

TRAVELAGE WEST

Stockholm Travel Guide: What to Do, Where to Stay and More

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Visitors should begin their stay in Stockholm, Sweden, with a walk through the Old Town.
Credit: 2023 f11photo/stock.adobe.com

In the Swedish capital of Stockholm, travelers will find a city that melds an Old World ethos with a lively, contemporary vibe. Founded in 1252, the largest city in Sweden is a place where visitors of any age and interest can find plenty to see and do — whether stopping for a day off a cruise ship or lingering for a while to explore.

Here's everything to know about exploring Stockholm, from where to eat and stay to where to wander and play.

Where to Start: Gamla Stan, aka Old Town Stockholm

Begin where Stockholm itself began: the compact island of [Gamla Stan](#), also known as Old Town, the city's beating heart. Stately 17th- and 18th-century buildings in a palette of artist colors line cobblestone streets, upon which throngs of locals and visitors shop, dine and visit museums and historic sites.

Wandering down the narrow alleys with no particular destination in mind is my favorite way to see Gamla Stan, but for those who love an itinerary, I recommend seeing [The Royal Palaces](#) and [Storkyrkan](#), Stockholm's oldest church with a glorious Saint George and the Dragon sculpture. Along Stortorget, the city's oldest square, are shops, restaurants and the imposing [Nobel Prize Museum](#).



Gamla Stan features cobblestone streets, cafes and quaint architecture.
Credit: 2023 Zuzana/stock.adobe.com

For excellent coffee, tea and pastries, duck into cozy [Grillska Huset](#), with its overstuffed chairs and lamps topped with shades of distinctly Swedish design. Savor a petite prinsesstarta (princess cake) for a delicious taste of Sweden. Candy shops and touristy stores crowd Gamla Stan, but in between are one-of-a-kind places such as the [Wooden Horse Museum](#), dedicated to Sweden's ubiquitous hand-painted symbol (yes, you should bring one home as a souvenir).

Must-Do: Stockholm Archipelago Boat Tour

The best overview of Stockholm is arguably an [archipelago boat tour](#). Aside from picture-perfect scenery, knowledgeable onboard historians provide compelling commentary and context for the sights the boat glides past.

One island you'll pass is [Djurgarden](#), home to the world's oldest open-air museum, [Skansen](#). The venue (which includes a zoo) transports visitors to the past via costumed interpreters, historic buildings, farmsteads and old-timey

activities. It's a must-see for families but a treat for everyone.

What to Do in Stockholm

Another must-see is the stunning [Fotografiska](#), a contemporary museum of photography, art and culture. In addition to superb photography and thought-provoking exhibits and programming, the museum houses a fantastic contemporary restaurant dedicated to sustainability. The menu is heavily vegetarian, though meat, fish and poultry are available. In warmer months, the ground-level, waterside veranda is an ideal place to gather for food and drink. (A sister Fotografiska in New York City and one scheduled to open in Miami this year let visitors recapture a bit of Sweden stateside.)



Svenskt Tenn's designs are visible all throughout town.
Credit: 2023 Christine Loomis

Even if home decor is not of interest, I suggest a stop at [Svenskt Tenn](#), the singularly Swedish emporium filled with fabrics and decor featuring the company's signature bold graphics. Once you see the designs, you'll find them everywhere in town. Tableware and dining accessories are front and center, but interesting wall hooks, drawer knobs, jewelry, scarves and more will catch your eye in this elegant cornucopia of color and design.

Where to Eat and Stay in Stockholm

Embrace the Nordic aesthetic by lodging at independent hotels in the eclectic collection of [Nordic Hotels & Resorts](#). [Nordic Light Hotel](#), a lifestyle brand and my personal favorite property, exudes contemporary brightness with blond woods and a minimalist aesthetic. Comfortable and welcoming, it's ideal for those traveling for work or play.



Nordic Light Hotel offers a contemporary, but bright minimalist aesthetic.
Credit: 2023 Nordic Hotels & Resorts

[Hotel C Stockholm](#) across the street is the place to chill — literally — as it features an [Icebar](#) off the lobby (parkas provided), where guests can sip a cocktail in a 23-degree setting. [Hobo](#), meanwhile, sports a hip, high-energy rooftop scene that heats up at night.

In Nordic Hotels & Resorts' luxury portfolio, [At Six](#) offers contemporary style, evocative artwork and excellent service and dining.



At Six is one of the best places to stay in Stockholm for luxury clients.
Credit: 2023 At Six

Yasuragi, in the resorts category, is a Japan-inspired spa experience that's about a half-hour drive from Stockholm. Guests stroll about in yukatas (cotton robes), soak in hot pools and enjoy meditation, yoga and massage. High above the archipelago with sweeping views, Yasuragi is unexpected immersion in Japanese culture surrounded by all things Swedish.

Speaking of all things Swedish, did I mention meatballs? Prinsen is the go-to for classic cuisine such as Swedish meatballs, lingonberries and herring, plus, it features an extensive beverage list. Although opened in 1897, Prinsen is a Parisian-esque bistro that feels timeless.



Prinsen is a top choice for classic Swedish meatballs.
Credit: 2023 Christine Loomis

Old Town has endless pub options — including a subterranean Viking bar called Aifur — but historic Den Gyldene Freden, lit only by candles that barely cast a glow in the dark interior, offers the satisfying ambience of an ancient pub.

By luck, I scored a table in the far corner when I was visiting; turns out, that was where Cornelis Vreeswijk, Sweden's famed troubadour, liked to drink his beer and maybe, I imagine, scribble drafts of his songs and poems. A plaque with his name hangs on the wall above the table. My travel partners and I ordered Swedish beer and toasted to our time in Stockholm — perhaps inspired by Vreeswijk to return home and write our own odes to this grand-dame city of islands. Skål!