

# Sweden

## Country



Sweden is officially called **the Kingdom of Sweden**.

The land area of Sweden is the 4th largest in Europe.

Sweden shares a land border with its Scandinavian counterparts Finland and Norway, and is connected to Denmark by a bridge.

The main official language of Sweden is **Swedish** (svenska), but the country also has 5 other official languages - Finnish, Yiddish, Sami, Meänkieli and Romani.

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## Flag, Language, Government



Sweden's flag was adopted on June 22, 1906. It is blue with a yellow Scandinavian cross.

While being part of the EU Sweden has retained its own currency the **krona**.

Sweden is a parliamentary **democracy**. Sweden's parliament is called the **Riksdag**, to which members are elected every four years.

The Swedish head of state since 1973 has been **King Carl XVI Gustaf**. He has no political power, but represents the country and performs ceremonial duties.



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## Geography



The capital and largest city in Sweden is **Stockholm**, other notable cities include Gothenburg, Malmö and Uppsala.

Forests cover over 50% of Sweden, there are also around 100,000 lakes and over 24,000 islands throughout the country.

Sweden is long – some 1,574 kilometres from top to bottom – and can be divided into three major regions: **Götaland** in the south, **Svealand** in the middle and **Norland** in the north.

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## Culture, Technology



Sweden is renowned for producing great pop bands and singers, including **ABBA**, **The Cardigans**, **Ace of Base**, **Europe** and **The Hives**. Sweden is the world's 3rd largest exporter of music after the United States and United Kingdom.

A number of prominent manufacturing and technology company's were founded in Sweden including **Ericsson**, **Volvo**, **Saab**, **Scania trucks**, **IKEA** and **Electrolux**.

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## Food, Sport



A traditional and famous dish of Sweden is **Swedish meatballs**, served with gravy, boiled potatoes and lingonberry jam.



A **crayfish party** (kräftskiva) is a traditional summer eating and drinking celebration in August. It involves boiled crayfish served with boiled potato and dill.

**Ice hockey** and **football** (soccer) are Sweden's main sports, other popular sports include handball, golf, gymnastics, athletics and cross country skiing

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## St. Lucia's Day



Around Christmas time in Sweden, one of the biggest celebrations is **St. Lucia's Day** (or St. Lucy's Day) on December 13th. The celebration comes from stories that were told by Monks who first brought Christianity to Sweden.

St Lucia was a young Christian girl who was martyred, killed for her faith, in 304. The most common story told about St Lucia is that she would secretly bring food to the persecuted Christians in Rome, who lived in hiding in the catacombs under the city. She would wear candles on her head so she had both her hands free to carry things. Lucy means 'light' so this is a very appropriate name.

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## St. Lucia's Day



December 13th was also the Winter Solstice, the shortest day of the year, in the old 'Julian' Calendar and a pagan festival of lights in Sweden was turned into St. Lucia's Day.

St. Lucia's Day is now celebrated by a girl dressing in a white dress with a red sash round her waist and a crown of candles on her head.

The crown is made of Lingonberry branches which are evergreen and symbolise new life in winter. Some towns and villages also choose a girl to play St. Lucia in a procession where carols are sung.

Lucias also visit hospitals and old people's homes singing a song about St Lucia and handing out 'Pepparkakor', ginger snap biscuits.

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## St. Lucia's Day



Small children sometimes like dressing up as Lucia. Also boys might dress up as 'Stjärngossar' (star boys) and girls might be 'tärnor' (like Lucia but without the candles).

A popular food eaten at St. Lucia's day are **Lussekatts**, St Lucia's day buns flavored with saffron and dotted with raisins which are eaten for breakfast.

St Lucia's Day first became widely celebrated in Sweden in the late 1700s. St Lucia's Day is also celebrated in Denmark, Norway, Finland, Bosnia, and Croatia.