Welcome to Northern Delight

Stockholm awaits to excite visitors of Swedental

The City of Stockholm is often identified as one of the world’s most exciting urban areas. Strengthening its position as the most attractive city in Scandinavia for business travellers and tourists, the city has set another achievement in 2012 with over 10.5 million overnight stays in commercial forms of accommodation. Foreign visitors accounted for one third of these stays with people from Germany, Britain, the USA and Norway topping the list.

The city indeed attracts today an intercontinental set of visitors, who come to experience its selection of contemporary cosmopolitan culture—for the same reasons that they might otherwise travel to London, Paris or Tokyo. Design in the broadest sense, both contemporary and traditional, has been and is an important part of the city’s lifestyle. Many of the Swedish and international brand stores can be found in Stockholm’s oldest department store PUB. For those interested in modern interior design, stores such as Asplund and Nordiska Galleriet, as well as shops that offer classic Swedish design and furniture like Svenskt Tenn with Josef Frank textiles are the places to be. The best of Sweden’s famous crystal can be found at Orrefors/Kosta Boda’s concept store and Nordiska Kristall, among other places. For food lovers, the markets and food halls at Hötorgetshallen and Östermalmshallen are must-see destinations. The Östermalm district is also home to Stockholm’s most exclusive antiques precinct, with fine art, crafts and classic design from several centuries. The large auction houses are also here, and viewings as well as auctions are big events in autumn and spring.

Stockholm has always been an important centre for commerce and trade. The city originally rose to prominence as member of the Hanseatic League with strong economic and cultural ties to prosperous cities like Hamburg, Danzig, Reval, modern-day Tallinn and Riga. The earliest mention of Stockholm in writing dates back to 1252, when the mines in Bergslagen made it an important site in the iron trade. It is also said to have been founded by Birger Jarl, in order to protect Sweden from sea invasion by foreign navies, and to stop the pillage of towns such as Sigtuna on Lake Mälaren. In Norse sagas, the location appears as Agnafit, named after legendary king Agne, who gained glory in the Finnish wars, but was betrayed and hanged by his wife Skjalf for having killed her father.

Parts of the city’s history are preserved in the Old Town (Gamla Stan) and the tiny adjacent island of Riddarholmen. The Royal Palace is standing there serving as offices for the Royal family and is used by the king to perform his duties as Sweden’s head of state. It has 609 rooms and is one of the largest royal palaces in the world that is still in use for its original purpose. Unlike the Buckingham Palace in London, the Royal Palace is open to the public and hosts a selection of museums like the Royal Armoury (Livrustkammaren) or the Trea-
The Old Town is also home to the Nobel Museum (Nobel museum) and the House of Nobility (Riddarhuset). From there, it is a beautiful walk to the picturesque street, Fjällgatan, over in the Södermalm (Söder) district, a separate island with stunning views across the city. It is also called SOFO similar to the famous SOHO districts in London and New York, has become home to entrepreneurs that have developed new types of shopping experiences by combining fashion, design, cafés and galleries, all in the same place. Today, many of Sweden’s talented young fashion and product designers are represented with their own stores.

Stockholm is built on many islands and there are lots of bridges and water. On one side of the city is the Baltic and on the other is Lake Mälaren. Unlike most European capitals, Stockholm makes it easy for you to combine big city life with countryside excursions and adventures of every possible kind, even during a brief visit. On all sides, the city is surrounded by pristine natural environments and interesting cultural landscapes. Within half an hour by public transport, visitors can access places of great beauty, devoid of all signs of city life. Kungliga Djurgården is such an island consisting mainly of parkland, with enough to keep visitors busy for days. There is Skansen, for instance, an open-air museum presenting historical Sweden, and the Vasa Museum that exhibits the remains of warship Vasa, which sank in Stockholm on her maiden voyage in 1628. Until today, the ship is one of Sweden’s most popular tourist attractions and, as of 2007, has attracted more than 25 million visitors.

Most unique and spectacular of all is the Stockholm Archipelago—a vast, fan shaped maritime world of more than 30,000 islands, of which only about a thousand are inhabited. In the summer, it is a paradise for sailors and other boaters of any level. Another UNESCO World Heritage destination is Skogsbyggarbyn (the Woodland Cemetery), just south of the Södermalm district in Stockholm.

There are also towns nearby of particular historical and cultural interest, such as Uppsala, Strängnäs and Sigtuna, and stilled communities like Ytter, Norrtälje, Vaxholm and Mariefred with Gripsholm Castle, one of the most impressive monuments to Sweden’s period as a superpower in the 17th century.

Skeppsholmen is another centrally located island that is rich in art and culture. It features the Modern Museum (Moderna museet), one of the world’s foremost museums for 20th century art, with the Swedish Museum of Architecture (Arkitekturmuseet) in the same building, not to mention the extraordinary Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities (Ostasiatiska museet). The adjacent island, Blasieholmen, has Nationalmuseum (the National Museum), with its first rate collection of Danish and European painting and sculpture and a permanent exhibition of Swedish design. To the west, rising above the water is Stockholm’s iconic Stadshuset (City Hall), venue for the Nobel Banquet, which takes place on 10 December every year.

On Djurgården, younger visitors will love Junibacken with its storybook worlds by the children’s author, Astrid Lindgren. Thieliska Galleriet (the Thieliska Gallery) and Prince Eugen’s Waldemarsudde are two outstanding art museums, housed in former private palaces and famous for their collections of Scandinavian paintings and sculptures from the period around 1900. The imposing Nordic Museum (Nordiska museet), often mistaken by visitors for the Royal Palace, is another leading international museum for Scandinavian culture and history. All three museums are situated on Djurgården.