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Insider's Guide to Sweden

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Travel Advisor

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Sweden balances both a cool vibe with feeling genuinely welcoming. Maybe it's Stockholm's island-hopping energy, where you can museum-crawl through royal palaces in the morning and find yourself at a candlelit dinner featuring reindeer tartare by evening, or Gothenburg's

canal-side ease where the cultural scene keeps surprising you around every corner. This isn't a destination trying to impress you with flashy attractions. It's a country that's figured out how to balance the sophisticated with the approachable, all while maintaining that distinctly Swedish sense of *lagom*—just the right amount of everything.

Whether you're planning a romantic getaway, bringing the family, or simply curious about a place that does modern living better than most, Sweden delivers. Discover why it keeps landing on those "happiest countries" lists. Connect with me to plan your Swedish getaway and unlock experiences that turn a good trip into legendary.

Need to know



Image courtesy of Ett Hem

From seamless public transit and card-first payments to dramatic shifts between midnight sun and northern winter skies, Sweden welcomes discovery. Knowing a few essentials will help you experience the country like a local.

Currency: While Sweden is a part of the EU, they use the Swedish Krona (SEK) for currency. The country is card-first, with Apple and Google Pay widely accepted. While tipping isn't expected, rounding up or adding 5-10% for great service is appreciated.

Languages: Swedish is the official language in Sweden, but an estimated 80-90% of the population can speak English.

- **Key phrases:** *hej* (hello), *god morgen/kväll* (good morning/evening), *hej då* (goodbye), *ursäkta mig* (excuse me), *tack* (thank you), *varsågod* (you're welcome/please).

Airports: Most international travelers fly into Stockholm Arlanda (ARN). There is year-round service from Newark, with seasonal flights to New York City, Toronto, and Miami. Gothenburg (GOT) and Malmö (MMX) have direct flights across Europe. Flying into Copenhagen (CPH) is a convenient option with connections, including Los Angeles, Chicago, Atlanta, and more.

Transportation: Trains offer a scenic option, with night trains to Lapland and nearby countries. Major cities are walkable, but public transit options are fast and readily available. Use "Taxi Stockholm," "Taxi Kurir," or Uber to hail a car. Ferries connect islands and Finland, while car rentals are good options too.

Best time to visit: Sweden offers something in every season. Summer (June—August) sees long days for hiking and biking, or exploring vibrant cities. Winter (December—February) transforms into a snowy wonderland for skiing and Northern Lights. Spring (April—May) and fall (September—October) bring fewer crowds, crisp air, and quieter, more local experiences.

Ideal length of stay: To explore Stockholm's historic neighborhoods, waterfront museums, and vibrant dining, three to four days is perfect. A week allows time to pair the capital with cities like Gothenburg or Malmö, plus scenic countryside or coastal day trips.

Signature dishes and drinks:

- **Stockholm:** *gravad lax* (cured salmon, dill, and mustard sauce), *toast skagen* (creamy shrimp salad on crisp bread), *raggmunk* (crispy potato pancakes with lingonberries).
- **Gothenburg:** *fiskekrogen* seafood platter (fresh oysters, lobster, and shellfish), *skagenröra* (local take on shrimp salad with fresh bread), and West Coast herring (pickled or fried, a classic Nordic flavor).

- **Malmö:** *smörrebröd* (open-faced sandwiches with seasonal toppings) and *falafel med svenska twist* (Swedish spin on Malmö's beloved street food).

What to wear: Summer days can be bright and surprisingly warm. Pack breathable cotton, linen, and comfortable shoes for cobblestone streets and long walks. Evenings call for Scandinavian-chic elegance—relaxed tailoring, flowy dresses, or smart layers. A light jacket or wrap is handy, especially near the coast or on cooler evenings.

Travel tips:

- **Advanced bookings:** Restaurants, tours, and ferries often sell out in peak season, so secure reservations ahead of time.
- **Shopping:** Södermalm in Stockholm brims with vintage stores, indie boutiques, and design-forward homeware shops. Malmö's Gamla Väster and Gothenburg's Haga charm with cobbled lanes and artisan finds. High-end Swedish brands like Acne Studios, Filippa K, and Totême are showcased at Nordiska Kompaniet and sleek concept stores. Non-EU visitors can usually claim a VAT refund, so hold on to receipts.
- **Drinking laws:** The legal drinking age is 18 in licensed venues, with public drinking prohibited and fines enforced.
- **Medications:** Carry prescriptions in original packaging with a doctor's note if required. Pharmacies are well-stocked, though some common US over-the-counter medications may require a prescription.

Stockholm



Image courtesy of Grand Hôtel Stockholm

Sweden's capital is a city of islands, where medieval lanes meet sleek Scandinavian design. Wander the cobblestoned old town Gamla Stan, cruise the archipelago's 30,000 islands, and dive into world-class museums. Its blend of history and culture makes it easy to linger

Where to stay

Grand Hôtel Stockholm: A landmark of timeless elegance and luxury that overlooks the Royal Palace and Stockholm's waterfront. With rich history and impeccable service, it's a favorite for gourmet dining, a tranquil spa, and easy access to the city's top cultural sites.

- **Fora Perks** include a \$100 food and beverage credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade, and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

At Six: In the heart of Stockholm, this gem stands out with sleek, contemporary design and vibrant energy. Artistic flair combines with thoughtful comfort, offering a stylish base with a rooftop bar and dynamic public spaces that make it a social hub.

- **Fora's Preferred Platinum** partner perks include a \$100 hotel credit, welcome amenity, daily breakfast, an upgrade, and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Ett Hem: This intimate boutique hotel, tucked away in a quiet Stockholm neighborhood, blends Swedish simplicity with coziness. Interiors blend vintage charm with modern comfort, while personalized service creates a truly bespoke experience.

- **Fora's withIN by SLH** partner perks include a hotel credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade, and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Stockholm Stadshotell: This boutique waterfront gem, incorporates historic elegance with modern Scandinavian design. Cozy rooms, an airy breakfast room, and intimate lounge, in close proximity to the Royal Palace for both sightseeing and stylish relaxation.

- **Fora's Relais & Châteaux** partner perks include daily breakfast.

Gothenburg



Image courtesy of Elite Plaza Hotel Göteborg

Laid-back and coastal, Gothenburg is Sweden's heart for food, art, and the sea. The canals and leafy boulevards are dotted with cafes, Michelin-starred spots, and cozy design boutiques. Just offshore, the West Sweden archipelago offers salty-air escapes in under an hour.

Where to stay

Avalon Hotel: Playful design meets effortless Scandinavian cool in this city-center landmark. Contemporary art, bold colors, and a rooftop pool give it a modern, cosmopolitan edge. Steps from shopping streets and buzzing cafés, it's an ideal urban base.

Elite Plaza Hotel Göteborg: Housed in a grand neo-Renaissance building, this address exudes old-world elegance. Marble staircases, crystal chandeliers, and richly detailed interiors nod to its 19th-century heritage. A refined stay for travelers who value history with their luxury.

Malmö

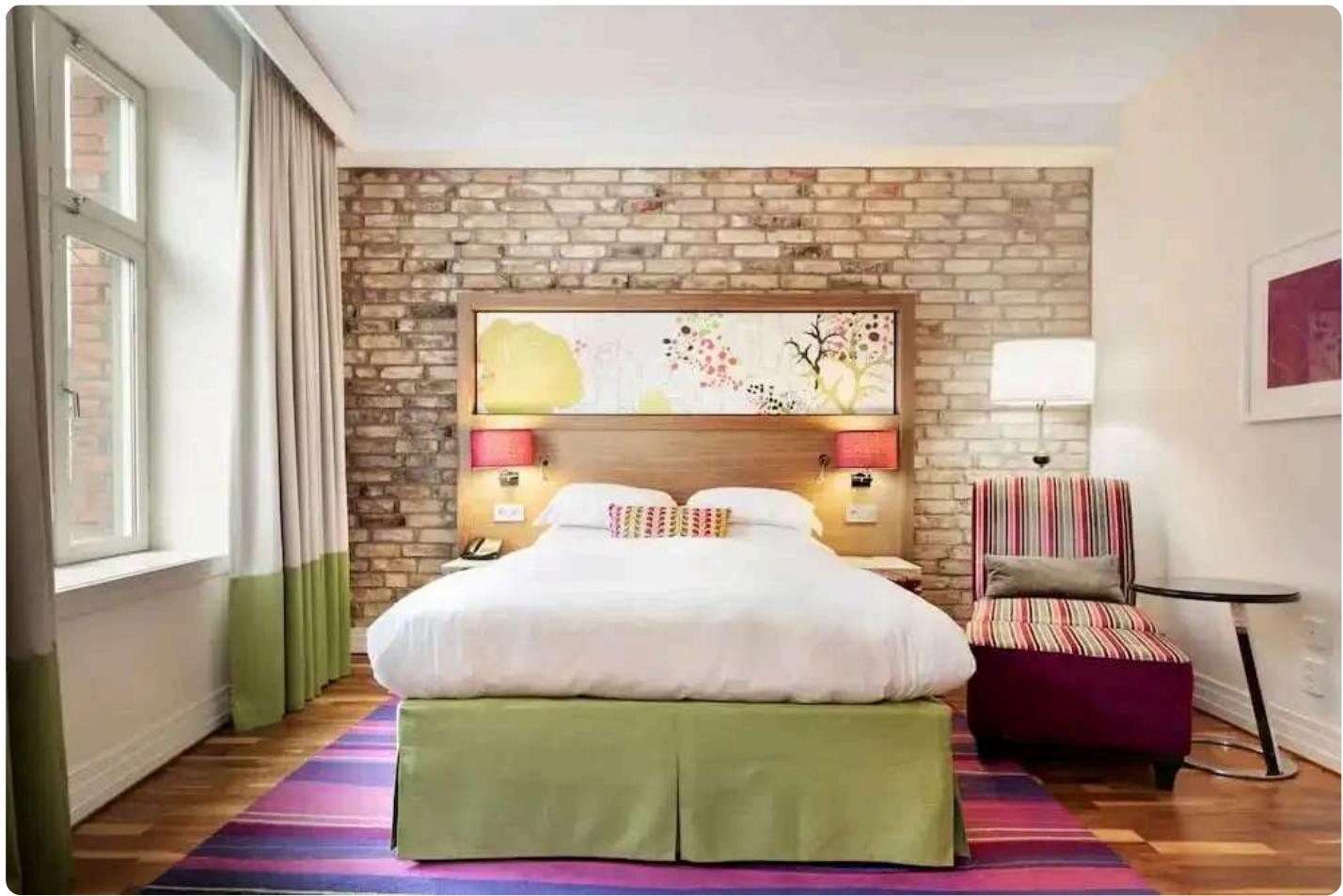


Image courtesy of Elite Hotel Esplanade

Historic charm meets a creative, multicultural edge in Malmö. Old town squares, the striking Turning Torso tower, and waterfront parks set the scene for a vibrant, bike-friendly visit. Copenhagen is also a 1-hour train ride across the Öresund Bridge.

Where to stay

Elite Hotel Esplanade: Tucked into Malmö's historic Gamla Väster district, this boutique stay is full of understated charm. Spacious rooms with soft palettes offer a calming retreat from the city's creative energy. Stroll outside to cobbled streets lined with galleries and cafés.

Cruising to and around Sweden



Image courtesy of Silversea

Cruising to Sweden is often part of broader Baltic or Scandinavian itineraries. Many sailings begin or end in Stockholm, making it well worth arriving early or staying a few extra days to explore the city. Smaller ships are your best bet here, as they can dock closer to the heart of town without lengthy transfers, and also visit more ports across Sweden. Some ships call at Visby (a UNESCO-listed medieval town), Helsingborg (known for Sofiero Palace and its seaside promenade), and Gothenburg. Cruising through the Stockholm Archipelago's thousands of islands is a highlight in itself.

Notable cruise lines

Silversea: An ultra-luxury cruise experience with spacious suites, personalized service, and refined dining. Expect immersive itineraries to remote and iconic destinations.

- Virtuoso Voyages Hosted Benefits available on select sailings.

Viking Ocean Cruises: Elegant, understated ships designed for culturally curious travelers who want destination-focused itineraries and immersive shore excursions.

- **Fora Perks** include up to \$200 Onboard Credit per stateroom on select sailings.

Regent Seven Seas: All-inclusive luxury cruising on intimate, small ships. Spacious suites, gourmet dining, and unlimited shore excursions included.

- Virtuoso Voyages Hosted Benefits available on select sailings.

Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection: Intimate vessels that visit both well-known and off-the-beaten-path ports. Impeccable service, elegant design, and curated experiences ashore.

- **Fora's STARS Program** partner perks include \$250 Shipboard Credit per suite, welcome amenity, exclusive shore excursion options, enhanced recognition on board, and more.

Holland America Line: Known for classic mid-size ships that balance tradition with enriching onboard programs, a sophisticated cruising experience, and attentive service.

- **Fora Perks** include a \$100 Shipboard Credit per stateroom when booked in a verandah stateroom or suite on all 6+ day voyages.

History and culture



From ancient rock carvings along the west coast to the grandeur of Stockholm's Gamla Stan, Sweden offers a living story of resilience and innovation. The Vikings left a legacy of seafaring adventure and trade, evident in museums and archaeological sites. The medieval era brought castles and churches that still dot the landscape today. Sweden's shift toward democracy and social welfare in the 19th and 20th centuries created a progressive society with a strong commitment to equality and environmental stewardship.

Visitors will also discover the deep-rooted traditions of the Sámi people, the Indigenous community of northern Sweden. They maintain a rich cultural heritage expressed through reindeer herding, *joik* singing (akin to some Native American cultures' chanting), and colorful handicrafts. Seasonal rituals like Midsummer celebrations, with flower crowns, dancing around the maypole, and feasting, showcase the Swedish love for nature and communal joy. Landmarks such as the Vasa Museum, the medieval Visby on Gotland, and the Icehotel in Jukkasjärvi reveal the country's diverse history and creative spirit, making it a destination where past and present blend seamlessly.

Cultural celebrations & events

- **Kiruna Snow Festival (Late January, Lapland):** A winter celebration of snow culture with ice sculpting, dog-sledding, reindeer races, and northern lights backdrops.
- **Göteborg Film Festival (Late January–Early February, Gothenburg):** The largest film festival in Scandinavia, with screenings across Gothenburg's art-house cinemas.
- **Walpurgis Night / Valborg (April 30, Nationwide):** A festive spring tradition with bonfires, choral singing, and lively student gatherings marking winter's end.
- **Midsummer (Late June, Nationwide):** Sweden's iconic holiday, with maypole dancing, flower crowns, herring feasts, and all-night celebrations marking the summer solstice.
- **Stockholm Pride (Late July–Early August, Stockholm):** Scandinavia's largest Pride festival with parades, performances, and parties.
- **Nobel Prize Banquet (December 10, Stockholm):** The city buzzes during Nobel Week with exhibitions, lectures, and celebrations surrounding the invite-only ceremony.

What to do in Sweden



Sweden offers a mix of old-world charm and contemporary edge. Storybook villages, wild coastlines, and a culture that balances tradition with forward-thinking design.

Stockholm

- **Gamla Stan:** Wander the cobblestone alleys of the medieval old town with hidden courtyards, cozy cafés, and artisan shops.
- **SoFo district:** Explore Södermalm's SoFo, a hub of street art, indie boutiques, and buzzing cafés. It feels equal parts Brooklyn and Scandinavian cool.
- **Museums:** The Vasa Museum houses a 17th-century warship that sank on its maiden voyage. Check out the Viking Museum, ABBA Museum, and Moderna Museet.
- **Stockholm Archipelago:** Cruise the 30,000 islands on a private yacht, pausing to swim in secluded inlets, hop between islands, and savor a gourmet picnic on deck.
- **Drottningholm Palace:** Arrive by ferry and wander through ornate Baroque rooms, Rococo salons, and manicured gardens tracing centuries of royal history.
- **Fotografiska:** Visit Stockholm's contemporary photography museum. Linger over a plant-forward meal at its top-floor restaurant with harbor views.
- **Baking class:** Join a cinnamon bun workshop for a hands-on taste of Swedish tradition in an intimate, off-the-beaten-path setting.
- **Seasonal celebrations:** Time your trip for Midsummer dances, Stockholm Pride, or the atmospheric Christmas markets in Djurgården and Gamla Stan.
- **Stockholm Central Station:** Part transit hub, part cultural hub, with shops, dining, and historic architectural details worth a short visit.

Gothenburg

- **Haga:** Stroll through Gothenburg's historic quarter. Cobblestones, wooden houses, and hidden courtyards set the scene for cafés, small galleries, and artisan shops.
- **Majorna:** Explore this creative hub's street art, indie boutiques, and lively cafés.
- **Göteborgs Konstmuseum:** Home to one of Scandinavia's strongest Nordic collections alongside rotating contemporary shows.
- **Feskekôrka:** Visit the iconic "Fish Church," where locals gather for oysters, smoked fish, and casual seafood lunches.
- **The World of Volvo:** This new design and culture hub for car enthusiasts is also home to Volvo's delivery program. Buy your car, visit Sweden, drive around, then ship it home.
- **Gothenburg's archipelago:** Cruise the islands on a private boat, stopping for swims, picnics, or champagne on hidden beaches.
- **Liseberg Amusement Park:** Embrace a touch of nostalgia with a mix of thrill rides, landscaped gardens, and stylish seasonal festivals.

- **Röda Sten Konsthall:** Experience this contemporary art center in a converted industrial space by the harbor. Bold exhibitions and a café overlooks the water.

Malmö

- **Gamla Väster:** Wander Malmö's historic quarter, where colorful 19th-century houses frame boutique shops and cafés. Pause at the lively squares Stortorget and Lilla Torg.
- **Möllevången:** Explore this multicultural district brimming with street art, indie shops, and trendy cafés.
- **Moderna Museet Malmö:** Step inside for bold contemporary works from Nordic and international artists.
- **Ribersborg Beach:** A summer must where locals swim, walk the promenade, or linger in waterfront cafés.
- **Malmöhus Castle and Slottsparken:** Visit this Renaissance fortress and surrounding gardens for art, history, and natural history collections.
- **Västra Hamnen:** Explore Malmö's sleek waterfront district, with striking modern architecture, upscale dining, and panoramic views of the Öresund Bridge.
- **Form/Design Center:** Browse this boutique museum and gallery celebrating Swedish design, fashion, and crafts.
- **Copenhagen:** Take a day trip, just 35 minutes across the Öresund Bridge by train, for world-class dining, design, and vibrant neighborhoods.

Where to eat in Sweden



From cozy cafés and bustling markets to Michelin-starred kitchens, Sweden's eateries are tied to place, season, and a deep love of craftsmanship.

Stockholm

- **Frantzén:** Three-Michelin-starred dining in Norrmalm, with tasting menus that combine avant-garde techniques with hyper-local Nordic ingredients.
- **Sturehof:** Classic Östermalm brasserie, ideal for people-watching and cocktails.
- **Café Nizza:** Södermalm gem with minimalist décor and excellent coffee.
- **Östermalms Saluhall:** Historic food hall offering artisanal cheeses, smoked fish, caviar, and casual Swedish lunches in an elegant setting.
- **Prinsen:** Upscale traditional Swedish dishes near the Royal Palace.
- **Lilla Ego:** Trendy Vasastan neighborhood restaurant serving creative small plates using Nordic ingredients.
- **Ekstedt:** Contemporary Nordic cuisine cooked entirely over open fire, with dramatic flavors in a cozy, modern atmosphere.

- **Östermalms Food Hall:** Historic indoor market hall with artisanal cheeses, fresh seafood, cured meats, and traditional Swedish specialties under one roof.
- **Restaurant Tradition:** Classic Swedish fare served in a warm, authentic setting.
- **Pom & Flora:** Bright, modern café known for its healthy breakfast and brunch menus. Think smoothie bowls, avocado toast, and great coffee in a stylish space.
- **Rosendals Trädgårdskafé:** A charming garden café and bakery serving organic, seasonal dishes and pastries made with ingredients grown on-site.

Gothenburg

- **Fiskekrogen:** Iconic West Coast seafood restaurant in Feskekörka's neighborhood in an elegant, maritime-inspired setting.
- **SK Mat & Människor:** Michelin-starred modern Swedish cuisine in Vasastan. Tasting menus emphasize hyper-local, seasonal ingredients with inventive, artful presentation.
- **Sjömagasinet:** Waterfront fine-dining with Nordic seafood specialties.
- **Bhoga:** Award-winning, contemporary Nordic restaurant in Linné. Menus evolve with the seasons with sustainable, locally sourced ingredients.
- **Gurra:** Trendy, playful street-food-inspired eatery in Majorna serving globally influenced dishes with a creative twist.
- **Thörnströms Kök:** Sleek, elegant restaurant in the city center combining inventive Swedish flavors with expert wine pairings and refined plating.
- **Koka:** Minimalist modern Nordic tasting menus with an emphasis on sustainability.
- **Smörgåsbaren:** Casual yet refined spot inside the legendary Feskekörka "Fish Church."
- **Heaven 23:** Located atop Gothia Towers with panoramic views over the city skyline.
- **Råda Rum:** Boutique neighborhood gem offering hyper-local, contemporary Nordic dishes with playful plating.

Malmö

- **Ruths:** Warm, buzzy restaurant offering inventive Nordic dishes using seasonal, local ingredients, open for breakfast to late-night dining.
- **La Fonderie:** French-inspired cuisine with a Scandinavian twist.
- **Malmö Saluhall:** The vibrant food hall features local producers, artisanal cheeses, freshly caught seafood, and casual Swedish specialties.

- **Bastard:** Rustic-modern Nordic small plates with a focus on sustainable, seasonal ingredients in a cozy, energetic space.
- **Bloom in the Park:** Michelin-starred fine dining in a serene park setting. Tasting menus showcase hyper-local ingredients in creative, artful presentations.
- **Vollmers:** Elegant, intimate fine-dining with innovative Nordic cuisine, exceptional service, and minimalist décor.

Trips to add on



Image courtesy of Arctic Bath

Whether by quick flight, scenic train ride, or overnight ferry, these neighboring destinations pair perfectly with a trip to Sweden.

Copenhagen, Denmark: Just across the Öresund Bridge from Malmö. Cycle along colorful Nyhavn, explore cutting-edge design shops, and savor world-class dining. The city's mix of historic charm and modern innovation makes it a seamless, stylish getaway.

Oslo, Norway: Surrounded by fjords and forested hills, Oslo pairs natural beauty with a thriving arts scene. Visit the striking Oslo Opera House, explore Viking ship museums, and enjoy fresh seafood by the water. Its relaxed pace makes it an ideal complement.

Helsinki, Finland: Helsinki feels fresh, modern, and distinctly Nordic, an easy ferry ride from Stockholm. Stroll through lively market squares, discover bold architecture, and warm up in a traditional Finnish sauna.

Tallinn, Estonia: An overnight ferry ride across the Baltic Sea, Tallinn's medieval Old Town feels straight out of a fairytale. Past cobblestone streets, pastel facades, and hidden courtyards is a thriving creative energy with repurposed industrial spaces and buzzing cafés.

Swedish Lapland: Far north of the Arctic Circle, chase the Northern Lights or stay at the iconic ICEHOTEL in winter. By summer, you can experience the Midnight Sun, indigenous Sámi traditions, and stay at the floating Arctic Bath hotel on the shore of Lule river.

If not Sweden...



There are plenty of places that offer a similar mix of dramatic landscapes, rich traditions, and standout cultural experiences to Sweden.

The Nordics (Norway, Denmark, Finland, Iceland): From Norway's fjords to Denmark's design scene, Finland's sauna-and-lake culture, or Iceland's volcanic landscapes. Each offers its own spin blending epic scenery, design-forward cities, and deep-rooted traditions.

Ireland: Emerald hills, rugged coastlines, and villages full of music and storytelling make Ireland endlessly inviting. From Dublin's lively pubs to the wild beauty of the Cliffs of Moher, the country offers a slower pace and heartfelt hospitality.

Scotland: Landscapes shift from misty glens to wave-battered islands and historic castles. Edinburgh and Glasgow offer culture, dining, and festivals, while the Highlands promise untamed adventure. It's a place where history feels alive and nature demands your attention.

New Zealand: A natural wonderland split between two islands, New Zealand packs soaring peaks, turquoise lakes, and pristine coastlines into one destination. Māori heritage, thriving wine regions, and adventure sports keep the pace varied and exciting.

Patagonia (Chile and Argentina): At the southern edge of South America, Patagonia is a remote land of glaciers, wind-swept plains, and jagged mountain ranges. Trekking here feels like exploring the edge of the world, with wildlife encounters and jaw-dropping vistas.

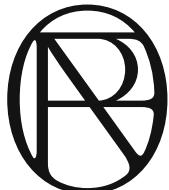
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