

**S**TOCKHOLM, the political, business and cultural capital of Sweden, is abuzz with excitement. The city, not to mention the whole country, is thrilled about the recent announcement that Crown Princess Victoria is to marry her long-time partner and former fitness instructor, Daniel Westling, next year.

The timing is perfect as 2010 marks the 200th anniversary of the House of Bernadotte's rule in Sweden. When the announcement was made, a crowd gathered outside the palace and sang the national anthem. Then the Royal Court Website crashed as Swedes tried to view the video clip of King Carl Gustav XVI announcing the engagement.

"There is excitement on the streets," Pamela Andersson, the editor of *Queen* magazine, told *The Times of London*. "This is going to be wonderful for Sweden." Many people expect a lavish ceremony and hope the happy couple will be married in the Storkyrkan, Stockholm's Cathedral, just like King Carl Gustav and Queen Sylvia in 1976.

The world will be watching and television viewers will be treated to a spectacular backdrop as Stockholm is one of the most pic-



turesque cities in Europe. Spread over 14 islands strung between the Baltic Sea and Lake Malaren and connected by scores of bridges, Stockholm is somewhere everyone and everything seems to be imbued with an innate sense of style.

Justly celebrated for its design and fashion industries and an ongoing affection for hi-tech, Stockholm pulsates with smart restaurants, intriguing boutiques and humming bars that all indicate that Swedes certainly know how to enjoy themselves. Added to this is an invigorating dose of culture – the city hosts around 100 galleries and 70 museums – the natural beauty of 38 parks, and arresting architecture; the end result is a metropolis that's as stunning as it is vibrant.

Best of all, English is almost universally spoken, making Stockholm extraordinarily business and tourist friendly. And with the summer coming up, when the sun almost never sets, visitors can indulge in swimming, fishing and boating right in the heart of the city almost 24 hours a day.

"Stockholm's a vibrant and beautiful city that's also well positioned for reaching other countries in the Baltic, which makes it an excellent place for work and play," says Martin Allison,



CEO of Hutchison's container port operations in Sweden.

One of the best ways to explore the city is to take an organised tour. Three-hour bike trips around Djurgården – a former royal hunting ground which has been transformed into a lush city park – take in the major sites including the Vasa Museum whose centrepiece is a salvaged 17th century sailing ship, and the Rosendal Palace. Or visitors can simply go at their own pace with a walking trip around the old town, Gamla Stan, which is crammed with some of Stockholm's most interesting landmarks and attractions.

The changing of the guard takes place outside the Royal Palace, while the 18th century Stock Exchange Building in the Great Square, Stortorget, is where the Swedish Academy meets every year to choose the winner of the Nobel Prize for literature. One of the most unusual statues in Stockholm – commemorating the poet Evert Taube, together with his trademark sunglasses perched high up on his forehead – stands in Järntorget, which was formerly the centre of the city's iron and copper industry.

Shoppers will find plenty of stores to browse along Väst-

erlanggatan, especially the antique shops. Indeed, there are numerous opportunities for retail therapy in Stockholm, and visitors can make a sizeable saving by reclaiming value added tax at the airport before departure.

In addition to Västertlanggatan, one of the most attractive shopping areas in Stockholm is Skansen, where many crafts people – especially glassblowers – display their wares. And Gallerian is reckoned to be among the city's best malls, as it contains mainly local shops rather than international brand names. More mainstream mementoes are piled high at the Stockholm Tourist Souvenir Shop, which stocks Dala horses, embroideries, Viking statuettes, and glassware.

A sense of history is evident almost everywhere in Stockholm, and nowhere more so than its hotels. The most prestigious accommodation is the Grand, which opened in 1874. Quite apart from its incredible harbour-front location, the signature Mathias Dahlgren restaurant is one of the best in Scandinavia, while the rooms are all marvellously ornate, and the recently refur-

**Urban splendour and pristine wilderness: Stockholm is one of the most picturesque cities in Europe, while dog-sledding is popular in Lapland in the far north of the country.**



# DESTINATION SWEDEN

*A country with something for everyone*

*By Ed Peters*



bished Cadier bar is both stylish and fun.

Smaller and with a more intimate feel, the Hotel Stureplan opened last year and blends old and new with a contemporary décor contrasting with high ceilings and chandeliers. The champagne bar is a magnet for both visitors and locals, while guests can also enjoy access to Sturebadet, one of the city's best spas.

If Stockholm seems a little staid at first sight, with grandiose buildings and monuments at every turn, then its nightlife offers a stunning contrast. A vast range of bars, clubs, pubs and live music venues get going shortly after dusk and rarely let up until the early hours of the morning.

Typical of the breed is Stampen, a Mecca for devotees of the "sound of surprise" as it plays Dixieland, New Orleans and mainstream jazz beneath a ceiling hung with stuffed animals and an assortment of antiques, while the outdoor veranda is especially popular in summer. Rather more trendy, the Blue Moon Bar attracts a host of models and actors, with a chic modern décor and a DJ spinning a huge variety of tunes from all over the globe. Alternatively, Café Opera is a bistro, brasserie and tearoom by day, but in the evening is transformed into one of Stockholm's most happening nightclubs.

More formal entertainment is on offer at the Royal Dramatic The-



atre – Kungliga Dramatiska Teatern – where Greta Garbo launched her acting career – which stages both classics and experimental productions. Even more spectacular, the Drottningholm Court Theatre dates from the 18th century and puts on both opera and ballet with performers dressed in period costume while the music of the time is played on antique instruments.

Sweden's second city, Gothenburg, was once the centre of the country's ship building industry, however nowadays it's better known for its universities and the student population gives the metropolis a merrily rumbustious air. Yet the greatest change in Gothenburg in recent years has been a mini-gastronomic revolution, with dozens of smart eateries opening up in and around the city centre.

Fresh fish from the North Atlantic is the prime ingredient, and one place to sample it is Sjomagasinet, right by the Alvsborg Bridge. The restaurant boasts a coveted Michelin star, awarded in 1999. Meanwhile, Gallic and Swedish cuisine is beautifully fused at Kock & Vin, which concentrates on matching the various dishes with the wines in the restaurant's extensive cellar.

Health-conscious eaters should drop by Wasa Alle, where nutritional ingredients are served up in dishes from all over the world. Not all of Gothenburg's dining is so formal; after work on Fridays pubs such as Respekt, Rumpbar and Tres lay on

**Spoilt for choice:** Clockwise from below left: **The luxurious Grand Hotel; a scenic panorama of Stockholm; Gothenburg, river views; cross-country skiing; the Ice hotel at Jukkasjarvi; Stockholm's port; the Northern Lights; a 3 shop.**  
*Inset:* **The origins of the Dala Horse, a national symbol and a popular tourist souvenir, date back hundreds of years.**




a buffet and serve drinks at happy hour prices starting as early as 4pm – though the queues usually form well in advance.

While Sweden's cities are renowned for being extremely clean and eco-friendly, it is in the countryside that visitors come to realise the precise meaning of "pristine".

"Sweden is a great place to do business, but it's also great for leisure and Swedes love the outdoors," says Peder Ramel, CEO of 3 Scandinavia. "We love the outdoors. More than half the population owns a summer home in the countryside, and in the winter we go skiing in the mountains."

Lapland, in the far north of Sweden, is famed for its World Heritage Sites, and the incredible phenomenon of the Northern Lights, which illuminate the night-time sky in an awesome display that is a tribute to nature at its most beautiful. Lapland is often justifiably described as Europe's last wilderness, and it's one vast adventure playground for anglers, hikers, and skiers. Dog and reindeer sledding is highly popular, there's ample sport for elk and small game hunters, and Lapland hosts the world's most northerly golf courses.

It's also home to Sweden's most distinctive accommodation; the Ice Hotel at Jukkasjarvi, is one vast igloo, rebuilt each year with ice from the Torne River, so the total number of rooms varies, but always with an adjoining ice chapel for weddings. The only permanent part of the hotel is the restaurant, which is built from regular construction materials, though just to remind diners that they're inside the Arctic Circle, many dishes are served on plates carved from ice.

With so much on offer, it's enough to make you want to pack your bags and jump on a plane for Sweden. 

## STAYING CONNECTED

**H**UTCHISON'S PRESENCE in Sweden extends to two of the country's most essential businesses, providing 3G mobile services and – with effect from March 2009 – handling the port of Stockholm's container operations.

Sweden has long relied on its international maritime trade, while it also witnessed the genesis of mobile telephony. Ericsson and the then state-owned telephone monopoly launched the world's first mobile phone system back in the 1950s, although it was not particularly portable and snail-like compared to Hutchison's current 21 Mbps system. Current penetration in Sweden is approximately 110 per cent, and while Hutchison faces some stiff competition, it remains the market leader.

Hutchison Port Holdings (HPH) will operate the container terminal within Stockholm Free Port, supporting the company strategy of enlarging its presence in growing markets. The primary aim is to increase cargo handling capacity, which is currently in excess of 45,000 twenty-foot equivalent units per year.

HPH will also be instrumental in developing a dynamic new container terminal at Stockholm-Nynashamn, approximately 60 kilometres south of the city. This will cover an area of 25 hectares and will be developed in three phases, with a quay length of 800 metres and a depth alongside of 15 metres. The new terminal is expected to become operational in 2012.

