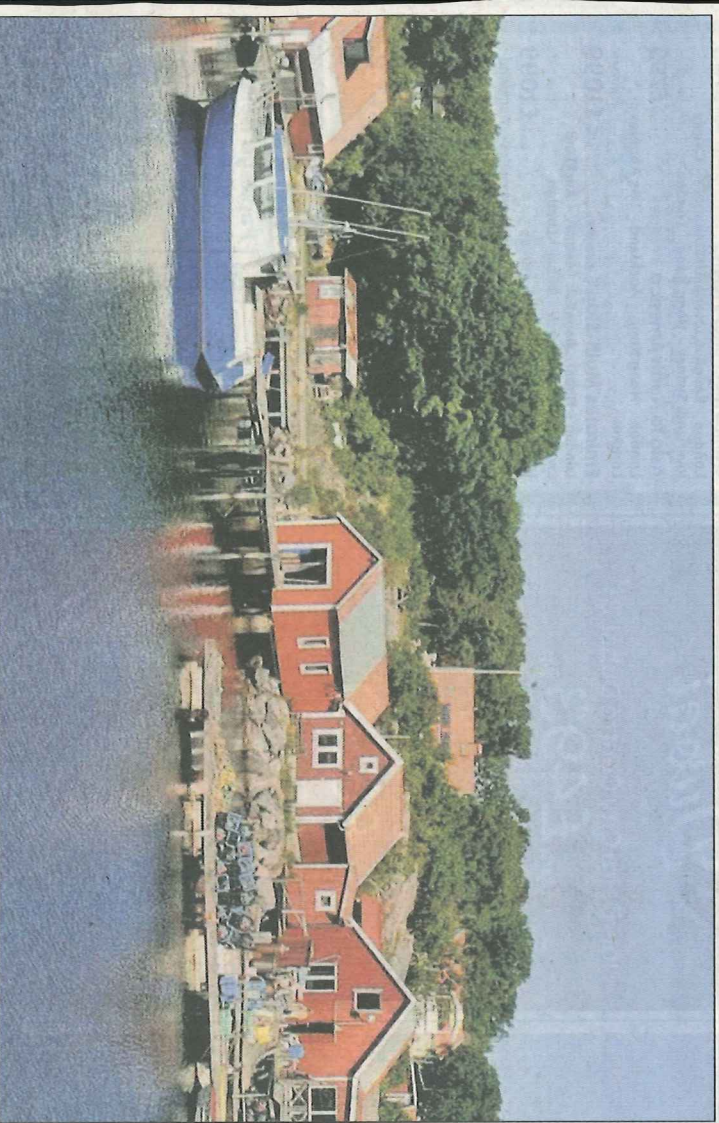


Swede dreamers of summer



Stunning scenery in Sweden

As you trudge to work this morning, soldiering through the gloom and the long, dark test of endurance that is January, imagine a midsummer night in which it barely gets dark. Imagine taking a walk in the midnight sun in Sweden along a beach, deserted but for a few friendly seals.

'In Britain, we don't really look to Scandinavia for our holidays but it's an incredibly relaxing place to visit, with a gentler pace of life,' says Michael Hatch, itineraries manager for Ramblers Worldwide, which has launched a new eight-day walking tour of Sweden's Koster Islands (pictured). It's about getting back to nature, Swedish-style.'

The Koster island archipelago

Our weekly page looks at launches around the world, from accommodation to tours to hotel bars. This week: Swedish walking tours, a fresh look for a New York hotel and transatlantic travel via Iceland

boat, with no cars, few people and a soothingly slower rhythm. The tours are led by enthusiastic local experts and are, Hatch is keen to emphasise, not about hard-core, gung-ho exertion. 'It's more like Zen hiking, strolling through pretty scenery, along empty beaches and past Hobbit-like cottages on the tiny islands of Trossö, Kalvö and Lindö,' he says.

Accommodation is in traditional wooden cabins by the beach. 'It's quite far removed from boutique hotels and fashionable bars,' says

The final three days of the eight-day tour are spent in Sweden's greenest city, Gothenburg, exploring the botanical gardens and enjoying leisurely lakeside strolls. Now isn't that the perfect antidote to a packed train?

Jane Mulkerrius

From £1,110 per person, including four nights' cabin and three nights' hotel accommodation half-board, guiding and flights. Departures on May 15 and 22, June 12 and 26, August 14 and September 4. Tel: 01707 331 133.

Food & Drink **London Life**

THE SMART SHOPPER

SWEDE DREAMS

CHEESE "twitthers" in search of ever rarer cheeses will be pleased to see the Swedish Festival at the Foodhall in John Lewis Oxford Street features the almost unpronounceable Västerbotensost (£4.75/165g; £7.25/450g) – this is a first visit to

Britain for Sweden's most revered cheese, the one expat Swedes dream about! It's semi-soft, chewy, pungent and has a caramelly flavour. Also worth trying are the Leksandsbröd – traditional Swedish crisp bread, (£1.50/200g; £2.25/400g) and Felix lingonberry jam (£2.95/238g) which is made from wild lingonberries and is delightfully sharp – very good.

The Waitrose Foodhall, John Lewis, 300 Oxford Street, W1 (020 7629 7711, johnlewis.com)

Charles Campion



As well as more than a dozen Malaysian restaurants strutting their stuff – including the Satay House in Paddington – there will be a Teh Tarik demonstration. This is a Malaysian version of tea – piping hot, heavily sweetened with condensed milk and surprisingly appropriate for a British winter.

Malaysian Winter Market, The Southern Terrace, Westfield centre, W12 (malaysiakitchen.co.uk)

Tea time.