**Climate in the Nordic Countries**

Climate can be defined as the average weather in a given area over a longer period of time. The  northerly location of the Nordic countries influences the climate the most. There are differences in  the climates among the countries depending on where they are situated.

**Temperature and Rains**

Climate has often been described by temperatures, the amounts of rain and the winds. Especially  the rain and the temperature influence the vegetation. Vegetation can be explained as plant life of  a specific area.

The Gulf Stream, the warm ocean current of the Atlantic,

warms the climate of the Nordic countries. Because of

the Gulf Stream, the winters are warmer in the Nordic

countries than in places equally far north in the other

parts of the world e.g. in Canada or in Siperia in Russia.

Finland, Sweden and Norway are long countries with

clear differences between the temperatures in the

northern and the southern parts. There are no such clear

differences in Denmark and Iceland.

It rains in the Nordic countries during every season of the

year. In winter, the rains often fall as snow. It rains the most the western coast of Norway because  the mountains of the area collect the rains that come from the Atlantic. Drought is uncommon in  the Nordic countries. Only Denmark may sometimes suffer from drought in the spring.

**Different Climates**

Denmark, Norway and Iceland have a maritime climate. Mild winters and cool summers are typical  for the maritime climate. The temperature difference between summer and winter is fairly small.  Sweden has maritime climate in the south and a continental climate in the north. Cold winters and  hot summers are typical of the continental climate. There is also a greater temperature change  between winter and summer.

Finland has an intermediate climate, which has formed between the western maritime climate and  the eastern continental climate. The intermediate climate has features of both the maritime and  the continental climates.

**Three Vegetation Zones**

The Nordic countries have three vegetation zones which are tundra, coniferous forests and  deciduous forests, listed here from north to south.

There is tundra in Iceland as well as in the northern most parts and mountains of Finland, Sweden  and Norway. The growth conditions in the tundra are hard. For example, no trees grow there.

Most of Finland and Sweden and a part of Norway are coniferous forest. Fir and pine trees, as well  as some birch, aspen and alder grow in the coniferous zone. There is a lot of marshland (swamps) as  well . Southern Sweden and Denmark are in the deciduous zone. There are beech and oak forests as well  as elm, linden, and ash trees.