Why Sweden´s Popularity is Rising as a Premium Winter Destination

Recent trends show that Sweden is becoming increasingly popular among winter travelers, especially from the UK, Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands. With experiences like chasing the Northern Lights, dog sledding through snowy landscapes, and world-class skiing, Sweden attracts winter enthusiasts from around the globe. The country's unique mix of soft adventures and thrilling activities makes it a standout winter destination.

According to SLAO, the 2023/24 winter season has set a new record for Swedish ski resorts, with an 11% increase in lift pass sales. Regions such as Dalarna and Värmland have seen the largest growth in visitors and ski days.

Surveys from key markets, including the UK, Germany, and the USA, indicate that:

- 2 out of 5 travelers plan to engage in winter activities during a Sweden trip.
- 1 out of 5 prioritize winter holidays, with 10% selecting them as their top holiday choice.
- 15% of past visitors came back to Sweden for skiing-focused trips.

In response to growing demand, SkiStar is introducing AI-driven technology across its resorts to enhance the visitor experience for the upcoming season. This includes real-time reporting of lift queues and AI-powered ski logistics designed to optimize time on the slopes, minimizing wait times for guests.

Top winter activities for international visitors include:

1. **Northern Lights**

Aurora Sky Station in Abisko, Swedish Lapland has garnered numerous awards and is frequently hailed by the media as the world's top location to witness the Northern Lights. Situated in the heart of the auroral zone, Abisko offers ideal conditions with its clear, crisp air and mostly cloudless skies. Visitors can enjoy a breathtaking night-time experience, watching the Northern Lights' dramatic flares and calm pulsations.

At the Sky Station, you'll find an outdoor terrace, a lookout tower, and an informative Northern Lights exhibition. A guide provides talks throughout the evening, adding insight into this awe-inspiring natural phenomenon. For those planning a visit, the viewing season runs from 14 November 2024 to 15 March 2025.

2. Stargazing

Jokkmokk, known for its rich Sámi heritage, offers some of Sweden's most pristine night skies, particularly west of the town near the Pärlälven nature reserve. With little light pollution, it provides exceptional stargazing opportunities, allowing observers to witness the stars in their full clarity, just as they appeared to ancient cultures. This unique experience is increasingly rare in today's urban environments dominated by artificial lighting.

For more on astrophotography in Swedish Lapland, follow David Björkén on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube under @northernpanorama. Further details about Jokkmokk can be found at http://www.destinationjokkmokk.se.

3. Wildlife safaris

Sweden's vast wilderness is perfect for wildlife safaris, offering encounters with creatures like moose, bears, reindeer, muskoxen and a variety of birds. These safaris, led by eco-friendly organisers such as "Wild Sweden" and "Wild Nordic," take visitors through forests, past lakes, and across mountains, giving them the chance to spot wildlife in its natural habitat. In Swedish Lapland, you can track reindeer and moose, while in Gästrikland and Hälsingland, bears roam close to human observation spots. Bird enthusiasts can enjoy close views of golden eagles and other species in specially designed cabins. Each safari combines wildlife viewing with insights into Sweden's nature and foraging traditions.

4. Snowmobile rides

Sweden offers a variety of snowmobile adventures, from family-friendly safaris to more rugged Arctic Circle expeditions. Many resorts and towns, particularly in northern Sweden, offer tours that include activities such as wilderness lunches, campfires, ice fishing, and visits to mountain lodges.

A major innovation in 2023 is the introduction of the electric snowmobile, from Vidde, unveiled at the Icehotel. This sustainable

vehicle allows guests to experience the Northern wilderness in near silence, enhancing their connection to nature. Vidde's production model, Alfa, will be ready by 2024-2025, offering an eco-friendly option for snowmobiling while reducing environmental impact.

The collaboration between Vidde and the Icehotel aligns with a commitment to sustainability, providing a more immersive and eco-conscious way to explore Sweden's winter landscapes.

Here are some places to experience snowmobile tours in Sweden, listed from north to south:

- Snowmobile tours in Kiruna
- Snowmobile in Åre
- Snowmobile rental in Härjedalen
- Snowmobile rental in Lofsdalen
- Snowmobile destinations in Dalarna
- Snowmobile in northern Värmland

5. Dog sledding

Dog sledding in Sweden offers an unforgettable adventure, particularly in the Swedish mountains and Lapland. Mush your own team of Alaskan or Siberian huskies across snow-covered forests, frozen lakes, and mountains. These energetic dogs can cover 15 to 40 kilometers a day, and on your journey, you might even spot reindeer or arctic wildlife like foxes and hares. If you're lucky, you could catch a glimpse of the Northern Lights.

Beginners can try short dog sledding trips at ski resorts, while multi-day tours provide an immersive experience with expert guides. You'll stay in log cabins or tents, with all meals and accommodation included. For the best experience, visit between December and March in the northern regions, though some companies also offer wheeled dog sledding in summer.

Where to go dog sledding in Sweden – from north to south

6. Snowshoeing

7. Downhill skiing

Sweden boasts over 100 ski resorts, offering a variety of experiences. These range from family-friendly destinations to areas ideal for off-piste skiing. Smaller ski areas provide a quieter alternative to popular resorts, allowing visitors to escape the crowds. Additionally, convenient ski slopes are located close to major cities like Stockholm and Gothenburg, making day trips a viable option. Whether seeking a relaxed family trip or more challenging terrain, Sweden's ski resorts cater to all preferences.

8. Cross-country and ski touring

Sweden hosts the world's largest ski race, the renowned Vasaloppet. Beyond this legendary event, there are numerous cross-country skiing opportunities for all levels, including beginners. A variety of well-maintained tracks can be found across the country, from the northern regions down to the south.

Visitors can combine outdoor exercise with the Swedish tradition of enjoying a 'fika' in nature, making cross-country skiing a truly immersive winter experience.

Here´s our top list of places to go cross-country skiing

9. Ice fishing

Ice fishing is a popular winter pastime in Sweden, offering a peaceful and engaging experience, especially in the early spring sun. Even for beginners, it's a straightforward activity to try. "Pimpel" fishing is one of the easiest methods.

One exciting destination for ice fishing is North Dalarna's mountains, where Anglerman fishing adventures offers unique day trips focusing on Arctic char in a pristine, unspoilt environment. Arctic char, known for being both elusive and thrilling to catch, draws many enthusiasts. Lake Locknesjön near Östersund, one of Sweden's cleanest lakes, also provides an excellent spot for Arctic char fishing, especially in Musviken Bay, which is renowned for whitefish catches in January and February. Alternatively try in the stunning national park environment of Flufjället Nation Park in Dalarna where rumour has it, there are really big arctic char to be found. Ice fishing starts even before Christmas in Jämtland Härjedalen in the north where trout, arctic char and perch are all to be found at latitude 63.

10. Off-piste skiing

In conclusion, Sweden is the ultimate winter dream destination, offering everything from adventure to serene escapes.

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Visit Sweden has an official assignment from the Swedish government to market Sweden as a destination. Our vision is that Sweden by 2030 is the world's most sustainable and attractive destination built on innovation. Now more than ever, purposeful travel needs to be meaningful, conscious and creating lasting value with regard to our guests, the local community and our planet. Welcome to Sweden, a destination of a different nature.

Additional assets available online: Photos (1)

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