



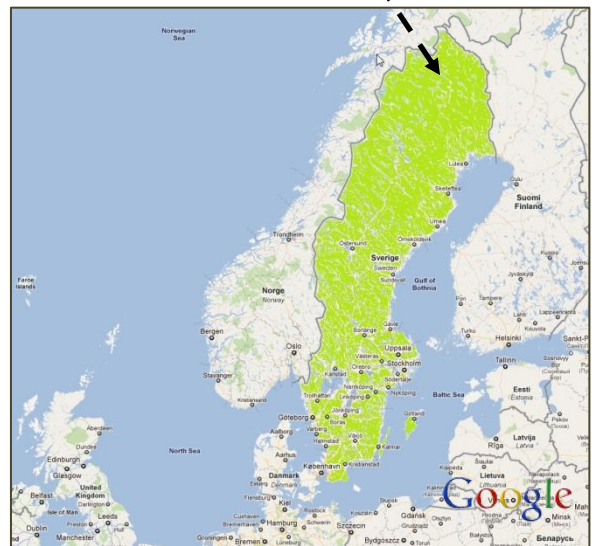
Trekking the Planet

Discovering the Cultural and Natural Significance of the World



Where are we now?

- Darren and Sandy are in Kiruna, Sweden, located at 67° N and 20° E.
- We have traveled approximately 31,125 miles (50,091 kilometers) from our starting point in California.



People and Culture

- Sweden has not participated in any wars for almost two hundred years. Prior to that, they were united in various unions with the Danish and Norwegians and controlled Finland.
- The country has a king and an elected prime minister and parliament. King Carl XVI Gustaf is a ceremonial head of state. Sweden joined the European Union in 1995 but still uses its own currency, the krona.
- The nine million inhabitants are primarily Swedes. Finns make up the next largest ethnic group. Built 700 years ago on a span of islands, Stockholm is the capital and largest city.
- The Nobel Prize was founded by a Swede, Alfred Nobel, who invented dynamite. As of 2006, Swedes have been awarded 27 Nobel prizes, including five peace prizes. This is the highest per capital ratio and 5th largest country total in the world.
- Swedish women have their first child, on average, at 30 years old. This, along with Ireland and the Netherlands, is the oldest average in Europe.
- The Swedish band ABBA has sold over 375 million records. Their music is featured in the musical *Mamma Mia!*.



The King and Queen of Sweden (source: Wikipedia.org)



Old town Stockholm (source: Happytellus.com)

Did you know?

The Viking period took place from about 750 to 1060 AD. Swedish Vikings, unlike their Norwegian and Danish counterparts, moved eastward, rather than westward. In the 9th and 10th centuries, Swedish Vikings controlled areas as far away as present-day Istanbul and the Caspian Sea. The first kingdom of Russia was founded by Vikings and many Russian Tsars were of Swedish Viking descent.



Swedish Viking stamp (sources: Sverigeturism.se, Stamp-shop.com)

Nature and Environment

- Sweden is part of the Scandinavian Peninsula that consists of it and Norway. The term Scandinavia refers to these two countries and Denmark. More recently, Finland and Iceland have been grouped as part of this area because of their similar culture and history. The term of Nordic countries also refers to this larger designation of five countries.
- Swedish Lapland is north of the Arctic Circle and includes eight national parks, as well as UNESCO World Heritage sites. Watch a three minute video about Lapponia, one World Heritage site, [here](#).
- There are 11 peaks over 6,562 feet (2,000 meters), in Swedish Lapland. The tallest is Kebnekaise at 6,925 feet (2,111 meters).
- The Kungsleden (King's Trail) is found in Lapland and was created over 100 years ago by the Swedish Tourist Association. The northern portion goes through Abisko National Park, from Abisko to Nikkaluokta. Hikers may encounter lynx, wolverine, elk, arctic fox, bear and wolf, as well as numerous types of birds. The Sami people inhabit this area and tend to their grazing reindeer during the summer months.

An Ice Hotel

The world's first-ever built ice hotel is located near Kiruna, Sweden in Lapland. It is open from December to April each year and entirely made of snow and ice blocks taken from a nearby river. Guests can stay at the hotel, sleep in ice-sculpted rooms and drink from glasses that are also made from ice.



sources: wikipedia.org, Flickr.com/NiamhCotter, Icehotel.com.uk



Northern trekking route and view – the start and end are in yellow (source: Svenskaturistforeningen.se)

Our Plans

- We reached Kiruna after an overnight train trip from Stockholm, which took about 17 hours. Our Lapland Arctic Circle trek on the northern portion of the Kungsleden trail will begin tomorrow and take seven days. We expect to cover about 65 miles (105 kilometers) of the 280 mile (450 kilometer) Kungsleden trail.
- After the end of the trek we will return to Kiruna and then travel into Norway for the next week.
- As we continue traveling through Europe let us know what questions you have. We will try to include our answers in a future email.

Smörgåsbord

A well-known Swedish meal is the smörgåsbord. In Swedish "bord" means "table" and "smörgås" translates to "open sandwich". The term refers to a variety of dishes, similar to a buffet. Dishes may include specialties such as Swedish meatballs, herring, and salmon, as well as eggs, potatoes, cheese and bread. Its origin dates back about 300 years ago. Julbord is a Christmas version of the smörgåsbord.



sources: Sverigeturism.se,
Wikipedia.org

More Information

- <http://lifestyle.iloveindia.com/lounge/facts-about-sweden-1501.html>
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kungsleden>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Sweden
- <http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/europe/euscan.htm>
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scandinavia>
- <http://www.visitsweden.com/sweden/Regions--Cities/Northern-Sweden/Nature-experiences/>
- <http://travel-island.com/interesting.places/sweden.html>
- <http://www.funtrivia.com/en/Geography/Sweden-3858.html>

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