



Great Swedish Houses

Royal residences, country estates and provincial palaces

30 June–7 July 2025 (ML 731)

8 days • £4,550

Lecturer: Ulrica Hällner

The finest of Sweden's great houses, palaces and retreats – and the history of their occupants.

Picturesque landscapes around Lake Mälaren, in Södermanland, just outside Stockholm.

Private visits to 17th- and 18th-century noble residences, hosted by the owners.

Two nights in the spectacular Baroque grounds of Ericssberg – and one in Sweden's oldest inn, mere metres from Gripsholm Castle.

Fondly described as the Cotswolds of Sweden, the province of Södermanland lies southwest of Stockholm, bordering Lake Mälaren. A bucolic landscape is enhanced by a plethora of well-preserved houses, estates, and palaces, most of which date from the 17th and 18th centuries. Many are still inhabited by members of the Swedish royal family or by aristocratic families, who have dwelled on the estates for centuries.

Over the course of eight days, and by special arrangement, we meet the young nobles residing in the splendid homes of their ancestors. The current generation of aristocratic families now faces the challenges of balancing modern reality with responsible custodianship of their cultural heritage. Other houses, such as Gripsholm – a former defensive fortress now housing a magnificent state portrait gallery and Gustav III's spectacular theatre – have been converted into carefully curated museums. Journeying on picturesque country roads, we travel the routes that link the likes of regal Drottningholm with charming country estates.

The modern history of Sweden begins in the early 16th century with the coronation of Gustav Vasa; the stone foundations of numerous properties were laid during his reign. Not quite two centuries later, Gustav III had an enormous influence on cultural tastes that is reflected in the properties of those who could afford to share the predilections of their king. The talents of the most skilled, French- and Italian-trained artists and craftsmen of the late 18th century were widely employed. At Haga and Tullgarn, the sumptuous interiors display marvellous detail created by *les frères Masreliez*.

The Gustavian period shifted into Regency and Empire styles, with Sweden's best example of French Empire style having



Stockholm, harbour and Royal Palace, 19th-century steel engraving.

strong Napoleonic links. Having belonged to Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte, the French general, elected heir-presumptive to Gustav III and who became the first king in Sweden's current dynasty. As Charles XIV John, Bernadotte created a *maison de plaisance* that remains almost intact – Rosendal Palace.

Presenting an enticing contrast between Sweden's lavish royal residences and the serenity of its refined provincial retreats, this delightful tour places in context Sweden's historic and artistic legacy, from kings to craftsmen, all of whom have left their mark.

Itinerary

Day 1: Stockholm. Fly at c.10.00am from London Heathrow to Stockholm (Scandinavian Airlines). An introductory walk and lecture is followed by dinner. First of three nights in Stockholm.

Day 2: Stockholm. Drive out to Drottningholm Palace, residence of the Swedish royal family; splendid interiors, wonderful gardens, landscaped park, exquisite Chinoiserie pavilion and theatre museum.

Day 3: Stockholm. Morning lecture followed by a visit to Bernadotte's summer house on Djurgården. In the afternoon, tour the Royal

Palace (1754); a masterpiece in the Roman Baroque style by Nicodemus Tessin the Younger.

Day 4: Stockholm, Mariefred. The morning is free for independent exploration; perhaps the Nationalmuseum, the city's National Museum of Fine Arts. The drive to Mariefred, on the shores of Lake Mälaren, gives us our first appreciation of how past royalty travelled from the city to their country houses. Walk from the hotel to the medieval castle of Gripsholm, sitting imposingly across the water from the inn, numerous Swedish kings have been kept prisoner within its walls. Overnight Mariefred.

Day 5: Norsborg, Katrineholm. Morning visit to the 18th-century manor of Sturehov, best known for its beautiful Marieberg tiled stoves. Arrive in the late afternoon at Ericssberg, one of Sweden's largest private estates, where two nights are spent. A tour of the grounds before a lecture and dinner. First of two nights in Katrineholm.

Day 6: Julita, Katrineholm. Guided tour of Julita Manor, built on the site of a 12th-century Cistercian monastery. Its surrounding orchards are part of the national gene bank for apples and hops. Time for independent exploration before continuing to the romantic, neo-Gothic castle of Stora Sundby (1840s, Peter Frederick

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Robinson). Here we are met by a member of the Klingspor family for a private tour.

Day 7: Tystberga, Trosa. Drive along the Baltic coastline to Nynäs Manor, which offers an insight into the country lifestyle of the Swedish aristocracy from the late 1600s to the early 20th century. After lunch, Tullgarn Palace, its reflection mirrored in the lake below, has exquisite late 18th-century interiors. Just outside Trosa stands Tureholm Castle, rebuilt after a fire by Carl Hårleman in the 1700s. The owner guides us through his ancestral home, including the blue and white 18th-century kitchen. Overnight Trosa.

Day 8: Trosa, Stockholm. Leave Trosa for Stockholm's Hagaparken, site of Gustav III's 18th-century pavilion, modelled on the Petit Trianon at Versailles and set in an expansive English landscaped park. Designed by Louis Masreliez in a Pompeiian style, the highlight is undeniably The Hall of Mirrors. The final visit is Rosersberg, a 17th-century manor gifted to Charles XIII. The décor, including fine silk wall hangings, is surprisingly untouched and unaltered by restoration. Continue to the airport and fly from Stockholm to London Heathrow, arriving c. 8.00pm.

Some of these houses can only be visited by special arrangement and are subject to confirmation in early 2025.

Lecturer

Ulrica Hällér. Art historian specialising in the decorative arts, antiques and cultural history in Sweden in the 17th and 18th centuries. She has over twenty-five years experience as a Museum Educator at the Royal Palaces in Stockholm. She has lectured internationally and contributed to several French publications and television emissions on the topics of Bernadotte, Rosendal, and the French empire style in Sweden.

Practicalities

Price. Two sharing: £4,550 or £4,260 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £5,050 or £4,760 without flights.

Included: flights with SAS Scandinavian Airlines (SAS Go, Airbus A320neo); travel by private coach for airport transfers and excursions; hotel accommodation; breakfasts, 2 lunches, and 6 dinners with a glass or two of wine, water and coffee; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Accommodation. Hotel Diplomat, Stockholm (diplomathotel.com): well-placed on the waterfront in Östermalm district, rated locally as 5-star. **Gripsholms Vårdshus, Mariefred** (gripsholms-varldshus.se): Sweden's oldest inn with magnificent views of Gripsholm Castle. Rooms are charming and individually decorated. **Ericssbergs Slott, Katrineholm** (ericsberg.se): Located in the castle grounds, rooms are stylishly decorated. **Trosa Stadshotell and Spa, Trosa** (trosastadshotell.se): a quaint 4-star hotel with a good restaurant. Rooms are modern and comfortable. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? There is a lot of walking and standing on this tour, and it would not be suitable for anyone who has difficulties with everyday walking or stair-climbing. There is a fair amount of driving. Average coach travel per day: 52 miles.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.

Combine this tour with: *Stockholm Modern*, 24–29 June 2025. We are happy to advise on linking accommodation and transport.