astrid Lindgren's *Pippi Longstocking* might be the best-known book by a Swedish writer; its red-pigtailed heroine is a model of resourcefulness and self-determination. And she can lift up her own horse.

Henning Mankell, who created the gloomy detective Kurt Wallander, practically gets his own section in any Swedish bookshop; *Faceless Killers* and *The Dogs of Riga* are among his most influential works.

SELMA LAGERLÖF'S SAGA

Selma Lagerlöf (1858–1940) was an early Swedish literary giant. Two of her best-known works are *Gösta Berlings Saga* (1891) and *Nils Holgerssons underbara resa genom Sverige* (The Wonderful Adventures of Nils; 1906–7). The latter, which is still frequently taught as a geography text in schools, has great character portrayals as well as providing an illuminating portrait of Sweden as a whole.

Lagerlöf was a vocal opponent to the Swedish intellectual and cultural establishment. Despite this, she received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1909 – the first woman to do so. During WWII she helped several German artists and intellectuals escape the Nazi regime. She donated her Nobel Prize (made of gold) to raise money for Finland's efforts to defend itself against the Soviets. Working for freedom and human rights until the end, Lagerlöf died of a stroke on 16 March 1940.

with references to drunken revelry and Bacchus, the Greek and Roman god of wine, are strong features in this work. Evert Taube (1890–1976), a sailor, author, composer and painter, is known as a latter-day Bellman.

Cinema & TV

Sweden led the way in the silent-film era of the 1920s with such masterpieces as *Körkarlen* (The Phantom Carriage), adapted from a novel by Selma Lagerlöf and directed by Mauritz Stiller. In 1967 came Vilgot Sjöman's notorious *I Am Curious – Yellow*, a political film that got more attention outside Sweden for its X rating. With a few exceptions, one man has largely defined modern Swedish cinema to the world: Ingmar Bergman. With deeply contemplative films like *The Seventh Seal*, *Through a Glass Darkly* and *Persona*, the beret-clad director explores human alienation, the absence of god, the meaning of life, the certainty of death and other cheerful themes.

More recently, the town of Trollhattan has become a centre of film-making, drawing the likes of wunderkind director Lukas Moodysson, whose *Lilja 4-Ever*, *Fucking Åmål* and *Tillsammans* have all been both popular and critical hits. Fellow up-and-comer Josef Fares (*Jalla! Jalla! Koppis*), who came to Sweden from Lebanon, focuses on themes about the country's growing immigrant communities.

Music

Everyone knows about ABBA, but that's just the tip of the iceberg. Sweden is the third-largest exporter of music in the world, and Swedes buy more recorded music per capita than any other nationality.

Pop bands who actually sing in Swedish are few and far between. Who knew the Caesars ('Jerk It Out') were Swedish? And what about Helena Paparizou, who won the 2005 Eurovision Song Contest for Greece with 'My Number One'? Yep, she's a Swedish citizen.

Other hot names in the pop world are Sahara Hotnights, the Hellacopters, the International Noise Conspiracy and the Shout Out Louds. Late-'90s radio favourites the Cardigans are aiming for a comeback, and recent chart-toppers the Hives are still going strong. Sensitive rockers Dungen are notable for singing lyrics in their native language, although they get just as much attention for lead singer Gustav Ejstes's devastating cheekbones.

Interest in Swedish folk music took off in the 1970s and '80s, thanks mainly to the Falun Folk Music Festival. Traditional Swedish folk music revolves around the triple-beat *polska*, originally a Polish dance. Ethnic folk music includes the Sami *yoik* and a wide range of styles brought to Sweden by immigrants from around the world.

Swedish jazz peaked between the 1920s and '60s. The pianist Jan Johanson (1931–68) succeeded in blending jazz and folk in a peculiarly Swedish fashion. Both Stockholm and Umeå host popular annual jazz festivals.

Although Sweden has never produced a classical composer to match Norway's Edvard Grieg, there has been no shortage of contenders. One of the earliest was Emil Sjögren (1853–1918). He was followed by the Wagnerian Wilhelm Peterson-Berger (1867–1942) and Hugo Alfvén (1872–1960).

Opera flourished after the opening of the Royal Opera House in Stockholm (1782). Opera singer Jenny Lind (1820–87) is known as the 'Swedish nightingale'.

Architecture

Apart from elaborate gravesites, little survives of Bronze Age buildings in Sweden. Several Iron Age relics remain on Öland, including Ismantorp, a fortified village with limestone walls and nine gates.

Excellent examples of Romanesque church architecture dot the country. One of the finest is Domkyrkan (Cathedral) in Lund, consecrated in 1145 and still dominating the city centre with its two imposing square towers.

Gothic styles from the 13th and 14th centuries mainly used brick rather than stone. Some fine examples can be seen at the Mariakyrkan in Sigtuna (completed in 1237) and Uppsala's Domkyrkan, consecrated in 1435.

Gotland is the best place in Sweden to see ecclesiastical Gothic architecture, with around 100 medieval churches on the island.

During and after the Reformation, monasteries and churches were plundered by the crown in favour of wonderful royal palaces and castles like Gustav Vasa's Kalmar Slott and Gripsholm Slott, which has one of the best Renaissance interiors in Sweden.

Magnificently ornate baroque architecture arrived in Sweden (mainly from Italy) during the 1640s while Queen Kristina held the throne. Kalmar Cathedral, designed in 1660, the adjacent Kalmar Rådhus and Drottningholm Slott (1662), just outside Stockholm, were all designed by the court architect Nicodemus Tessin the Elder. Tessin the Younger designed the vast 'new' Royal Palace in Stockholm after the previous palace was gutted by fire in 1697.

The late 19th century and early 20th century saw a rise in romanticism, a particularly Swedish style mainly using wood and brick, which produced such wonders as the Stockholm Rådhus (1916) and Stadshus (City Hall; completed in 1923).

From the 1930s to the '80s, functionalism and the so-called international style took over, with their emphasis on steel, concrete and glass.

Painting & Sculpture

Carl Larsson, part of an artistic revolution in the 1880s, painted some of the best 19th-century oil paintings in a warm Art Nouveau style. Anders Zorn's portraits of famous Swedes and August Strindberg's violently moody seascapes have also come to the attention of the art world. The nature paintings of Bruno Liljefors are well regarded.

Although there was an initially cautious approach to Cubism, some artists embraced the concepts of surrealist and abstract art, albeit with their own Swedish style, such as the rather bizarre 'dreamland' paintings of Stellan Mörner. Otto Carlsund was the driving force behind early abstract art in Sweden.

More radical art movements in the 1960s and '70s were influenced by diverse sources including far left-wing politics, popular culture, minimalism and pop art.

Carl Milles (1875–1955) is Sweden's greatest sculptor and one of the 20th century's most eminent artists in this field. He once worked as Rodin's assistant and his home in Lidingö, on the outskirts of Stockholm, is a gorgeous museum (p82).

Theatre & Dance

King Gustav III founded the Royal Dramatic Theatre, known as Dramaten, in Stockholm in 1773, and interest in theatre and opera blossomed. Greta Garbo attended the Royal Dramatic Theatre drama school in 1922, and Ingmar Bergman made his directorial debut here in 1951.

In 1773, King Gustav III also founded the Royal Swedish Ballet in Stockholm, the world's fourth-oldest ballet company. Stockholm is home to the House of Dance, the Dance Museum, Kulturhuset and the Dance Centre. Modern dance can also be seen at the Göteborg Opera and the Dance Station in Malmö, with smaller-scale productions performed across Sweden.

The Swedish Film Institute has loads of information at www.sfi.se, including film reviews, statistics, awards and programmes.

'August Strindberg's violently moody seascapes have come to the attention of the art world'

Environment

THE LAND Geography

Sweden occupies the eastern side of the Scandinavian peninsula, and shares borders with Norway, Finland and Denmark (the latter a mere 4km to the southwest of Sweden and joined to it by a spectacular bridge and tunnel).

The surface area of Sweden's (449,964 sq km) is stretched long and thin. Around one-sixth of the country lies within the Arctic Circle, yet Sweden is surprisingly warm thanks to the Gulf Stream: minimum northern temperatures are around -20°C (compared to -45°C in Alaska).

The country has a 7000km-long coastline, with myriad islands – the Stockholm archipelago alone has an extraordinary 24,000. The largest and most notable islands are Gotland and Öland on the southeast coast, and the best sandy beaches are down the west coast, south of Göteborg.

Forests take up an incredible 57% of Sweden's landscape. The Swedes aren't short of inland lakes either: there are around 100,000 of them in all. Vänern is the largest lake in Western Europe at 5585 sq km. Kebnekaise (2111m), part of the glaciated Kjölen Mountains along the Norwegian border, is Sweden's highest mountain.

Population

Most Swedes live in the flat south of the country, which has an average population density of 35 people per square kilometre. The capital,

Sweden is a long-drawn-out 1574km from north to south, but averages only about 300km in width.

Stockholm, has 266 people per square kilometre, but in the empty north there are only around nine people per square kilometre.

The 25 historical regions, or *landskap*, are denominators for people's identity and a basis for regional tourist promotion, and are used throughout this book. The 21 counties (*län*) in Sweden form the basis of local government, and these county administrations are responsible for things like regional public transport (*länstrafik*) and regional museums (*länsmuseum*).

Geology

Between 500 to 370 million years ago, the European and North American continental plates collided, throwing up an impressive range of peaks called the Caledonian Mountains, which were as tall as today's Himalaya. Their worn-down stubs form the 800km-long Kjölen Mountains along the border with Norway.

Parts of Skåne and the islands of Öland and Gotland consist of flat limestone and sandstone deposits, probably laid down in a shallow sea east of the Caledonian Mountains during the same period.

Lake Siljan, in the central south, marks the site of Europe's largest meteoric impact: the 3km-wide fireball hurtled into Sweden 360 million years ago, obliterating all life and creating a 75km ring-shaped crater.

WILDLIFE

Thanks to Sweden's geographical diversity, it has a great variety of European animals, birds and plants.

Animals

LARGE PREDATORS

Sweden's big carnivores – the bear, wolf, wolverine, lynx and golden eagle – are all endangered species. Illegal hunting carries a maximum prison sentence of four years. Most conflict between human and beast occurs in the Sami reindeer areas: compensation is paid to the Sami whenever predator populations in their lands increase.

Wolves and wolverines are top of Sweden's most endangered list. However, wolf numbers are slowly increasing, and there are now between 70 and 80 of these beautiful creatures in Sweden, mainly in Värmland and Dalarna.

The more solitary wolverine, a larger cousin of the weasel, inhabits high forests and alpine areas along the Norwegian border. Most are in Norrbotten and Västerbotten.

Brown bears were persecuted for centuries, but recent conservation measures have seen numbers increase to around 2000. Bears mostly live in forests in the northern half of the country, but are spreading southwards.

Another fascinating forest dweller is the solitary lynx – the Swedes' favourite endangered species – which belongs to the panther family and is Europe's only large cat. Sweden's 1000 lynx are notoriously difficult to spot because of their nocturnal habits.

If you have no luck with wildlife in the wild, Grönklitt Bear Park (see p268) has an endangered-animal breeding programme with large and natural-looking enclosures.

OTHER MAMMALS

More than any other animal, the elk (or moose) is the symbol of Sweden. The elk family is the world's largest deer, a gentle knobby-kneed creature that grows up to 2m tall. Elk are a serious traffic hazard, particularly at night: they can dart out in front of your car at up to 50km/h. For

The fearsome-looking brown bear's favourite food is...blueberries!

Swedish elk are slightly smaller than their closely-related American relatives.



elk-spotting and sausages, visit Sweden's biggest elk park Grönåsens Älgpark (p129).

Around 260,000 domesticated reindeer roam the northern areas, under the watchful eyes of Sami herders.

Hikers encountering lemmings in the mountains may be surprised when these frantic little creatures become enraged and launch incredibly bold attacks. The brown mouselike lemmings (white in winter) are famous for their extraordinary reproductive capacity. Every 10 years or so, the population explodes, resulting in denuded landscapes and thousands of dead lemmings in rivers, lakes, and on roads.

Musk ox were reintroduced into Norway in the late 1940s and herds have wandered into Sweden, notably in Härjedalen county. Angry adults have a habit of charging anything that annoys them.

Forests, lakes and rivers support beavers, otters, mink, badgers and pine martens. Weasels and stoats are endemic in all counties; northern varieties turn white in the winter and are trapped for their fur (ermine).

Grey and common seals swim in Swedish waters, although overfishing has caused a serious decline in numbers. In 1988 and 2002, thousands of seals were wiped out by the Phocine distemper virus (PDV) after pollution weakened their immune systems. Common dolphins may also be observed from time to time.

BIRDS

Sweden attracts hundreds of nesting species and permanent residents. Some of the best bird-watching sites are the Falsterbo peninsula (p175), Getterön Nature Reserve (p232); Öland, including the nature reserve at its southernmost tip (p141); Tåkern (p152); Hornborgasjön, between Skara and Falköping in Västergötland; and the national parks Färnebofjärden, Muddus and Abisko.

The golden eagle is one of Sweden's most endangered species. It's found in the mountains, and is easily identified by its immense wing span. Another dramatic bird of prey is the white-tailed sea eagle.

Coastal species include common, little and Arctic terns, various gulls, oystercatchers, cormorants, guillemots and razorbills. Territorial arctic skuas can be seen in a few places, notably the Stockholm archipelago and the coast north of Göteborg.

Look out for lovely little goldcrests in coniferous forests. A few spectacular waxwings breed in Lappland, but in winter they arrive from Russia in large numbers and are found throughout Sweden. Grouse or capercaillie strut the forest floor, while ptarmigan and snow buntings are seen above the tree line along the Norwegian border.

Sweden has a wide range of wading and water birds, including the unusual and beautiful red-necked phalaropes, which only breed in the northern mountains. Other waders you're likely to encounter are majestic grey herons (south Sweden), noisy bitterns (south-central Sweden), plovers (including dotterel, in the mountains) and turnstones.

See p55 for information about local ornithological groups.

FISH & CRUSTACEANS

Many marine species have been badly affected by ecological problems in the Baltic (see p47).

Sprats and herring are economically important food sources. Among other marine species, haddock, sea trout, whiting, flounder and plaice are reasonably abundant, particularly in the salty waters of the Kattegatt and Skagerrak, but the cod is heading for extinction due to overfishing.

Indigenous crayfish were once netted or trapped in Sweden's lakes, but overfishing and disease has driven them to extinction.

Plants

Swedish flora is typical of that in temperate climates, and includes around 250 species of flowering plants.

In the mountains along the border with Norway, alpine and arctic flowers predominate, including mountain avens, with large white eight-petalled flowers; long-stalked mountain sorrel, an unusual source of vitamin C; glacier crowfoot; alpine aster; and various saxifrages (livelong, mossy, purple, pyramidal and starry).

The limey soils of Öland and Gotland produce rare flowering plants including orchids, all of them protected.

Southern Sweden originally had well-mixed woodland, but much of this has been replaced by farmland or conifer plantations. Northern forests are dominated by Scots pine, Norway spruce and various firs.

Hikers will find a profusion of edible berries, mostly ripe between mid-July and early September. The most popular are blueberries (huckleberries), which grow on open uplands; blue swamp-loving bilberries; red cranberries; muskeg crowberries; and amber-coloured cloudberries. The latter, known as *hjordron*, grow one per stalk on open swampy ground and are a delicacy.

NATIONAL PARKS

Sweden was the first country in Europe to set up a national park (1909). There are now 28 (see below), along with around 2600 smaller nature reserves; together they cover about 9% of Sweden. They're set up by Naturvårdsverket (see p47), which also produces pamphlets about the parks in Swedish and English, and an excellent book *Nationalparkerna i Sverige* (National Parks in Sweden).

Four of Sweden's large rivers (Kalixälven, Piteälven, Vindelälven and Torneälven) have been declared National Heritage Rivers in order to protect them from hydroelectric development.

The right of public access to the countryside (*Allemansrätten*) includes national parks and nature reserves; see p54 for more details.

Sweden's National Parks

NORTHERN

Abisko Numerous hiking routes and good accessibility. Northern gateway to the famed Kungsleden hiking track (p49).

Haparanda Skärgård A group of several islands in the far north of the Gulf of Bothnia, with sandy beaches, striking dunes and migrant bird life. Reached by boat from Haparanda.

Muddus Ancient forests and muskeg bogs, plus several deep and impressive gorges, and superb bird-watching opportunities.

Padjelanta High moorland surrounds the lakes Vastenjaure and Virihaure, favoured by a range of Swedish wildlife. The renowned hiking trail, Padjelantaleden, is here (p52).

Pieljekaise Just south of the Arctic Circle, with moorlands, birch forests, flowering meadows and lakes rich in arctic char.

Sarek Sweden's best-loved national park, with wild mountain ranges, glaciers, deep valleys, impressive rivers and vast tracts of birch and willow forest. There's no road access, but experienced hikers can reach the park from the Kungsleden route.

Stora Sjöfallet This park, dominated by lake Akkajaure, has been spoiled by hydroelectric development.

Vadvetjåkka Sweden's northernmost national park. Protects a large river delta containing bogs, lakes, limestone caves and numerous bird species. Access on foot from Abisko.

The lemming is the smallest but most important mammal in the Arctic regions – its numbers set the population limits for everything that preys on it.

For more about bird-watching, read *Where to Watch Birds in Scandinavia* by Johann Stenlund.

You can swim, and fish for trout and salmon, in the waters by Stockholm's city centre.

Four of the national parks in Lappland – Muddus, Padjelanta, Sarek and Stora Sjöfallet – are Unesco World Heritage sites.

NATIONAL PARKS & WORLD HERITAGE SITES

NATIONAL PARKS

- 1 Vadvetjåkka
- 2 Abisko
- 3 Stora Sjöfallet
- 4 Padjelanta
- 5 Sarek
- 6 Pieljekaise
- 7 Muddus
- 8 Haparanda
- 9 Björnlandet Skärgård
- 10 Skuleskogen
- 11 Sänfjället
- 12 Töfsingdalen
- 13 Fulufjället
- 14 Hamra
- 15 Färnebofjärden
- 16 Ångsö
- 17 Tyresta
- 18 Garphyttan
- 19 Tresticklan
- 20 Djurö
- 21 Tiveden
- 22 Gotska Sandön
- 23 Blå Jungfrun
- 24 Norra Kvill
- 25 Store Mosse
- 26 Söderåsen
- 27 Dalby Söderskog
- 28 Stenshuvud

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES

- A Laponia Area
- B Gammelstad Church Village, Luleå
- C Hoga Kusten (High Coast)
- D Falu Kopparbergsgruva
- E Engelsberg Bruk
- F Royal Domain of Drottningholm
- G Skogskyrkogården, Stockholm
- H Birka & Hovgården
- I Tanumshede Rock Carvings
- J Hanseatic Town of Visby
- K Agricultural Landscape of Southern Öland
- L Naval Port of Karlskrona
- M Varberg Radio Station

0 200 km
0 120 miles



CENTRAL

Björnlandet In the far south of Lappland and well off the beaten track. Natural forest, cliffs and boulder fields.

Färnebofjärden Noted for its abundant bird life, forests, rare lichens and mosses. Good road access to the eastern side.

Fulufjället Sweden's newest national park (2002) contains Njupeškär, the country's highest waterfall at 93m.

Garphyttan A tiny 111-hectare park easily reached from Örebro. Previously cultivated areas have fantastic springtime flower displays.

Hamra Measuring only 800m by 400m, this is a protected area of virgin coniferous forest. Access from a minor road off national road No 45.

Skuleskogen A hilly coastal area with untouched forest, deep valleys, Bronze Age graves, good hiking trails and great sea views. Access from the nearby E4 motorway.

Sänfjället Natural mountain moorland with extensive views. Road and foot access possible from several sides.

Tresticklan An area of natural coniferous forest, with small rift valleys and fine bird life. Access by road from Dals-Ed, in Dalsland.

Tyresta Stockholm's own national park: an extensive forest area with huge 300-year-old pines and interesting rock formations. Easy access by car or bus.

Töfsingdalen Exceptionally wild and remote, with virtually impenetrable boulder fields and pine forest. Must be approached on foot.

Ångsö A tiny island in the northern Stockholm archipelago noted for wonderful meadows, deciduous forest, bird life and spring flowers. Boat access from Furusund.

SOUTHERN

Blå Jungfrun A wonderful island with smooth granite slabs, caves, a labyrinth and great views. Boat access from Oskarshamn.

Dalby Söderskog A forested haven of peace for people and wildlife. Bus access from Lund.

Djurö Bird life and deer on an archipelago of 30 islands in Lake Vänern. Access by private boat only.

Gotska Sandön A beautiful sandy isle featuring dunes, dying pine forest and varied flora and fauna, including unusual beetles. Boats from Nynäshamn and Fårösund.

Norra Kvill A tiny 114-hectare park noted for its ancient coniferous forest, excellent flora and gigantic boulders.

Söderåsen A new park easily reached by road. Contains deep fissure valleys, lush forests and flowing watercourses. Pleasant hiking trails and cycling paths.

Stenshuvud A small coastal park with a great combination of beaches, forest and moorland. Easily reached by road; buses from Simrishamn.

Store Mosse Dominated by bogs with sand dunes, and noted for its bird life and great views. A road runs through the park.

Tiveden Wild hills, forests and lakes, plus extensive boulder fields, beaches and excellent viewpoints. Minor roads and trails pass through it; access from road No 49.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Ecological consciousness among Swedes is high, reflected in concern for native animals, clean water and renewable resources. Sweden has a good record when it comes to environmental policies. Industrial and agricultural waste is highly regulated, sewage disposal advanced, greenhouse gas emissions low, and recycling extremely popular.

The North and particularly the Baltic Seas are suffering severe pollution, eutrophication and vast algae blooms, caused partly by nitrogen runoff from Swedish farms. As a result, herring, sprats and Baltic salmon contain high levels of cancer-causing dioxins; they're still being sold in Sweden at the time of writing (with a health warning attached), but will probably be banned by the end of 2006.

Overfishing of these waters is also a huge cause for concern, with cod and Norwegian lobster on the verge of extinction. Fishing quotas may help numbers return.

Some 47% of Sweden's electricity generation comes from hydroelectric sources, mainly dams on large northern rivers. However, there are associated problems, including the displacement of Sami people; landscape scarring; dried-up rivers and waterfalls 'downstream' of the dams; high-voltage power lines sweeping across remote regions; and the depletion of fish stocks, particularly Baltic salmon which cannot return upriver to their spawning grounds. In 1993 the National Heritage Rivers were created to redress this problem.

Nuclear power generation has always been a contentious issue in Sweden. At a referendum held in March 1980, the electorate narrowly voted for the phasing-out of the nuclear programme by 2010. One nuclear reactor has shut, but the remaining 10 are unlikely to close by the deadline, because of high costs and no viable alternatives (nuclear power currently provides about 51% of Sweden's electricity generation).

Environmental Organisations

Naturvårdsverket (Swedish Environmental Protection Agency; ☎ 08-698 10 00; www.environ.se; Blekholmsterrassen 36, SE-10648 Stockholm) Government-run central environmental authority, with an extensive and informative website.

Svenska Ekoturismföreningen (Swedish Society of Ecotourism; ☎ 0647-66 00 25; www.ekoturism.org in Swedish; Box 87, SE-83005 Järpen) Promotes environmentally friendly tourism.

Svenska Naturskyddsföreningen (Swedish Society for Nature Conservation; ☎ 08-702 65 00; www.snf.se/english.cfm; Åsögatan 115, Box 4625, SE-11691 Stockholm) Excellent website on current environmental issues.

'Some 47% of Sweden's electricity comes from hydroelectric sources'

Outdoor Activities

Sweden has thousands of square kilometres of forest with hiking and cycling tracks, vast numbers of lakes connected by mighty rivers, and a range of alpine mountains – it's ideal for outdoor activities. Most of the information available on the Internet is in Swedish. If you can't read the language, contact the national organisations (listed under individual activities in this section) for the sport you're interested in. Regional and local tourist offices are helpful and staff at outdoor stores can also point you in the right direction.

For organised activity holidays, see p332, check individual destinations in this book, or pick up the booklet *Active Holidays in Sweden* from tourist offices.

HIKING

Hiking is well loved in Sweden and there are thousands of kilometres of marked trails. European Long Distance Footpaths Numbers One and Six run from Varberg to Grövelsjön (1200km) and from Malmö to Norrtälje (1400km), respectively.

Nordkalottleden runs for 450km from Sulitjelma to Kautokeino (both in Norway), but passes through Sweden for most of its route. Finnskogleden is a 240km-long route along the border between Norway and the Värmland region in Sweden. The Arctic Trail (800km) is a joint development of Sweden, Norway and Finland and is entirely above the Arctic Circle; it begins near Kautokeino in Norway and ends in Abisko, Sweden. The most popular route is Kungleden, and its most beautiful – and busiest – sections are in Lapland.

Many counties have networks of easy walking trails perfect for day hikes, such as sections of the 950km Skåneleden (www.skaneleden.org).

Multiday routes are found in the mountains and forests near the Norwegian border. The best hiking time is during the short snow-free season, between late June and mid-September; conditions are better after early August when the mosquitoes have gone. Overnight huts and lodges are maintained by Svenska Turistföreningen (STF).

Mountain trails in Sweden are marked with cairns, possibly with some red paint. Marked trails have bridges across all but the smallest streams, and wet or fragile areas are crossed on duckboards. Avoid following winter routes (marked by regular poles with red crosses) since they often cross lakes or marshes!

Safety Guidelines

Before embarking on a walking trip, consider the following points to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience:

- Be sure you are healthy and feel comfortable walking for a sustained period.
- Obtain reliable information about physical and environmental conditions along your intended route, and stock up on good maps.
- Be aware of laws, regulations and etiquette regarding wildlife and the environment, including Sweden's *Allemansrätten* (right of public access to the countryside: see p54).
- Walk only in regions and on trails within your realm of experience.
- Be aware that weather conditions can change quickly in the Northern Sweden: even in summer, prepare for both cold and warm conditions.

- Ask before you set out about the environmental characteristics that can affect your walk and how local, experienced walkers deal with these considerations.

Equipment

Hikers should be well equipped and prepared for snow in the mountains, even in summer. Prolonged bad weather in the northwest isn't uncommon – Sarek and Sylarna are the most notorious areas. In summer you'll need good boots, waterproof jacket and trousers, several layers of warm clothing (including spare dry clothes), warm hat, sun hat, mosquito repellent (a mosquito head net is also highly advisable), water bottle, maps, compass, and sleeping bag. Basic supplies are often available at huts and most lodges serve meals. If you're going off the main routes you should obviously take full camping equipment – for more information about camping away from the main routes see p54.

Equipment can usually be hired from the STF, but don't rely on this. If you need to replace gear, try the small STF lodge shops or the nationwide chain **Naturkompaniet** (www.naturkompaniet.se). Its a Swedish-only website, but click 'butiker' and you'll find a list of stores.

Information

Information in English is scarce – the best source is **Svenska Turistföreningen** (STF; Swedish Touring Association; ☎ 08-463 21 00; www.svenskatouristforeningen.se; Box 25, SE-10120 Stockholm), one of Sweden's largest tour operators. Most of its publications are Swedish-only, however STF staff are generally happy to answer questions and provide information in English over the phone or via email.

For nonmountain walking, address enquiries to **Svenska Gång- och Vandrarförbundet** (SGVF; Swedish Walking Association; ☎ 031-726 61 10; svenskgang@vsif.o.se; Kviibergräddcenter, SE-41582 Göteborg).

MAPS

STF lodges sell up-to-date maps, but it's a good idea to buy them in advance. Try local and regional tourist offices, or buy online or in person at **Kartbutiken** (☎ 08-20 23 03; www.kartbutiken.se; Kungsgatan 74, SE-11122 Stockholm). Maps cost around Skr100 each.

Kungleden

Kungleden, meaning 'The King's Trail', is Sweden's most important waymarked hiking and skiing route. Most hikers visit the part that runs for 450km from Abisko (in the north of Lapland) to Hemavan in the south. The route is normally split into five mostly easy or moderate sections. The fifth section has a gap of 188km in STF's hut network, between Kvikkjokk and Ammarnäs. The most popular section is the northern one, from Abisko to Nikkaluokta; Sweden's highest mountain Kebnekaise (2111m) is a glorious extra for this section.

ABISKO TO NIKKALUOKTA

72km to Singi, 86km to Kebnekaise Fjällstation, 105km to Nikkaluokta; 7-8 days; Fjällkartan map BD6

This section of Kungleden passes through spectacular alpine scenery and is usually followed from north to south. It includes a 33km-long trail from Singi to Nikkaluokta which isn't part of Kungleden, but which allows an easy exit from the area. An alternative (and much more challenging) start is from Riksgränsen on the Norway-Sweden border; the

'Hikers should be prepared for snow in the mountains, even in summer'

English-language coverage of hiking and climbing in the Swedish mountains is limited to *Scandinavian Mountains* by Peter Lennon. The Swedish sections aren't very detailed but they're better than nothing.

Saturday) from Skellefteå to Bodø (Norway) via Jäkkvik, and one to four times daily from Sorsele to Ammarnäs.

AMMARNÄS TO HEMAVAN

78km; 4-5 days; Fjällkartan map AC2

Most of the southernmost section of Kungsleden runs through Vindelfjällens Nature Reserve. The trail is mostly easy, but with a long initial climb.

The STF has hostels at Ammarnäs and Hemavan and five huts en route which all sell provisions.

The Umeå to Hemavan bus runs three or four times daily (only once on Sunday; Skr241, seven hours), and continues to Mo i Rana (Norway; eight hours, once daily).

Padjelantaleden

139km; 8-14 days; Fjällkartan maps BD10 & BD7

The entire Padjelantaleden trail can be hiked in 10 to 14 days. It's generally an easy route, with long sections of duckboards, and all rivers are bridged. The southern section, from Kvikkjokk to Staloluokta (four or five days), is the most popular. At the northern end (by lake Akkajaure), you can start at either STF hut, Vaisaluokta or Akka (the latter is easier). Most of the trail lies in Padjelanta National Park, and all huts in the park are owned by Naturvårdsverket, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency.

STF runs the Sämmarlappa, Tarrekaise and Njunjes huts at the southern end of the trail, and the hostel at Kvikkjokk. You can buy provisions at Staloluokta, Sämmarlappa, Tarrekaise and Kvikkjokk.

To reach the northern end of the trail, take the bus from Gällivare to Ritsem (twice daily) and connect there with the STF ferry to Vaisaluokta and Änonjälme (1.5km north of the Akka STF hut), which runs from midsummer to early September, one to three times daily (Skr140/170 for members/nonmembers). For details of boats from the end of Padjelantaleden to Kvikkjokk (up to three times daily from July to mid-September), call ☎ 0971-210 12. Helicopters (☎ 0971-210 40 or ☎ 0971-210 68) serve Staloluokta from Ritsem or Kvikkjokk daily from midsummer up until early August (Skr750 per flight).

Jämtland

The mountainous part of western Jämtland is one of Sweden's most popular hiking areas. There's a good network of easy to moderate hiking trails served by STF lodges and huts. The most popular route is the 'Jämtland Triangle' (47km), which takes a minimum of three days; allow an extra day for an ascent of the magnificent 1743m-high mountain Sylarna, easily climbed from STF's Sylarna lodge – the route is clearly marked with cairns. The hike runs between STF's Storulvån, Sylarna and Blåhammaren lodges. Sylarna and Blåhammaren don't have road access and Sylarna only has self-catering; meals at Blåhammaren are excellent. The section from Sylarna to Blåhammaren is very marshy and can be quite difficult in wet conditions. Fjällkartan map Z6 covers the area.

See p296 for public transport details.

MOUNTAINEERING & ROCK CLIMBING

Mountaineers head for Sylarna, Helagsfjället, Sarek National Park and the Kebnekaise region.

The complete traverse of Sylarna involves rock climbing up to grade 3. The ridge traverse of Sarektjähkkä (2089m) in Sarek, the second-highest

mountain in Sweden, is about grade 4. There are lots of other glacier and rock routes in Sarek. The Kebnekaise area has many fine climbing routes (grades 2 to 6), including the north wall of Kaskasapakte (2043m), and the steep ridges of Knivkammen (1878m) and Vaktposten (1852m). Ice climbing in the northern regions is excellent, if you can put up with all the darkness and the cold!

For qualified guides, contact **Svenska Bergsguideorganisation** (Swedish Mountain Guide Association; ☎ 098-01 26 56; www3.utsidan.se/sbo; Rymdvägen 11, SE-98145 Kiruna). The website is in Swedish only but under 'medlemmar' there's a list of guides and their contact details.

Rock climbers can practise on the cliffs around Stockholm and Göteborg – there are 34 climbing areas with 1000 routes around Göteborg, and some 200 cliffs around the capital. Other popular spots are Bohuslän, the Kulla Peninsula (north of Helsingborg), and a newly developed bouldering area, Kjøgekull, a few kilometres northeast of Kristianstad. You'll find good climbing walls in Stockholm, Göteborg, Uppsala, Skellefteå and Linköping.

For further information, try the helpful **Svenska Klätterförbundet** (Swedish Climbing Federation; ☎ 08-618 82 70; kansliet@klatterforbundet.com; Lagerlöfsgatan 8, SE-11260 Stockholm).

CYCLING

Sweden is ideal for cycling, with Skåne and Gotland particularly recommended. It's an excellent way to look for prehistoric sites, rune stones and quiet spots for free camping. The cycling season is from May to September in the south, and July and August in the north.

You can cycle on all roads except motorways (green sign, with two lanes and a bridge on it) and roads for motor vehicles only (green sign with a car symbol). Highways often have a hard shoulder, which keeps cyclists well clear of motor vehicles. Secondary roads are mostly quiet and reasonably safe by European standards.

You can take a bicycle on some *länstrafik* trains and most regional buses (free, or up to Skr50). On the Skåne region's Pågatågen trains, a bike costs the price of a child's ticket. On the Öresund trains (which serve routes between Göteborg–Copenhagen and Kalmar–Alvesta–Copenhagen) you can book a space for your bike on ☎ 0771-75 75 75. Long-distance buses usually don't accept bicycles, and nor does the SJ railway. Bikes are transported free on some ferries, including Vägverket routes.

You can hire bicycles from some campsites, hostels, bike workshops and sports shops; the average price is about Skr100 for a day, or around Skr500 per week (although we have seen costs as high as Skr200 and Skr800 for the same periods of time).

Some country areas, towns and cities have special cycle routes – contact local tourist offices for information and maps. Kustlinjen (591km) runs from Öregrund (Uppland) southwards along the Baltic coast to Västervik, and Skånespåret (800km) is a fine network of cycle routes. The well-signposted 2600km-long Sverigeleden extends from Helsingborg in the south to Karesuando in the north, and links points of interest with suitable roads (mostly with an asphalt surface) and bicycle paths.

Brochures and Swedish-text guidebooks with decent maps are available from **Svenska Cykelsällskapet** (Swedish Cycling Association; ☎ 08-751 6204; www.svenska-cykelsallskapet.se; Torneågatan 10, SE-16406 Kista).

An unusual and very popular cycling activity is *dressin* – also advertised as 'rail pedal trolley', 'cycle trolley' or 'inspection-trolley' rides – where you pedal a wheeled contraption along a disused railway line. Trips cost around

'Cycling is an excellent way to look for prehistoric sites, rune stones and quiet spots for camping'

'Western Jämtland is one of Sweden's most popular hiking areas'

THE RIGHT OF PUBLIC ACCESS

The right of public access to the countryside (*Allemansrätten*) is not a legal right, more a common-law privilege. It includes national parks and nature reserves, although special rules may apply. Full details in English can be found on the website www.allemansratten.se.

You're allowed to walk, ski, boat or swim on private land as long as you stay at least 70m from houses and keep out of gardens, fenced areas and cultivated land. You can pick berries and mushrooms, provided they're not protected species. Generally you should move on after one or two nights' camping.

Don't leave rubbish or take live wood, bark, leaves, bushes or nuts. Fires fuelled with fallen wood are allowed where safe, but not on bare rocks (which can crack from the heat). Use a bucket of water to douse a campfire even if you think that it's out. Cars and motorcycles may not be driven across open land or on private roads; look out for the sign *ej motorfordon* (no motor vehicles). Dogs must be kept on leads from 1 March to 20 August. Close all gates and don't disturb farm animals or reindeer. Off-limit areas where birds are nesting are marked with a yellow or red-and-yellow sign containing the words *fågelskydd – tillträde förbjudet*.

If you have a car or bicycle, look for free camping sites around unsealed forest tracks leading from secondary country roads. Make sure your spot is at least 50m from the track and not visible from any house, building or sealed road. Bring drinking water and food, and don't pollute any water sources with soap or food waste.

Above all, remember the mantra: 'Do not disturb, do not destroy!'

Skr450 per day or about Skr1800 a week. The best area in the country to try out this novel experience is Värmland, which has miles of old track: phone ☎ 054 148041 or check out Activities under www.varmland.org for a list of operators.

For further information on cycling, contact your local cycle-touring club.

SKIING

Lift passes and equipment hire are reasonably priced, resorts are well run and facilities are of a high standard. After the spring solstice (21 March), daylight lasts longer than in the Swiss Alps, so you'll get more skiing time out of your pass.

Cross-country (nordic) skiing opportunities vary, but the northwest usually has plenty of snow from December to April (but not much daylight in December and January). Kungsleden and other long-distance tracks provide great skiing. Practically all town areas (except those in the far south) have marked and often illuminated skiing tracks.

The large ski resorts cater mainly for downhill (alpine and telemark) skiing and snowboarding, but there's also scope for cross-country. For resort reviews in English, visit www.goski.com and www.thealps.com. **SkiStar** (www.skistar.com) manages two of the largest places, Sälen and Åre, and has good information on its website.

The southernmost large resort in Sweden, Sälen (Dalarna), appeals particularly to families, as does Idre, a little further north. Åre, in Jämtland, is great for long, downhill runs (over 1000m descent) and cross-country routes, and is the main party place for young skiers. Nearby ski areas at Düved and Storlien are also good, and less crowded. In Lappland, Heman gets fairly busy with spring skiers. Riksgränsen (at the border with Norway on the E10 Kiruna–Narvik road) is the world's northernmost ski resort, and offers interesting options – including heli-skiing and alpine ski touring – from mid-February until late June. Downhill runs at Riksgränsen aren't suitable for beginners.

From 3 to 18 February 2007, the resort of Åre will be hosting the Alpine Skiing World Championships.

Take the usual precautions: don't leave marked cross-country or downhill routes without emergency food, a good map, local advice, and proper equipment including a bivouac bag. Temperatures of -30°C or lower (including wind-chill factors) are possible, so check the daily forecasts. Police and tourist offices have information on local warnings. In mountain ski resorts, where there's a risk of avalanche (*lavin*), susceptible areas are marked by yellow, multilingual signs and buried-skier symbols. Make sure your travel insurance covers skiing.

BOATING & SAILING

Boating and sailing are hugely popular in Sweden. The 7000km-long coastline, with its 60,000 islands, is a sailors' paradise, but look out for the few restricted military areas off the east coast.

Inland, lakes and canals offer pleasant sailing in spring and summer (the canals are generally open for limited seasons). The main canals are the Göta Canal (see p146), the Kinda Canal and the Dalsland Canal. Various companies offer short canal cruises; contact local tourist offices for details. Steamboats and cruisers ply the shores of lakes Vättern and Vänern: see individual town sections for details.

Those with private boats will have to pay lock fees and guest harbour fees (around Skr150 per night, although some small places are free). A useful guide is the free, annual *Gästhamnsguiden* in Swedish, which is published by **Svenska Kryssarklubben** (Swedish Cruising Club; ☎ 08-448 28 80; info@sxx.se; Augustendalsvägen 54, Box 1189, SE-13127 Nacka Strand). It contains comprehensive details of 500 guest harbours throughout the country. It's also available from larger tourist offices and most of the harbours listed.

Svenska Sjöfartsverket (Swedish Maritime Administration; ☎ 011-19 10 00; www.sjofartsverket.se; Huvudkontoret, SE-60178 Norrköping) can send you information on harbour handbooks and sea charts. For charts you can also try **Kartbutiken** (☎ 08-20 23 03; www.kartbutiken.se; Kungsgatan 74, SE-11122 Stockholm).

SKATING

Whenever the ice is thick enough, Stockholm's lake and canal system is exploited by skating enthusiasts seeking the longest possible 'run'. When the Baltic Sea freezes (once or twice every 10 years), fantastic tours of Stockholm's archipelago are possible. The skating season usually lasts from December to March. **Stockholms Skridskoseglarklubb** (Stockholm's Ice Skate Sailing Club; www.sssk.se) has some information in English on its website, but its services are for members only.

DOGSLEDDING & SNOWMOBILE SAFARIS

Organised tours with Siberian huskies pulling your sledge are fairly popular in Lappland, as are excursions on snowmobiles. For further details see the Northern Sweden chapter.

Further south, you can dogsled through the wintry woods of the Dalarna region with **Häst & Vagn** (☎ 0250-55 30 14; hast.vagn@itadventure.se; Torsmo 1646, SE-79491 Orsa); prices are around Skr600/4800/9600 for a half-day/three-day/six-day adventure.

BIRD-WATCHING

There are many keen ornithologists in Sweden, and there are bird-watchers' towers and nature reserves everywhere; see p44 for details of the best bird-watching sites. For further information, contact **Sveriges Ornitologiska Förening** (Swedish Ornithological Society; ☎ 08-612 25 30; www.sofnet.org in Swedish; Ekhagsvägen 3, SE-10405 Stockholm).

Bring a good pair of sunglasses, even if you're visiting in winter, to protect your eyes from glare off snowy surfaces.

Sweden has two indigenous horse breeds: the north Swedish horse and the Gotland pony.

HORSE-RIDING

Sweden's multitude of tracks, trails, forests, shorelines and mountains make for some fantastically varied riding. Everything from short hacks to full-on treks are on offer, for around Skr300/500/800 per two hours/half day/full day, on Swedish or Icelandic horses.

For more information see the website www.hastlandet.se, which has comprehensive contact details for approved stables.

FISHING

There are national and local restrictions on fishing in many of Sweden's inland waters, especially for salmon, trout and eel. Before dropping a line, check with local tourist offices or councils. You generally need a permit, but free fishing is allowed on parts of Vänern, Vättern, Mälaren, Hjälmaren and Storsjön Lakes and most of the coastline.

Local permits for the waters of a *kommun* (municipality) can be bought from tourist offices, sports or camping shops, and some boat or canoe-hire outfits, and typically cost around Skr125 per day. For fishing maps and advice, ask the local tourist office.

Summer is the best fishing time with bait or flies for most species, but trout and pike fishing in southern Sweden is better in spring or autumn and salmon fishing is best in late summer. Ice fishing is popular in winter.

An excellent web resource for fishing in Sweden is www.cinlusc.com/spfguide in Swedish, or contact **Sportfiskeförbundet** (Angling Federation; ☎ 08-704 44 80; info@sportfiskarna.se; Svartviksslingan 28, SE-16739 Bromma).

GOLF

Golf is incredibly fashionable in Sweden. There are over 400 golf courses, open to everyone, and many hotel chains offer golf packages. Courses in the south are often surrounded by rolling farmlands, but things are decidedly weirder in the north – Björkliden, near Abisko, is a golf course 240km above the Arctic Circle, and at the Green Line golf course at Haparanda, playing a round means crossing the Swedish-Finnish border four times. Green fees are around Skr300; for more information, contact **Svenska Golf förbundet** (Swedish Golf Federation; ☎ 08-622 15 00; <http://sgf.golf.se>; Box 84, Kevingestrand 20, SE-18211 Danderyd).

CANOEING & KAYAKING

Sweden is a real paradise for canoeists and kayakers (canoes are more common than kayaks). The national canoeing body is **Svenska Kanotförbundet** (Swedish Canoe Federation; ☎ 0155-20 90 80; www.kanot.com; Rosvalla, SE-61162 Nyköping). It provides general advice and produces *Kanotväg*, a free, annual brochure listing 75 approved canoe centres that hire out canoes (for around Skr250/1300 per day/week).

According to the right of common access, canoeists may paddle or moor virtually anywhere provided they respect the privacy of others and avoid sensitive nesting areas. More good information is available on the Internet at www.kanotguiden.com.

RAFTING

White-water rafting in rubber boats isn't a big activity, since most rivers have low gradients. Localities that do offer the activity include Arvidsjaur on Piteälven (p305); Haparanda on Torneälven (p291); Järpen in Jämtland (one of the best places for rafting in Sweden, see www.jmt.se for more information); and Vindelns, on Vindelälven (p284). You can also go slow-water rafting, especially on Klarälven in Värmland (see p259).

SWIMMING, WINDSURFING & DIVING

Swedish folk need no encouragement to go leaping into lakes, rivers and the sea. The white-sand beaches on the west coast south of Göteborg are some of Sweden's finest. Many campsites have outdoor swimming pools, there are numerous family waterparks, and, for winter, plenty of indoor municipal ones.

Also on the west coast, the area around Varberg (p232) is the premier spot for windsurfing.

There are around 10,000 wrecks lying off Sweden's coastline; those in the Baltic Sea are often in a miraculous state of preservation, thanks to the low salinity of the water. The Kulla Peninsula (p197) also has good diving. Sweden's national diving body **Svenska Sportdykarförbundet** (☎ 08-605 60 00; sportdykning@ssdf.se; Idrottens Hus, SE-12387 Farsta) may be able to help with queries.

One in every 16 Swedes plays golf.

Food & Drink

It's fair to say that Swedes are obsessed with food, though they don't have the kind of reputation for it that, say, the French do. Dining, even down to the afternoon coffee break, is ritualised and taken seriously. Food is often considered a means of exploration of other cultures, as well as a celebration of the traditions that hold Swedish society together.

STAPLES & SPECIALITIES

Most folk start the day with a strong cup of coffee. This is usually accompanied by a *frukost* (breakfast) of cereal such as cornflakes or muesli with *filmjölk* (cultured milk) or fruit-flavoured yoghurt. Hotels and hostels offer breakfast buffets of several types of bread, pastries, crispbread and/or rolls, with *pålägg* (toppings) including butter, sliced cheese, boiled eggs, sliced meat and spicy sausage or salami, liver pâté, Kalles caviar (a ubiquitous caviar spread), pickled herring, sliced cucumber, jam and marmalade.

A hearty lunch has long been a mainstay of the workforce, so it has become institutionalised to a degree – which means it's an affordable and accessible way to get a good solid sampling of typical Swedish cooking. The *dagens rätt* (daily lunch special) includes a main course, salad, beverage, bread and butter, and coffee. Smaller cafés offer lighter versions centred on quiches or salads.

For a lighter lunch yet, head to a *konditori* – an old-fashioned bakery-café where you can get a pastry or a *smörgås* (sandwich), usually very artfully made with greens, shrimp or salmon, boiled eggs, roe and mustard-dill sauce piled onto a slice of bread.

Seafood and meat including game, form the core of the typical Swedish menu – along with the ever-present potato. The word *husmanskost* is used to describe a sort of everyman cuisine: basic, unpretentious, traditional meals like *köttbullar och potatis* (meatballs and potatoes, usually served with lingonberry jam, or *lingonsylt*), *lövbjiff och strips* (thinly sliced fried meat and chips/fries) and *pytt i panna* (equivalent to hash: a mix of diced sausage, beef or pork fried with onion and potato and served with sliced beetroot and an egg). *Gravadlax* or *gravlax* (cured salmon), caviar, shrimp, and smoked, fried or pickled herring are all popular.

TRAVEL YOUR TASTEBUDS

A lot of the best in Swedish food sounds rather discouraging – pickled herring in mustard sauce, reindeer-cheese cream in a tube, liver paste for breakfast, black-liquorice ice cream. But those brave enough to follow the locals' lead will be treated to some surprisingly good flavour combinations. Lingonberries and cloudberries are two distinctive fruits that add flavour to a number of Swedish dishes. Horseradish and dill are key flavours, too. Pairings of food and beverage are important: there's no crayfish without singing and *snaps*; there's no *sill* (pickled herring) without light ale and strong cheese; there's no coffee without cake – or, heaven forbid, vice versa. The best way to explore the many flavours of Swedish cuisine, from the sublime to the ridiculous, is to make a few trips to a *smörgåsbord*. This is especially rewarding around the Christmas holidays, but it's an adventure any time of year. Start with the cold-fish plates and work your way to dessert! You're meant to visit the table many times, so take care not to overload.

Swedes drink more milk than any other nation in the world, and more coffee than anywhere except Finland.

STOCKHOLM'S TOP FIVE

Here are five places an ambitious diner shouldn't miss while visiting Stockholm, for both atmosphere and food that's the best at what it's trying to be:

- Operakällaren (p94) is famous for its *smörgåsbord*.
- Eyubi (p94) showcases the sort of bold new cuisine coming from Stockholm's immigrant communities.
- Gondolen (p96) is old-school fancy with an amazing view.
- Östermalms Saluhallen (p97) is a market hall with a huge variety of food stands and restaurants.
- Nystekt Strömming (p95) is the best place in town for fried herring.

DRINKS

Coffee is Sweden's unofficial national drink, but tea is also generally available. *Saft* is cordial commonly made from lingonberries and blueberries as well as orange, apple and grape. Tap water is drinkable everywhere, but sparkling mineral water is common and comes in a wide variety.

Beers are ranked by alcohol content; the stronger the beer, the higher its price and, generally speaking, the more flavour it has. Light beers (*lättöl*, less than 2.25%) and 'folk' beers (*folköl*, 2.25% to 3.5%) account for about two-thirds of all beer sold in Sweden; these can be bought in supermarkets. Medium-strength beer (*mellanöl*, 3.5% to 4.5%) and strong beer (*starköl*, over 4.5%) can be bought only at outlets of the state-owned alcohol store, Systembolaget, or in bars and restaurants.

Swedes generally drink strong beer on special occasions – partly because the everyday beer produced by mass breweries like Falcon, Åbro, Pripps and Spendrups is entirely unremarkable. There are a few good microbrews available in taverns (look for Jämtlands brewery's very good Fallen Angel bitter; Tärnö's Nils Oscar range is good too), and the major producers also tend to bring out decent speciality beers on a limited scale. The large breweries also produce a wide range of drinks from cider to light and dark lagers, porter and stout. Pear and apple ciders are also common, frequently in light-alcohol or alcohol-free versions.

Wines and spirits can be bought only at Systembolaget. Sweden's trademark spirit, *brännvin*, also called *aquavit* (vodka) and drunk as *snaps*, is a fiery and strongly flavoured drink that's usually distilled from potatoes and spiced with herbs.

CELEBRATIONS

Certain foods are tied to celebrations and times of the year. The most traditional of these, naturally, is Christmas, when the *julbord*, a particularly elaborate version of the *smörgåsbord*, comes out. It contains all the usual delicacies – many types of herring, *gravlax*, meatballs, short ribs, *blodpudding* (blood pudding) etc – as well as seasonal delights like baked ham with mustard sauce, and *Janssons frestelse*, a casserole of sweet cream, potato, onion and anchovy. *Julmust*, a sweet dark-brown soft drink that foams like a beer when poured, and *glögg*, warm spiced wine, are also served around the Christmas holidays. The best accompaniment to a warm cup of *glögg*, available at kiosks everywhere in winter, is a *pepparkaka* (gingerbread cookie).

In summer, when many Swedes are on holiday in the countryside, people tend to dine outdoors. A typical summer lunch consists of various *inlagd sill* (pickled herring) with *knäckebröd* (crispbread), strong cheese like the crumbly *Västerbottens ost*, boiled potatoes, diced chives and cream, plus

Pick up the cookbook *Aquavit and the New Scandinavian Cuisine* by Ethiopian-born Swedish chef Marcus Samuelsson for a taste of what he offers at his Manhattan restaurant. The photos alone look good enough to eat.

The family-fun website www.luciamorning.com/todo.html shares instructions for making crafts and snacks related to the winter holidays.

a finger or two of *snaps* and some light beer 'to help the fish swim down to the stomach'. Midsummer, of course, wouldn't be complete without *sill* (pickled herring) and strawberries. Towards the end of summer, Swedes celebrate (or commiserate) its passing with *Kräftskivor* (crayfish parties) where people wearing bibs and party hats get together to eat *kräftor* boiled with dill, drink *snaps* and sing *snapsvisor* (drinking songs).

In August, noses across the nation crinkle in disgust over or anticipation of *surströmming*, a specially prepared herring that is fermented and tinned and reeks unbelievably when opened – definitely an acquired taste, with plentiful *snaps* being key to the acquisition.

Since pre-Reformation days, split-pea soup and pancakes are traditionally eaten on Thursdays, historically to prepare for fasting on Fridays.

WHERE TO EAT & DRINK

Restaurants are generally open from 11.30am to 2pm or 3pm for lunch, and from 5pm until 10pm for dinner. Cafés, bakeries and coffee shops are likely to be open all day, from 7am or 8am in the morning until at least 6pm.

Tipping is not common in Sweden. A service cost is figured into the bill. If you've had excellent service, a 10% to 15% tip is appropriate.

Quick Eats

Street snacks are the cheapest and most convenient way to fill up in Sweden, particularly in cities but also on beaches, along motorways and in many camping areas. A snack kiosk with a grill is known as a *gatukök* – literally, street kitchen. In the world of Swedish street food, hot dogs reign supreme – the basic model is called a *grillad korv med bröd*, grilled sausage with bread (hot dog in a bun), although you can also ask for it boiled (*kokt korv*). Brave souls can do a mind-boggling variety of things to the *korv*, chiefly involving rolling it up with any number of accompaniments, from shrimp salad to mashed potatoes to fried onions to coleslaw.

Kebab stands and fast-food windows are almost as common as *korv* carts. Packaged ice-cream treats are another ubiquitous option for quick sustenance on the go.

Self-Catering

Shopping for groceries outside your home country is always illuminating, usually fun and almost inevitably cheaper than eating out. Supermarkets across Sweden have preprepared foods for quick snacks, but making your own meals is easy enough too if you're hostelling or staying in camping grounds with good facilities.

Supermarkets are easily found in Swedish towns and villages. The main chains are ICA, Konsum and Hemköp (the last often found inside Åhléns department stores). Rimi is another, slightly less common chain.

By law, both the item price and the comparative price per kilogram have to be labelled. Plastic carrier bags usually cost Skr1 at the cashier.

The ideal way to buy produce is through small, rural farm shops or roadside stands. A brochure and website published by **Bo på Lantgård** (☎ 0534-12 07; www.bopalantgard.org) list farms and markets where you can buy fresh produce and smoked fish directly from the folk who raise them.

VEGETARIANS & VEGANS

Vegetarian and vegan restaurants are common; they're easy to find in the major cities, and even in rural areas restaurants generally have one or two vegetarian main-course options on the menu. For this reason we haven't created a separate category for vegetarian listings in this book.

25 March is Sweden's official Waffle Day.

The website <http://scan.dinaviancooking.com> contains articles about Swedish cuisine and recipes for Scandinavian dishes of all kinds.

Luleå native and Los Angeles resident Helene Henderson's *The Swedish Table* describes lighter, modern versions of traditional Swedish dishes suitable for catering Hollywood parties, which is how she makes a living.

EATING WITH KIDS

Dining with children in Sweden is easy, as they are accepted and catered for even in upscale restaurants.

HABITS & CUSTOMS

Table manners in Sweden are fairly standard for a European country – generally more formal than in the US, but if you follow your host's lead you can't go far wrong.

Should you like to offer a toast, hold up your glass and say 'Skål!' then nod at each person around the table. The host or hostess should make the first toast (see the boxed text, below).

EAT YOUR WORDS

Most people in Sweden speak excellent English and often several other languages, but it's handy, and polite, to be able to order from a Swedish menu. For key phrases and pronunciation guidelines, see p336.

Useful Phrases

Could I see the menu, please?

Kan jag får se meny?

kan ja for-se-a me-newn?

Is service included in the bill?

Är serveringsavgiften inräknad?

air ser-ve-a-rings aav-yif-ten in-vek-nad?

I'm a vegetarian.

Jag är vegetarian.

ya air ve-ge-ta-ri-an

I don't eat meat.

Jag äter inte kött.

ya air-ter in-te kött

breakfast

frukost

froo-kost

lunch

lunch

lunfh

dinner

middag

mid-daa

menu

meny

me-newn

children's menu

barnmeny

baan me-newn

wine list

vinlista

veen-lis-ta

first course/entrée

förrätt

fer-ret

main course

huvudrätt/varmrätt

hu-vu-dret/vaam-ret

daily special

dagens rätt (usually only at lunchtime)

daa-gens ret

takeaway

avhämtning

av-hemt-ning

Food Glossary

BASICS

bröd

brerd

bread

choklad

shoo-klaad

chocolate

grädde

gre-de

cream

honung

hu-nung

honey

ketchup

ke-choop

tomato sauce

DOS & DON'TS

On formal occasions, do wait for the host or hostess to welcome you to the table before eating or drinking. Aside from formal 'skåls', don't sip from your glass until the host or hostess says, 'Now everyone may drink when he or she likes.' Do wear decent socks when dining in someone's home, as you'll generally be expected to take off your shoes in the foyer. And do bring a small gift, such as a bottle of wine or flowers.

The classy-looking www.foodfromsweden.com/recipes has a number of how-to (and why-to) guides to preparing Swedish foods, with gorgeous photography too.

knäckebröd	<i>kne-ke-brerd</i>	crispbread
matolja	<i>maat-ol-yaa</i>	cooking oil
nudlar	<i>nood-laar</i>	noodles
ost	<i>oost</i>	cheese
paj	<i>pa-ee</i>	pie/quiche
pasta	<i>paa-sta</i>	pasta
peppar	<i>pe-paar</i>	pepper
pommes frites	<i>pom freets</i>	chips/french fries
ris	<i>rees</i>	rice
salt	<i>saalt</i>	salt
senap	<i>sen-nap</i>	mustard
smör	<i>smer</i>	butter
smörgås	<i>smer-gors</i>	sandwich
socker	<i>sok-ker</i>	sugar
soppa	<i>sop-paa</i>	soup
sylt/marmelad	<i>silt/mar-mer-laad</i>	jam/marmalade
sås	<i>sors</i>	sauce
yoghurt	<i>yor-goort</i>	yogurt
ägg	<i>eg</i>	eggs

VEGETABLES & HERBS (GRÖNSAKER & ÖRTKRYDDOR)

blomkål	<i>bloom-kol</i>	cauliflower
bönor	<i>ber-ner</i>	beans
champinjoner	<i>sham-pin-yoo-ner</i>	button mushrooms
dill	<i>dil</i>	dill
gräslök	<i>gres-lerk</i>	chives
gurka	<i>ger-ka</i>	cucumber
haricots verts	<i>aa-ree-ko-vair</i>	green beans
kryddor	<i>krew-da</i>	spices
lök	<i>lerk</i>	onion
majs	<i>ma-ees</i>	corn
morot	<i>mo-rot</i>	carrot
paprika	<i>pa-pri-ka</i>	capsicum
persilja	<i>pa-shil-ya</i>	parsley
potatis	<i>poo-ta-tis</i>	potato
potatismos	<i>poo-ta-tis-mus</i>	mashed potatoes
purjolök	<i>per-yoo-lerk</i>	leek
rödbetor	<i>rerd-be-ter</i>	beetroot
rödkål	<i>rerd-korl</i>	red cabbage
sallad	<i>sa-laad</i>	lettuce
sparris	<i>sfa-ris</i>	asparagus
spenat	<i>spe-naat</i>	spinach
svamp	<i>svamp</i>	mushrooms
tomat	<i>too-mat</i>	tomato
vitkål	<i>veet-korl</i>	white cabbage
vitlök	<i>veet-lerk</i>	garlic
ärter	<i>air-ter</i>	peas

FRUIT (FRUKT)

ananas	<i>a-na-nas</i>	pineapple
apelsin	<i>a-pel-seen</i>	orange
aprikos	<i>a-pri-kot</i>	apricot
banan	<i>ba-naan</i>	banana
blåbär	<i>blor-baa</i>	blueberries
citron	<i>si-troon</i>	lemon

hallon	<i>hal-lon</i>	raspberries
hjordron	<i>yoor-tron</i>	cloudberries
jordgubbar	<i>yoord-gub-bar</i>	strawberries
lingon	<i>ling-on</i>	lingonberries
persika	<i>pa-shil-ka</i>	peach
päron	<i>pe-ron</i>	pear
smultron	<i>smul-tron</i>	wild strawberries
vindruvor	<i>veen-dru-ver</i>	grapes
äpple	<i>e-ple</i>	apple

MEAT (KÖTT)

and	<i>and</i>	wild duck
anka	<i>an-ka</i>	duck
biff	<i>bif</i>	beef/steak
bröst	<i>brerst</i>	breast
entrecote	<i>un-tre-kor</i>	steak
filé	<i>fil-lay</i>	fillet
fläsk/griskött	<i>flaisk/gris-shert</i>	pork
gryta	<i>grew-ta</i>	casserole
kalkon	<i>kaal-kon</i>	turkey
kalvkött	<i>kalv-shert</i>	veal
korv	<i>korv</i>	sausage
kotlett	<i>kot-let</i>	chop/cutlet
kyckling	<i>sheek-ling</i>	chicken
köttbullar	<i>shert-bul-lar</i>	meatballs
köttfärs	<i>shert-fash</i>	minced beef
lammkött	<i>lam-shert</i>	lamb
lammstek	<i>lam-stek</i>	roast lamb
leverpastej	<i>lee-ver-pas-tay</i>	liver pâté
nötkött	<i>nert-shert</i>	beef
oxfilé	<i>oks-fil-lay</i>	fillet of beef
oxstek	<i>oks-stek</i>	roast beef
rådjur	<i>rord-yur</i>	venison
renstek	<i>ren-stek</i>	reindeer
rostbiff	<i>rost-bif</i>	roast beef
skinka	<i>shing-ka</i>	ham
älg	<i>el-ye</i>	elk

FISH & SEAFOOD (FISK & SKALDJUR)

abborre	<i>a-bo-re</i>	perch
forell	<i>fo-rel</i>	trout
gädda	<i>yed-da</i>	pike
hummer	<i>hum-mer</i>	lobster
hälleflundra/helgeflundra	<i>hal-le-flund-ra</i>	halibut
kaviar	<i>kav-yaa</i>	caviar
krabba	<i>krab-ba</i>	crab
kräftor	<i>kref-tor</i>	crayfish
lax	<i>laaks</i>	salmon
makrill	<i>mak-riil</i>	mackerel
musslor	<i>mus-ler</i>	mussels
ostron	<i>oost-ron</i>	oysters
räkor	<i>re-ker</i>	shrimps/prawns
rödspätta	<i>rerd-spet-ta</i>	plaice
sill	<i>sil</i>	herring

sjötunga	<i>sher-tung-a</i>	sole
strömming	<i>strer-ming</i>	Baltic herring
tonfisk	<i>toon-fisk</i>	tuna
torsk	<i>torshk</i>	cod
vitling	<i>vit-ling</i>	whiting
ål	<i>ol</i>	eel
DESSERTS (DESSERTER/EFERRÄTTER)		
glass	<i>glas</i>	ice cream
kaka	<i>kaa-ka</i>	cake
ostkaka	<i>oost-kaa-ka</i>	cheesecake
pannkakor	<i>paan-kaa-ka</i>	pancakes
småkakor	<i>smor-kaa-ka</i>	sweet biscuits/cookies
tårta	<i>tor-ta</i>	filled cake
våffla	<i>vor-fla</i>	waffle
äppelpaj	<i>e-pel-pa-ee</i>	apple pie
COOKING STYLES		
bakad	<i>baa-kad</i>	roasted/baked
friterad	<i>free-te-rad</i>	deep fried
gravad	<i>graa-vad</i>	cured
grillad	<i>gril-lad</i>	grilled
halstrad	<i>hal-strad</i>	grilled
kokt	<i>kokt</i>	boiled
marinerad	<i>ma-reen-nair-rad</i>	marinated
rökt	<i>rerkt</i>	smoked
stekt	<i>stekt</i>	fried
ugnstekt	<i>ung-stekt</i>	roasted/baked
DRINKS (DRYCKER)		
apelsinjuice	<i>e-pel-sin-yoos</i>	orange juice
glögg	<i>glerg</i>	mulled wine
kaffe	<i>kaf-fe</i>	coffee
läsk	<i>lesk</i>	soft drink (carbonated)
mjölk	<i>myerlk</i>	milk
saft	<i>saft</i>	cordial
te	<i>tay</i>	tea
varm choklad	<i>vaam-shoo-klaad</i>	hot chocolate
vatten	<i>vat-ten</i>	water
vin (vitt vin/rödvin)	<i>veen (vit-veen/rerd-veen)</i>	wine (white wine/red wine)
öl	<i>erl</i>	beer