

10 of the best ways to enjoy Stockholm ... on a budget

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Floating hotels

Popular across Europe are [boat hotels](#) – or “[botels](#)” – refurbished remnants of the continent’s nautical past now used as modern-day lodgings – and Stockholm has its fair share, docked all over town. The city’s [boat hotel-hostel combos](#) cost a fraction of what you’d pay on land, and provide loads of ambience. For example, former fishing boat [Red Boat Mälaren](#) (from £23 B&B a night in a four-bed room to £106 a night in a private suite, breakfast included) is painted in classic Swedish Falu red. Docked alongside Söder Mälarstrand, it takes you back in time, with refurbished wood-panelled walls hung with nautical lamps and clocks and old lanterns and lifebelts as decor.

Eclectic neighbourhoods



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Coffee shop in the Södermalm district. Photograph: Ludovic Maisant/Hemis.fr

Each district in [Stockholm](#) has its own personality. In Östermalm, you’ll find high-end designer stores with fashionistas navigating cobblestones in high heels. For some of the coolest fusion restaurants in town and a sea of young professionals, explore the island of Kungsholmen.



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For a more budget-friendly neighbourhood and Stockholm's most vibrant scene, eclectic [Södermalm](#) ("Söder") offers vintage shopping, ethnic restaurants, organic cafes and quirky nightlife. A slum in the 17th century, the area south of Folkungagatan in Södermalm called SoFo packs more vintage punch than any area in town. Browse [through timeless vinyl](#) at Fade Records, pick up colourful nick-nacks and kitschy souvenirs at [Coctail](#), buy 1950-1960s vintage Levis and rockabilly wear at [Sivletto](#), then sip coffee in cosy grandma's kitchen-style [Gilda's Rum](#). And you could spend the whole day just people-watching at Medborgarplatsen – one of Stockholm's largest and most popular squares.

Theatre in the park



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Show time ... at Parkteatern

When summer rolls around, many Stockholm residents head out into the archipelago or countryside. Those who stay behind may well catch one of the popular [fairs](#) and summer festivals. In parks throughout the city, you'll find musical acts and theatre groups performing as part of [Parkteatern](#). From June to mid-September, these free outdoor shows, running since 1942, include concerts, circus shows, modern and classical dance and everything in between including Swedish folk music and dance.

Free walking tours



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Stockholm's old town, Gamla Stan. Photograph: Jonathan Irish/Getty Images/National Geographic

Though spread across 14 islands, Stockholm is compact and walkable by global city standards, so you can easily explore its cobblestoned alleyways by yourself. However, if you'd rather be guided through the best parts of the city, try one of these tours. [Stockholm Free Tour](#) offers two daily tours: "Modern Stockholm", which focuses on modern architecture and civic buildings, and "Medieval Stockholm", which crisscrosses its iconic old town, Gamla stan. Departure times are 10am and 1pm respectively, and commentary is in English. The guides work on tips only.

Affordable design



Lagerhaus. Photograph: Jesper Orrbeck Photography

Stockholm remains Sweden's creativity hub, with hundreds of big-name designers and smaller artisans running design shops, style houses and creative collectives. Leaving town without taking some Scandinavian design back with you feels borderline blasphemous. But you don't have to blow all your spending money. [Designorget](#) and [Lagerhaus](#) are both relatively affordable design chains selling patterned textiles and stationery, glassware and kitchenware, furniture, lamps, and books on Swedish culture and cuisine.

High-quality fast food



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Burger base ... Max. Photograph: Abraham Engelmark



The foodie traveller ... in Stockholm: the new take on coffee and cake

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Food trucks have finally hit the streets of Stockholm, with more than 20 vendors serving an array of international dishes from Mexican enchiladas and Lebanese falafel to grilled Turkish *köfte* and French-Vietnamese *bánh mì*. Download the free mobile app [StreetKäk](#) so you can find street trucks around town.

For a good burger, try the fast food joint [Max](#), where each burger is made fresh to order. If you would rather sit down with a knife and fork, then keep an eye out for signs in restaurant windows that say *Dagens rätt* or *Dagens lunch*. This means “dish of the day”, at affordable prices, and your meal will usually come with a salad buffet, bread and butter, free coffee or tea and maybe something sweet afterwards.

Djurgården by bike



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The Skansen Zoo and Museum, Djurgården. Photograph: Rob Schoenbaum/Zuma Press/Corbis

[Kungliga Djurgården](#) is the royal park, on its own island, along with many of the city's historical museums, palaces, gardens and fairground amusements. Grab a rental bike from Stockholm City Bikes or from one of the many other bike rental companies and enjoy a leisurely ride around the park. Stops worth checking out (admission fees apply) are [Vasamuseet](#), home to the Vasa warship, which sank in 1628; [Skansen](#), the world's oldest open air museum; and [Nordiska Museet](#), where you can learn about Scandinavian culture. Stop by [Rosendals Trädgård](#) cafe and bakery: it's in a greenhouse among vibrant flower gardens and apple orchards and sells freshly baked organic treats like cinnamon buns and carrot cake, plus a rotating menu of warm dishes such

as pan-seared Arctic char fillet with couscous (£13).

Child-friendly libraries



Full of characters ... Junibacken.

Travellers with children will truly appreciate just how kid-friendly Stockholm is. Parents with buggies ride for free on buses, and there are lots of free activities and workshops, children's libraries, and museums such as [Junibacken](#), dedicated to children's book characters such as the Moomins and Pippi Longstocking.



Abba's Björn Ulvaeus on Stockholm

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Whether or not you've got kids in tow, libraries around Stockholm are a great way to lose yourself for a few hours. Most of Stockholm's public libraries have special children's sections where you can also play games and take part in impromptu theatre shows. [Stockholm Stadsbibliotek](#) offers some activities in English for children. One great resource is [Rum för Barn](#) (Room for Kids) on the fourth floor of Stockholm's iconic [Kulturhuset](#) (Culturehouse, home to several cafes, theatres, exhibition halls, and a cinema). This exquisite [children's library](#) provides books in various foreign languages, as well as painting and sculpting workshops, stories and fairytale sessions, singalongs, and other daily activities organised by staff.

The world's longest exhibition



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Art in the T-Centralen subway station. Photograph: Alamy

For 25 SEK (£2), you can ride Stockholm's subway system all day and explore its impressive artwork. Note – you can ride all day without exiting, but if you do, each ticket is valid for 75 minutes. You may prefer to buy a 24-hour ticket instead (£9). Touted as the [world's longest art exhibition](#) at 110km, it includes a variety of paintings, sculptures, mosaics, tiles, installations, and other displays put together by 150 artists in more than 90 of the city's 100 stations.

Even better, Storstockholms Lokaltrafik (Greater Stockholm's traffic agency, locally known as "SL") runs free weekly [guided art tours](#) of its underground subway art led by certified guides. All you need is a train ticket; the tour itself is free, conducted in English and you don't have to book. Just show up on Tuesdays, Thursdays or Saturdays until 29 August at 3pm at the SL Center Sergels inside T-Centralen metro station.

Art for free



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The Maritime Museum

Stockholm has a variety of world-class and offbeat museums, many of which are included in the [Stockholm Pass Card](#). This one-four day card allows access to more than 75 attractions and museums and unlimited rides on public transport (£42 for one-day, £68 for four). [Without a card, you can visit the Medieval Museum](#) and [Maritime Museum](#) for free. Many museums also offer free admission on specific days and times. For example, Stockholm's signature contemporary art museum is the iconic [Moderna Museet](#) on Skeppsholmen island. Admission is free on Fridays between 6pm and 8pm, so plan your day accordingly. On Tuesdays between 5pm and 8pm, you can visit the [Nobel Museum](#) for free.