



Welcome to Sweden!

As an exchange student, you are about to discover the fascinating and beautiful country of Sweden. The nation encompasses such varieties of climates, nature, and ethnic groups; your exchange experience will look different from one day to another. You have a wonderful time ahead of you.

Regardless of where your host family lives, you will have the opportunity to discover the country's interesting history both in class and through your own explorations. You will gain a true understanding of what it means to be Swedish through your relationships with your host family and new friends, found at school and in the community. Prepare for an exchange experience filled with emotions, events, friendships, and high school life. Welcome to Sweden!

Expectations meet reality

– get to know your host country!

Many of your opinions about Sweden and Swedes may be based on stereotypes or preconceptions. Soon you will be experiencing the reality behind those ideas, and it may be vastly different from what you were expecting. The key to success is to keep an open mind and begin preparing for your exchange experience now while you are awaiting placement and departure.

1. Take off your shoes. You will quickly notice that shoes are taken off when entering private residences in Sweden. Some explain it with the simple fact that Swedes spend a lot of time outdoors during winter and are prone to dragging in the dirt. Others say it is a sign of respect for the home. Either way, you do the right thing in always taking off your shoes when entering a Swedish home.

2. General etiquettes. In Sweden, it is very important that you say “Tack för maten” (thank you for the food) when leaving the table after a meal. It is equally important that you say this to your host family, as it is when you are a guest at a friend's house. When someone gives you a ride somewhere, you always say “tack för skjutsen” when you get off to show your appreciation.

3. Time management. Punctuality is essential in Sweden. If you are invited somewhere at 6 p.m., it will be expected that you arrive at that time. The concept of “fashionably late” is a very foreign concept in Sweden. This includes coming home in time for your curfew. You should always be sure to come home on time. If you are even ten minutes late, you should give your host family a call to let them know you are on your way.

4. Be honest. Swedes often have an easygoing relationship with their parents and teachers. Swedish teenagers have fewer rules than you are probably used to. This is because their parents and teachers put a lot of trust in them. It is, therefore, necessary to always be straightforward and honest with your host family. Please remember that you should always let them know how you are feeling. It is just as important that you express your positive feelings, as well as your negative ones, for your exchange to be as good as possible.

5. Socialising and connecting. Coming to Sweden can be an emotional roller coaster. In Sweden, you might have to put an extra level to your socialising efforts. Swedish people are usually quite shy and do not talk to people they do not know. When attending your Swedish high school, you are doing the right thing in showing initiatives and starting talking to your fellow classmates. Even though they can appear quite reserved at a beginning, Swedes make great friends as soon as you get to know them.

Schools in Sweden

Upon beginning high school, Swedish students choose a specific school programme. Some study economics, other media, natural science or IT. Where you will be placed depends on your previous knowledge as well as the school's offer. Often exchange students in Sweden get offered a spot in a social or natural science programme. You will find that you get to study a bit of everything, with a strong focus on a particular field. Therefore, you will have less freedom to choose your subjects than what you might be used to.



Free time activities

The free time activities in Sweden vary a lot depending on where in the country you will live. If you live up north, we recommend you to take part in a wide range of outdoor activities, such as skiing and hiking. Orienteering and fishing are also popular outdoor activities, throughout whole Sweden. Besides being a country with a long coastline, Sweden has plenty of beautiful lakes where you can enjoy a picknick or go for a run in peaceful environments.

Due to the weather conditions, there are many indoor activities offered here. This can be sports such as dancing, football, floorball, and ice-hockey. You can also sign up for theatre or singing classes, basically anything you are interested in, during your high school exchange in Sweden.

Besides immersing in different sports and activities, Sweden teenagers often spend time at cafés after school, catching up over a “fika”. You will take part in many “fikas” during your time in the country. This means catching up with friends and family, over a coffee and something sweet, often a cinnamon bun (“kanelbulle”). Taking a fika is a significant part of the Swedish culture and everyday life.

Staying with a Swedish host family

As a member of a host family, you will experience what it means to live like a Swede. Whether you are catching up with your host parents about your school week over Sunday dinner or watching series with your host siblings, you will enjoy a daily life filled with laughter and love.

Every family has their own unwritten rules for daily routines. We ask prospective host families about these routines before your arrival so that they understand that it is crucial for them to highlight and go through them with you. It is your responsibility to adapt to the family’s lifestyle and follow the rules of your host family – just like you do at home. You will be expected to keep your room tidy, as well as pick up after yourself around the house. Your host family’s lifestyle may be very different from what you are used to in your home country, and you have a lot to win on being open-minded, join their activities, and try new things.

It is always a good idea to let your host parents in on your plans. If you know you will be going to the movies on Friday, tell them so they too can plan their time. If you would like to have a friend coming over, you should ask first. At the beginning of your exchange, there might arise confusions and misunderstandings between you and your family. This is totally normal. The more you communicate and get to know each other, the more frictionless your life together will be. Swedish families are very loving, and many of our families have been hosting students several times before. They will soon see you as a part of their family.

As a member of the family, spending money is intended to cover personal needs such as toiletries and occasional treats like eating out, movies, shopping, and other activities. Host families are not expected to supply you with personal items or extras. If you are going to make long-distance calls, we recommend you to connect to Wi-Fi and call through apps such as FaceTime or WhatsApp.

Your host family will take care of your meals while you are home, but feel free to take initiatives and prepare food from your home country every now and then. Your host family are as curious about your culture, as you are on theirs.

Language

Spending your high school exchange in Sweden is obviously a great way to become fluent in Swedish. You have probably already begun to study a bit of Swedish, and we highly recommend you to keep studying before your exchange starts. This for you to be able to understand the basics and to adapt to the society as quickly as possible.

You should always try to speak Swedish during your time in Sweden. You may be uncomfortable with your skills in the beginning, but you will quickly notice how you become more and more fluent for each day. Your language abilities will improve through your mistakes, and people may correct them in a positive way. Everyone will appreciate your willingness and desire to improve. Before you know it, you will be a fluent Swedish speaker!

