



# Quest Program SWEDEN



**Sweden** is a beautiful country with wilderness, lakes and coasts. This is where both Astrid Lindgren and ABBA were born. If you are lucky, you might meet the King of Sweden, or at least the king of the woods here, Sweden's famous moose. The country has a long, extraordinary history, which starts just after the last glacial period.

People have been living in Sweden for more than 10,000 years. The country is fairly big in size, yet has a population of only 9 million people, 80% of which live in the southern half of the country. The three biggest cities are the capital of Stockholm, Gothenburg (Göteborg) on the west coast, and Malmö (Malmö) in the very South.

Sweden is a Scandinavian country and is located in northern Europe. Many people think that the country consists of snow, polar bears and freezing

temperatures all year round, but this is not the case. Sweden has a temperate climate, and is much warmer than other places at similarly high altitudes. It is the northern part of Sweden that is colder than the rest of the country. During the winters the north gets a lot of snow, which is perfect for those who love skiing. Summers in Sweden are rather warm, with average temperatures around 68°F in the middle of the country.

Sweden has a beautiful landscape that is home to many fauna and flora. Maybe that is why native Carl Linnaeus became the father of botany. This long and narrow country features a wide variety of landscapes, which are ideal for hiking and outdoor recreation. The northern part of Sweden is called Lapland and has a spectacular wilderness with forests, alpine peaks and the world famous ice hotel in Jukkasjärvi. In the very south, Skåne offers lakes, stunning countryside and beaches.

The "allmansrätt," literally meaning "everyman's right," makes Sweden a country to feel welcome in. This right of public access allows you to roam the countryside freely without permission from the land owner, as long as you do not disturb or destroy. You can go out in the woods and pick berries and mushrooms, or just sit down by a lake and relax.

## Sweden Statistics

Area: 173,859 square miles  
Population: 9.2 million  
Capital: Stockholm  
Language: Swedish (Svenska)  
National holiday: June 6  
Life expectancy: 81 years

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A nonprofit corporation committed to advancing intercultural educational student exchange.

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Sweden is a constitutional monarchy with King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia. They have three children: Crown Princess Victoria, Princess Madeleine, and Prince Carl Filip. Sweden is currently led by the liberal Moderate Party, but the Social Democratic Party maintains a strong tradition in Sweden. Equality between men and women has made Sweden well known throughout the world.

Most Swedes have a good well-rounded education about the world, partly because immigration has made it a multicultural country. Many inventions come from Sweden, such as dynamite, ball bearings and Tetra Pak. You may also be familiar with Swedish multinational companies like VOLVO, SAAB, Ericson, IKEA and SKF, to name a few.

Swedes are generally healthy and do a lot of different exercise. Soccer is probably the most popular sport, but you will find a wide variety of physical activities available in most areas. Björn Borg, Carolina Klüft and Annika Sörenstam are some of the brilliant athletes that have inspired young Swedes. Music is also very popular and some bands are famous all over the world (ABBA, Robyn, the Cardigans and Roxette e.g.).

## School Life

Norwegians start school at the age of six and are required to stay in school for 13 years. The school year is divided into two semesters. Much like the US system, the fall semester starts in August and ends in December and the spring semester starts in January and ends in June. High school consists of three years, and is a preparation for higher education. The students have a certain number of compulsory subjects, such as math, English, Norwegian, history and social science, but can also choose from a range of elective subjects depending on their interests.

Students select from several “educational programs,” for example natural science, social science, language (English, French, German or Spanish is offered at most schools), business & economics, aesthetics, media and communication, etc.

The relationship between teachers and students is usually friendly and informal. Students in their final year of high school are referred to as “russ.” These soon-to-be graduates tend to make themselves heard and seen in the community throughout the year and especially in the spring. Dressed in red, black or blue, the “russ” have their special cars, clothes, whistles, etc. They participate in a number of activities such as trips, parties, shows, and parades. Although it’s a year of celebration, students continue to study hard for their final exams.

It is sometimes difficult to place exchange students in Norwegian schools because there are many exchange organizations who want to place students and only so many schools. Exchange students should be open and thankful to the school when placed. Special demands must be dealt with sensitively by the Quest office and we cannot guarantee that we will meet them.

Grades in Norway range from 1-6, where higher numbers represent better performance. School normally starts at eight or nine o’clock in the morning, and ends between one and four in the afternoon. Schools normally offer sports activities after school. Transportation to school varies. Sometimes schools will provide a free bus service, while in other cases students will have to pay for their own transportation. For lunch, most schools have a cafeteria where students may purchase food, but it is common for Norwegian students to bring their own lunch to school.

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Exchange students should prepare for a rigorous workload, depending on their command of the Norwegian language. Quest recommends that students study at least a basic level of Norwegian in their home country before arriving in Norway. Previous language study will help students follow class lectures and make Norwegian friends more easily. It is also important that students attend all classes, complete homework and respect their teachers and fellow students.

## Host Family Life

All host families are screened before a student moves into a home. Norwegian families all over the country open up their homes and volunteer as host families. Therefore, host families might live near the southern archipelago, the northern aurora lights, the western fjords and glaciers, or the capital city of Oslo.

The average Norwegian family consists of a mother, father and two children. Compared to some US families, Norwegian families are not very religious. Norwegian families usually only go to church on holidays such as Christmas or Easter. Norway is more accepting of untraditional family structures these days. Divorce has become more common, and society is more accepting of a mother or father raising children alone. It has also grown more acceptable for a woman to have children out of wedlock or a couple to live together before marriage.

Everyday life in Norway is busy with work, school and activities. Families try to spend as much time together as possible. They usually manage to at least have dinner together everyday. Most Norwegian children are taught to be independent and participate in making decisions from an early age. A typical Norwegian upbringing places less emphasis on obedience and discipline, and more emphasis on

being active, independent and creative. Exchange students should be able to help out in the host family's home like all other family members. It is important for an exchange student to show the host family initiative to help out, as that is the expectation. The Norwegian everyday lifestyle will require that exchange students plan to spend around 1,500 – 3,000 NOK per month.

## Hobbies

In general, Norwegians are very fond of sports and the outdoors. Soccer is a big sport among boys as well as girls. Handball is another very popular sport in many communities. Students who enjoy tennis, golf, basketball, volleyball or ice hockey, will have no problem finding teammates. In the winter, skiing is a very popular weekend activity, while boating and swimming take up a lot of people's time during the summer.

In addition to sports clubs, there are many organizations and clubs for those interested in music, singing, dancing, drama, arts and crafts. Norwegians enjoy getting together for celebrations, both in public and in their homes. When hitting the town, young people tend to go to youth clubs, dance clubs, movie theatres and concerts.

## Program Extras

Since the group of exchange students in Norway is quite small, much of the group attends the offered side trips and students have a chance to become very close with one another.

## Oslo Trip

During the fall semester, Quest offers students a chance to spend two days in Oslo. On the first day, we organize a bowling and pizza social gathering with

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Norwegian students and other exchange students. On second day, students are taken sightseeing around Oslo and have dinner at the Hard Rock Café.

## Trondheim Trip

During the spring semester, we offer students a chance to spend two days in Trondheim, which is the third biggest city in Norway. Students will spend time together at a social event and see famous places such as the Nidaros Cathedral, Munkholmen island and the Kristiansten fortress.

## Hiking Trips

Quest teams up with the Norwegian Trekking Association to arrange a hiking tour for students. We offer trips in a range of different locations, for example, Jotunheimen, Rondane and Hardangervidda. Youth group have set up base camps around Norway, at which students can go rafting, rock climbing, canoeing, ice fishing and much more. Our hiking trips are available throughout the year.



## Snow Day

Depending on the density of students in one area, we also host a “Snow Day” during the winter. During this event, students can try out cross-country and down hill skiing, snowboard, sliding and other Norwegian snow games.

## European Tour

At the end of June, Quest offers a three-week bus tour around Europe. Students get to visit 10 countries together with other students from all over the world. The price includes accommodations, half board, sightseeing, most entrances and activities, Disneyland in Paris and more. Please ask for more detailed information regarding the tour.

## About Quest

Quest International was founded in 1999. We are a nonprofit organization committed to international, educational student exchange. Our goal is to promote cultural awareness and international understanding by offering quality, educational and cultural programs for students, host families and schools. Our staff is dedicated to creating a positive exchange experience for all program participants.