

GQ DOES...

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THERE'S A LOT MORE TO THE SWEDISH CAPITAL THAN PIPED ABBA AND FLAT-PACKED FURNITURE.



First, let's tackle the stereotypes. Yes, Stockholm can be eye-wateringly expensive and yes, its inhabitants are possibly the planet's most attractive race. Which at least means when you're being relieved of \$10 for a beer, it will be by a long-legged, flaxenhaired beauty with piercing blue eyes and a poetry-inspiring smile.

Look beyond that, though, and you'll find a city that blends historical grandeur with cuttingedge design. Stockholm is scattered across 14 islands and sits at the edge of an archipelago of 30,000 more; an aquatic summer playground plied by a flotilla of ferries, sail boats and cruise ships. Each of the city's five main districts has its own personality, from the medieval, cobble-stoned lanes of Gamla Stan to the edgy, bohemian vibe of Södermalm. Throw in some world-class places to eat, dozens of sexy bars and a cosy cafe on every corner and you won't want to come home. ■

EAT

Restaurant AG

(Kronobergsgatan 37. 112 33) is a temple to all things meaty, including dry-aged cuts hanging in a huge glass refrigerator. Versaillesstyle boudoir Grill (Drottninggatan 89, 113 60) has nine themed areas in which to enjoy its delicately seasoned meats and seafood. "Fika" (to have coffee and cake) is a Swedish institution and you'll find a tempting array of pastries at Sturekatten (Riddargatan 4, 114 35) in a quirky, characterfilled townhouse. restaurangag.se: grill.se: sturekatten.se

The high cost of alcohol means most Swedes have a few glasses at home before hitting the bars around 11pm. Riche (Birger Jarlsgatan 4 114 34) is a perennial favourite with two interconnected areas and two different crowds - Lilla Baren attracts the frisky tots whereas Stora Baren is affectionately known as 'divorcee ditch'. Both the Lydmar (Södra Blasieholmshamnen 2. 103 24) and Nobis (Norrmalmstorg 2-4, 111 86) hotels have great in-house bars, but on a balmy night, you'll want to go to F12 Terrassen (Fredsgatan 12, 111 52),

a summer-only terrace club that spills onto a sweeping stone staircase, riche selydmar.com; nobishotel. se: terrassen.f12.se

SLEEP

On the waterfront opposite the Royal Palace, the 46-room Lydmar Hotel is like the home of the Swedish banking magnate you wish you knew. Beautifully decorated with a mix of antiques and contemporary local designs, it's a haven of impeccable service and Scandinavian Zen. Even more intimate is Ett Hem (Sköldungagatan 2. 114 27), a new luxury guesthouse with bespoke furnishings in its 12 bedrooms, many featuring fireplaces and marble bathrooms. etthemstockholm.se

SEE On paper, Vasa (Galärvarvsvägen 14) sounds yawn-inducing. But it's a jaw-dropping presentation of a 69m, 384-year-old wooden warship salvaged in 1961. On the same island of Diurgården is the bizarre but intriguing Spirit Museum (Diurgårdsvägen 38). which examines the Swedes' love of the hard stuff through art, video and interactive exhibits. www.vasamuseet.se: spritmuseum.se

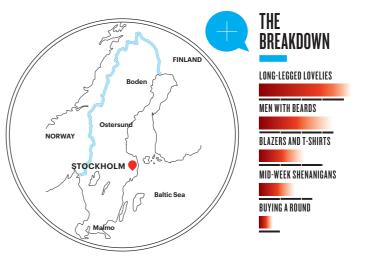
While there are many archipelago boat tours. none is as fun as the 1.5-hour high-speed hoon in a military-grade rigid inflatable boat (RIB). Stieg Larsson fans should check out the Dragon Tattoo exhibition at the Stockholm City Museum (Ryssgården) where you can pick up a Millennium Map for a self-auided tour. ribsightseeing.se; stadsmuseum. stockholm.se

SHOP

Stroll down Biblioteksgatan for high-end Swedish fashion outlets such as WHY RED. ACNE and V Ave Shoe Repair. For an insight into Swedish design, visit Svenskt Tenn (Strandvägen 5, 114 51), a two-storey homage to revered furniture and fabric designer Josef Frank. svenskttenn.se

PLAN

Unless you're a fan of sub-zero temperatures and six hours of sunlight, don't visit in January. From May to September the city spills outside for long summer nights and balmy mid-20s temps Pick up a Stockholm Card (from \$66 a day) for free entry to 80 museums and free public transport. visitstockholm.com



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