

Stockholm Gay Guide



Half a million spectators, 50,000 participants – when it comes to diversity, Stockholm Pride ain't foolin'. Given a total population under 10 million, neither is Sweden.

Welcome to a country officially saying, "Hej, Gays!"





Stockholm, the cosmopolitan center and natural capital of Scandinavia. Dull? Please. Predictable? Never! With a gay life as easily accessible, hugely fun and highly varied as the city itself, it's a destination seemingly tailor-made to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered traveler. And one widely celebrated amongst the world's most beautiful. Built on 14 islands where Lake Mälaren meets the coolly clear Baltic Sea, spanning centuries of history and culture, it's a city where opportunity meets contrasts: art and design, fashion and futurism, cobblestones and striking glass, Vikings and aristocracy, queer, calm, dynamic and energetically integrated. LGBT life is never brash, ghettoized or in-your-face aggressive, as in some of Europe's other capital cities. IKEA might have re-invented the closet, but there's little need for it here.

Rainbow flags fly high over much of the city's central districts, particularly the buzzing and bohemian SoFo (south of Folkungagatan) on Södermalm and the city's cobblestone streets of old town, Gamla Stan, which looms serene on hundreds of years of history. Easily engaged and at ease with diversity, Swedes are quick to shake off any dour ice queen stereotypes first-time LGBT visitors might have had. Summer even sees droves of fun-loving stunners sunbathing and swimming in full glory on the island of Långholmen.

Gay, gay-friendly, or simply friendly, whatever you're looking for in a holiday destination, you can count on a warm and laid-back, typically Scandinavian welcome in Stockholm. The city beckons back visitors, gay and straight, time and again with promise of fresh and exciting experiences laid out as if on an exceptionally satisfying smörgåsbord. Land of the midnight sun and legal gay marriages, birthplace of ABBA and Nobel prizes, two-time host of Europride, it's a place where pink dollars mesh with policy. Snap back that aquavit, Stockholm really is a city to celebrate!



PHOTO: ÅKE E:SON LINDMAN

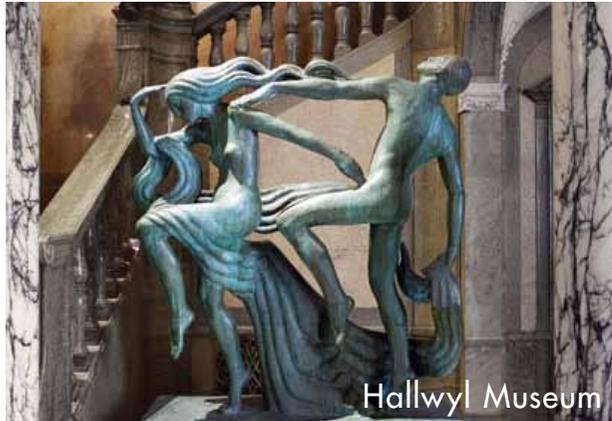


PHOTO: MÄLARPAVILJONGEN/MATS LINDFORSS

Dining Out

Surrounded by some of the purest water in Europe, Stockholm is a vanguard of the local and organic eco movements. Surprise – there’s more than meatballs to Swedish cuisine! Whether you’re hungry for Michelin-starred experiences or casual quick bites, foodies will delight in the city’s perennial special: simple, fresh and delicious fare. Much like Swedes themselves, overwrought is not on the menu.

Gay-popular highlights include the campily baroque and reliably tasty [Torget](#), queen of the Gamla Stan scene. [Le Rouge](#), also in the heart of Stockholm’s old town, is the perfect place to grab a pre-dinner drink or while away the night with inspired dishes and chatty friends. In summer, balmy evenings see Kungsholmen’s Riddarfjärden shore comes alive with slick outdoor restaurant/cafe [Mälarpaviljongen](#), its floating pontoon deck overflowing with cocktailing queers. Nearby, funky little [Göken](#) offers well-crafted seasonal delights under glowing handbag-shaped lights.



Insights Out

City or nature? On land or on water? Stockholm offers up nothing if a bevy of choice for the discerning sightseer. With 80 museums alone, it's not about finding something to do, but fitting it all in that becomes a challenge. Be sure to pick up the [Stockholm Card](#) for free admission to most attractions and cultural sites, unlimited public transportation, free bike and hop-on hop-off boat tours in summer plus other discounts in 24- to 120-hour increments. If you're looking for guided help, [Stockholm Sightseeing](#) cruises the waterways with uniquely designed itineraries, including a gay-themed tour during the Pride festival. Alight at the quays near the Royal Dramatic Theatre, the Grand Hôtel and City Hall.

On the queer front (in all meanings of the word), go no further than the [Hallwyl Museum](#), a gorgeously preserved turn-of-the-20th-century mansion poised on the once-notoriously cruisy Berzelii Park. Rumored lesbian Countess Wilhelmina von Hallwyl devoted her later years to cataloguing her life's everyday objects, from toothbrushes to oil paintings and silver chalices, creating both a historical slice-of-aristocratic-life and an eccentric tribute to monomania.



Not nearly as comprehensive but infinitely more impressive, all that glitters is gold at the [Royal Armoury](#). From gilded carriages to court fashions and medieval weaponry, 500 years of dynastic history are carefully preserved in the cool cellars of the Royal Palace.

An easy metro ride away to Södermalm, the [Stockholm City Museum](#) covers the city's cultural past and present. Pose with Rose the Poodle, the museum's bright pink mascot, then grab a guide for a "Millennium Walking Tour" to catch highlights of Stieg Larson's world from *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* or sign-up for frequent gay heritage city walks and boat trips.

Farther afield, the UNESCO World Heritage designated [Woodland Cemetery](#) (Skogskyrkogården) draws hushed drama queens with its modernist layout featuring undulating hills and oddly romantic architecture. Pay respects to Greta Garbo and stroll amongst 250 acres of pine forests and grassy slopes. If the little Angel of Death statue above the Woodland Chapel portico intrigues you, don't miss the [Millesgården](#) sculpture park at the former home and studio of its creator, Carl Milles, Sweden's foremost sculptor. Located on a serene clifftop overlooking Lake Värtan and chock full of monumental replicas of his most stunning, often erotic works, the terraced garden is especially magical at sunset, when his world-famous Angel Musicians and Hand of God dance against the orange-streaked sky.



Do not miss a visit to [Fotografiska](#), one of the world's largest meeting places for contemporary photography. Fotografiska presents four unique major exhibitions and about 20 smaller exhibitions annually. In addition to the large exhibition space, Fotografiska houses a book and souvenir shop, a restaurant and a photo gallery. In the bar on the top floor you will find one of Stockholm's very best vantage points.

Finally, no trip to Stockholm is complete without a visit to the [Vasa Museum](#). Inside a purpose-built shell of a building stands a near perfectly preserved galleon that sunk on its maiden voyage in 1628 and was salvaged 333 years later. Exhibits on seafaring life and naval warfare appeal to adults, while the hulking ship itself is a treat for the kid inside.

And no trip to Sweden is complete without picking up some world-famous design souvenirs. Whether you're looking for fashion or furniture, dueling department stores NK and P.U.B. are one-stop-shops for quality labels such as Acne, Cheap Monday, Gant, Whyred, Fifth Avenue Shoe Repair and flagship brands such as Design House Stockholm and colorful cult paperie Bookbinders. Exceedingly stylish Byredo Parfums is Scandinavia's answer to Diptyque. And while every major city might have an H&M, Stockholm also has an H&M Home Store. Stockholm is clearly a 21st century city not afraid to upend its lovingly-preserved traditions in the name of shopping.



Nights Out

Like any large city, the social calendar is ruled by the day of the week and shining season, as well as your own proclivities. Whatever your type for the night – jocks, cabaret, college, bear, leather, classy, dance or a quiet place for a beer with your boo – there’s no shortage of gay venues to choose from. Add in the many gay-friendly boîtes and you’ve got heaps of social options. Those who want nothing less than a shoulder-to-shoulder scene scored by international DJs pack into multi-level [Paradise](#) or flock to [Zipper Club](#) for sweaty shufflin’ between three dance floors and four bars. Fashionistas frequent the guest-list-only [2.35:1+Gay](#) in the clubby basement of pop-art opulent Berns Hotel on Saturday. Leathermen get their licks at the semi-private, strictly fetish focused [Scandinavian Leather Men](#) (SLM) pub and club nights. And it seems the whole town turns up on Sunday for lager and schlager (Sweden’s own brand of highly danceable cheese-tastic euro pop) on the moored lightship turned party boat [Patricia](#). In summer, an energetic buzz takes strength from the seemingly neverending sunset. The high-class mixed scene on the open-air steps of [F12](#) is a good bet to tap into it.



PHOTO: PUYOLS, FLICKR



PHOTO: MATTIAS OLSSON

In nightlife, nothing is more constant than change. QX magazine is a reliable source on the city's social scandal as well as the most up-to-date listings of gay-friendly bars, restaurants, clubs and events; its plainly laid out [QX GayMap](#) (also online at www.qx.se) is an easy-to-follow essential. Consult it while taking a fika – loosely translated, a traditional afternoon coffee and sweet pastry break – at cozy [Chokladkoppen](#) in the heart of Gamla Stan or head to [Copacabana Café](#) in grungier Södermalm. Adjoining an indie movie theater and around the corner from overstuffed queer bookstore [Hallongrottan](#) (named after a raspberry tartlet), the Copa is a laid-back place to meet locals and nosh vegetarian cuisine.

The late summer [Stockholm Pride Festival](#) (end of July/early August) is the largest public event in the country – period. A week's worth of musical entertainment and art exhibitions, lectures and debates plus no small amount of partying, all culminate in a lively parade and outdoor celebration. Viking Bears, gay Christians, queer sports teams and out firemen... you name it, they're there.



Berns Hotel



Grand Hôtel



Hotel Stureplan



Rica Hotel Kungsgatan

Lights Out

From old-world opulence to minimalist makeovers, Stockholm sleeps every scene.

Art deco meets pop art at the chic boutique [Berns Hotel](#), a self-proclaimed “Designer Hotel for people tired of designer hotels”. Past guests Marlene Dietrich and Diana Ross would certainly agree.

For those who like to dream of splendors of a bygone era, [Hotel Stureplan's](#) combination of two 19th buildings brings traditional Swedish craftsmanship and intimate class to a neighborhood renowned for shopping and nightlife. The hotel's champagne bar, Per Lei, is a must for lovers of the bubbly stuff. Jetsetters that need no dreaming flock to the [Grand Hôtel](#), a superbly elegant mainstay opposite the Royal Palace that oozes with heritage and tradition. A stocked new gym and full-service spa enhance its already extravagant offerings.

Enjoy the pulse of the city at Stockholm's true shopping hotel, [Rica Hotel Kungsgatan](#). Situated in an unbeatable location in the classic PUB department store where Greta Garbo used to work.



Sheraton Hotel Stockholm



Hotel Hellsten



Clarion Hotel Stockholm



Hotel Skeppsholmen



Hilton Stockholm Slussen

At the just-renovated [Sheraton Hotel Stockholm](#), five-star service and a popular happy hour mere steps from the train station draw a choice crowd to the central business district. From individually decorated rooms to meals in a exquisite conservatory, [Hotel Hellsten](#) is a gem prized for its impeccable good taste, buffed daily with a sheen of cozy charm.

Rightly described as “Stockholm’s Art Hotel No.1”, the [Clarion Hotel Stockholm](#) showcases a stellar collection of works in a living gallery of light and space. Whether you’re in town for business or indulging in a romantic weekend, save time for a drink and the fantastic skyline view at its trendy upstairs bar.

Commanding views, commanding breakfasts (voted “Best of” so many times it’s not allowed to run anymore) and cleverly designed rooms with swirling marble bathrooms make [Hilton Stockholm Slussen](#) a unique option for business and leisure.

And at gay-managed [Hotel Skeppsholmen](#), a slick, serene renovation turns two 17th-century naval barracks into an amenity-laden island of culture and calm, literally. Ensnconed in nature next to the Modern Art and Architecture Museums, its central water-front location is a captivating choice for a discerning crowd. Listed in many magazines’ hot spot lists this design hotel is a little piece of heaven.



PHOTO: RESTAURANT J NACKA STRAND

Check It Out!

Welcome to the unique quality of gay life in Stockholm. There's much to be discovered and even more to be experienced. The gay capital of Scandinavia awaits.

Follow our blog for daily updates and news on LGBT Stockholm www.visitstockholm.com/gay-lesbian
You can also find us on twitter, Facebook and Flickr. Please visit our blog for details.