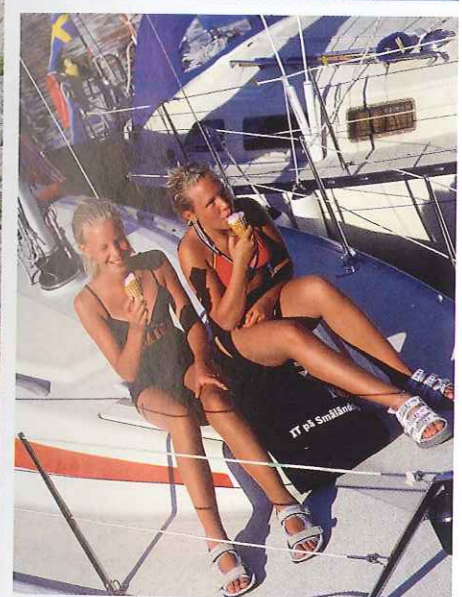
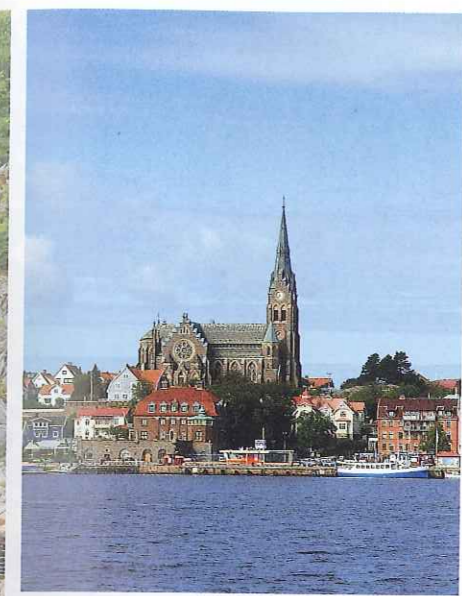


SEASIDE SWEDEN

Set sail for the easy-going islands off the west coast and you'll find plenty to float your boat



On a cluster of hide 'n' seek islands, rust-red fishermen's cottages gather on stilts by clear waters. The air is pure, the living is easy, the seafood so fresh it jumps onto the plate. This is West Sweden's Bohuslän archipelago, 45 minutes from Gothenburg by car. Here tanned Swedes live out their nautical adventures in dappled sun – just an hour's flight from the UK...

By Andrew Eames

- WHAT TO SEE & DO**
- Zoom north from Gothenburg up the E6 motorway; exit beyond Munkedal and head west for the Sotenäs peninsula. It's a fertile landscape that transforms itself slowly as the vegetation stands back, leaving sun-warmed rock. Here you'll find the outrageously pretty village of Smögen, a sort of Nordic Venice, its fishermen's cabins perched on bare toes of pink granite, alongside glassy creeks crammed with boats.
 - Sashay along the Smögen boardwalk – the place for West Sweden's fashionable young pleasure-seekers, who come for open-air midsummer parties in late June, admiring the boats and downing lingonberry juice in cafes.
 - While in the vicinity of Smögen, explore Nordens Ark (www.nordensark.se; £19), an endangered species nature park 20km inland.

- It conducts research into big cats – snow leopards are bred here in sympathetically created habitats. And if thalassotherapy's your thing, take a ferry (www.hallofarjan.se; £8 return) to the nature reserve on Hällö island and plunge into Sweden's saltiest water.
- Take the coastal road north to Grebbestad and try relaxing in a floating barrel. Run by the brothers Karlsson – marine enthusiasts – this is a hot tub on a pontoon at Evert's Boathouse (www.evertsjobod.se; £350 for up to 10 people, for as long as you like). They heat the water to about 40°C, and you can plunge over the side to cool off. Their 200-year-old timber boathouse is filled with bleached rope and crab pots, and they even run oyster safaris.
- Head south for the old-fashioned port of Lysekil, with its floating fish restaurants

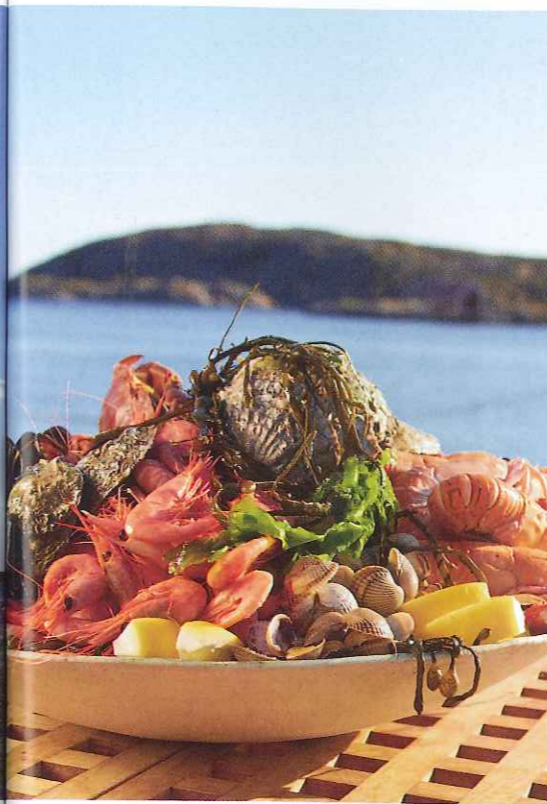
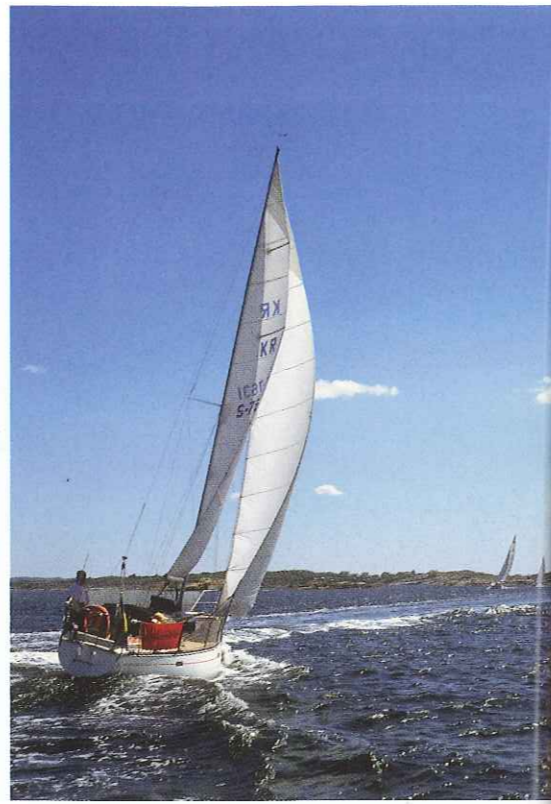
- and traditional hydropathic institutions. The brave skinny-dip in the jetty's (segregated) seawater baths; for the less intrepid, there's a ferry ride across to Fiskebäckskil, a village on the island of Skaftö (www.skafto.com), where lovely wooden houses line narrow car-free lanes and Gothenburg's wealthiest have holiday homes.
- Ferry-hop south to Tjörn island, heartland of the silvery sill (herring). In its day, the sill harvest was like a gold rush for the Bohuslän. Most of today's catch comes into Klädesholmen in Tjörn, where a pretty village tumbles over a jumble of rocks and dips its toes in the sea. The processing plant (www.kladesholmen.seafood.se) has a shop selling sill in every imaginable kind of marinade.
- Tjörn also has the giant Nordic Watercolour Museum (www.akvarellmuseet.se; £6.50), built

Nautically nice: from left, quayside in Smögen lined with fishermen's huts; sailing the inlets around Tjörn island; top, the lovely port of Lysekil, famous for its floating fish restaurants; taking an ice-cream break

out over the water and flooded with light. Rotating exhibitions, emphasising the contemporary, blow away prejudices of watercolour as a fuddy-duddy medium. There's also an excellent restaurant specialising in seafood.

● Join the hippy elite on tiny Astol, south of Tjörn. Once a sanctuary for herring fishermen when the weather cut up rough, today its rock-cradled natural harbour is jammed with boats. Its fishermen's cottages cling to a bare splay of granite – holiday homes for a slightly bohemian, arty crowd. Ferries cross hourly from Tjörn's Rönnängs Brygga (schedules on www.vasttrafik.se). From Tjörn, it's only 45 minutes back to Gothenburg. >

SEASIDE SWEDEN



WHERE TO STAY
Lekanders Bär & Boende (Fagerfjäll on Tjörn island; 00 46 304 662656, www.lekander.nu). Guest rooms occupy a sympathetic conversion of one of the outbuildings at this charming B&B on Tyfta Östergård farm. Gerda and Mats Lekander are ninth-generation farmers, and Gerda makes wonderful jams and bread from home-produced grains. Doubles from £76, B&B.

CABINS ON STILTS
Havshotel Strandflickorna (Turistgatan 13, Lysekil; 00 46 523 79750, www.strandflickorna.se). This former home for retired nurses, now a hotel, also has a glass-fronted fisherman's cabin set on stilts in the water. Check in to it, then lie in bed and watch the yachties go sauntering by. Doubles from £133, B&B.

Utpost Hällö (Hällö island; 00 46 703 536822, www.utpost-hallo.nu). Here's a romantic, rustic clapboard hostel on its own island (frequent ferries from Smögen), which also happens to be a nature reserve. NB: it's only open during summer months. Rooms (sleeping from three to five people) from £143, room only.

Villa Sjötorp (Lyckorna, Ljungskile; 00 46 522 20174, www.villasjotorp.se). Fancy an aristocratic Gothic villa? Try this place on the mainland, with garden, terrace and views over water rippled with cruiser wash out to the island of Orust. The creaky villa has lots of original touches and is filled with portraits

of the family who built it and still run it. An hour from Gothenburg's airports, it's a good first/last stop. Doubles from £162, B&B.

FLOATING HOTEL
Salt & Sill (Klädesholmen; 00 46 304 673480, www.saltosill.se). A much talked-about floating hotel, S&S comes with an equally well-known restaurant. Rooms are small but comfy, mounted on a pontoon that moves gently when boats pass. Flotillas of eider ducks provide early-morning calls, and guests can pay to use the 'fastest floating sauna in the world', a specially-made catamaran. Doubles from £190, B&B.

Väderöarnas Vårdshus ('Weather Islands Inn', Väderöarna; 00 46 525 32001, www.vaderoarna.com). Sweden's most westerly island is superbly isolated, so be prepared to get to know your fellow guests. When you book, arrange the scenic boat transfer from Fjällbacka, just south of Grebbestad. Doubles from £342, full board, including sauna sessions and transfer.

WHERE TO EAT
Ekelöfs (Boardwalk, Smögen; www.ekelofs.se). Here's a fine choice among the informal fishmonger-cafes that herald the boardwalk in Smögen. Sit at an outside table and gorge on fresh prawns at £9 a kilo.

Astols Rökeri (Quayside, Astol island; 00 46 304 677260, www.astolsrokeri.se). Take the ferry from Rönnängs Brygga on Tjörn to fill up

at this informal quayside smokery run by two Swedish actors: tables and handmade chairs outside; extraordinary Gothic dining room inside in the former ice shed, lined with pictures of old fishermen; and live music in the summer. There's creamy, tangy fish soup, too. Mains around £10.

Handelsman Flink (Flatön island; 00 46 304 55051, www.handelsmanflink.se). Its fishing boat supplies the restaurant, so the menu is always fresh. You can even buy to take away from a shack on the shore. Style is simple and elegant, clientele mainly international, many of them guests in the Handelsman Flink hotel. Try the fishcake. Mains around £15.

Salt & Sill (See Where to Stay). A restaurant before the floating hotel was added, this place is well-known among trendy Gothenburgers and yachties, who can tie up directly by their table. Staff are elegant, the menu is imaginative (the *Snappas* 'herringboard' is fun – different herrings chased with different schnapps) but it can feel business-accounty. Try the Greenland plaice and the pork cheek with asparagus. Mains around £18.

FISHY FOCUS
Brygghuset (Fiskebäckskilsvägen 28, Fiskebäckskil; 00 46 523 22222, www.brygghuset-krog.com). It's busy and cheery here, with homemade cheeses and breads. Fish is the focus, particularly halibut with apple sauce, shrimps with horseradish, and curried mussel soup. Mains around £20.

Docking in: from left, trendy yachties moor up alongside the **Salt & Sill** restaurant, Tjörn, and tuck into seafood; sailing round the archipelago; make a splatter with a seafood platter

Karingo (Hus 26, Karingön island; 00 46 304 56031, www.karingo.com). Come by ferry from Hälleviksstrand, on Orust, for the ultimate in romantic decadence: champagne and oysters in a hot tub on a lonely fishermen's island. You need a party of at least six – otherwise choose the non-tub 'bon vivant' menu, with three glasses of fizz, six oysters, three kinds of sauces and homemade bread, for £86.

WAYS TO FLOAT
Flatö Kajak (Lille Ström, Flatön; 00 46 73 312 1026, www.flatokajak.com). Flatön island is made for kayaks, with great water for canoeing, lots of creeks, shallows and shelter from prevailing winds. Provided the weather is calm, you can circle the island in four hours. One-person kayaks: from £7.70 per hour, £24 per day.

Kulturbåtarna (Kilsgatan 10, Gothenburg; 00 46 311 01015, www.kulturbatarna.se). Take a four-day cruise through the Bohuslän between Gothenburg and Fjällbacka aboard the old-fashioned *MS Svea*. From £561, full board, including three nights in hotels.

Sjösportskolan (Långedrag, Talattagatan 24, Gothenburg; 00 46 31 292030, www.sjosportskolan.com). For bareboat and crewed yacht charter try this company (half-day trip, £702 for up to eight people; including skipper).

Ask the local



Pia Edlund runs Astols Rökeri restaurant on the island of Astol

'Living where I do is like being inside a watercolour painting: in summer, you lie on sun-warmed rocks; in autumn, the landscape is dramatic with storms and rain. Take a ferry doing the Rönnäng-Dyrön-

Astol-Tjörnekalv circuit: enjoy the panorama of Astol and the archipelago with the Pater Noster lighthouse on the horizon. If you want to fish for mackerel, Hala is the place, an underwater mountain not far from Astol. Find it the old-fashioned way, dropping your line when you can see both the churchtower of Klädesholmen and the old watch lodge on Hättan island at the same time. I like to visit ceramicist Birgitta Ankerblad's studio – it's in an old wooden barn in Kålekärr on Tjörn. Her work is inspired by the sea.'



Get me there

GO INDEPENDENT
 Gothenburg and Gothenburg City airports are both well placed for the Bohuslän, but the latter, served by **Ryanair** (www.ryanair.com) from Stansted and Edinburgh, is closer. **EasyJet** (www.easyjet.com) flies to Gothenburg from Gatwick and Manchester, while **BA** (0844 493 0787, www.ba.com) has returns from Heathrow, from £106.

GO PACKAGED
Simply Sweden (0845 890 0300, www.simplysweden.co.uk) has two nights, one at the Salt & Sill and one at Strandflickorna, from £585pp, B&B, with car and Heathrow flights. **Sunvil Discovery** (020 8758 4722, www.sunvil.co.uk) has a three-night break with two at Handelsman Flink and one at Villa Sjötorp, from £644pp, B&B, with car and flights from Heathrow.

GET AROUND
Avis (0844 581 0147 www.avis.co.uk) has five days from £254, from Gothenburg City airport. Or try **Hertz** (www.hertz.co.uk). There are good bus and boat services from **Vasttrafik** (www.vasttrafik.se).

FURTHER INFORMATION
 See www.westsweden.com, www.visitsweden.com and www.sotenaturism.se.