

Why ‘Townsizing’ is the New Travel Trend Putting Sweden’s Smaller Cities in the Spotlight

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The term ‘townsizing’—a blend of ‘town’ and ‘downsizing’—describes a growing desire among travellers to bypass the frantic energy of major capitals in favour of smaller urban gems. Recently highlighted in the Germany edition [Condé Nast Traveller](#), the trend is driven by a move away from mass tourism and a preference for destinations where you don’t need to book a restaurant table weeks in advance or share historic streets with thousands of others.

In Sweden, these smaller cities offer distinct characters and are easily accessible by train, providing an authentic experience of Swedish life—whether that involves 13th-century fortresses, Viking history, or the nation’s passionate debate over the perfect cinnamon bun.

The *Condé Nast Traveller* [Hot List 2026](#) further highlights the growing appeal of “townsizing” – the trend towards seeking out smaller, more intimate destinations. Among this year’s featured properties is [Sibbjäns](#), a boutique farm stay on the Baltic island of Gotland.

Set in the island’s peaceful south, near Burgsvik, this family-run retreat offers a different kind of luxury. Rather than rooftop bars or concierge services, guests are greeted by grazing sheep, ancient limestone walls and wide-open landscapes. At Sibbjäns, everything begins with the land, where sustainable farming, exceptional local produce and biodiversity go hand in hand. Together with the UNESCO-listed medieval town of [Visby](#), Gotland exemplifies why smaller, nature-rich destinations are becoming increasingly sought after by travellers.

Five Swedish City Escapes Perfect for Townsizing:

- **Lund: For the Heart and the Mind**

One of Sweden’s oldest cities, Lund manages to feel remarkably young thanks to its world-renowned university and 50,000 students. Life here revolves around the medieval cathedral and the charming cafés of the Lundagård district. It is a city where the quality of life—and the quality of the cinnamon buns at local favourites like *Broder Jakobs* or *Mannz Bageri*—is held in high regard. <https://visitsweden.com/where-to-go/southern-sweden/skane/lund/>



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- **Varberg: The Home of 'Kallbad' Culture**

In Varberg, a city break typically begins with a plunge into the Kattegat. The city's iconic *Kallbadhus* (cold bath house) has stood on wooden stilts for over a century, offering a cycle of sauna and sea that locals consider a standard Tuesday activity rather than a test of nerves. Beyond the water, a mighty 13th-century fortress dominates the skyline, overlooking a vibrant surfing scene. <https://visitvarberg.se/>

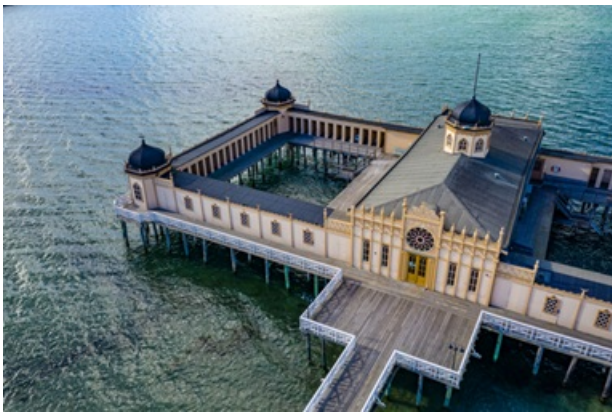


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- **Linköping: Where History Still Lives**

Gamla Linköping is not a cordoned-off museum but a living historic quarter of authentic wooden houses, shops, and craft workshops. It represents one of the largest preserved wooden urban environments in Sweden. Just a short distance away, visitors can watch the slow theatre of the Berg Locks on the Göta Canal, or stay overnight in the historic *Hilma Winblads B&B* to wake up amidst cobblestone alleys. <https://visitlinkoping.se/en/>



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- **Uppsala: From Viking Kings to Botanical Wonders**

Just north of Stockholm, Uppsala offers a relaxed atmosphere for Sweden's fourth-largest city. It is home to the Royal Mounds of *Gamla Uppsala*, one of Scandinavia's most significant Viking sites, and the legacy of world-famous botanist Carl Linnaeus. His former home and gardens remain a tranquil escape in a city otherwise defined by its grand cathedral and lively student population. <https://visitsweden.com/where-to-go/middle-sweden/uppland/upsala/>



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- **Umeå: High-Latitude Culture**

Located just 400 kilometres south of the Arctic Circle, Umeå punches well above its weight culturally. A former European Capital of Culture, the city is home to the *Bildmuseet*, one of Sweden's most prestigious contemporary art institutions, situated right on the banks of the Ume River. It proves that you don't need to be in a metropolis to find world-class art and a cutting-edge creative scene. <https://visitsweden.com/where-to-go/northern-sweden/vasterbotten/umea/>



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