



Swedish summer

By Joy Dunbar

Stockholm in Sweden is one of Europe's most beautiful capital cities and is often described as the Venice of the North.

It is built on 14 islands and a network of bridges connect the city's islands.

Surrounded by Lake Malaren and the Baltic Sea – it is an ideal short break for city slickers or people who love adventure.

Stockholm is an amazing city to walk around, especially the oldest part of the city, Gamla Stan – the Old Town – which has preserved some of its medieval charm.

A city soaked in cultural and architectural history, it has a Royal Palace, beautiful churches and narrow picturesque streets which is complemented by a unique range of galleries and museums.

The city is also a leading contemporary design centre with an abundance of independent shops, cafes and restaurants.

Stockholm's greatest and most unique asset is its vast natural landscape that encircles its city.

Stockholm Archipelago is almost like a foreign country, an unique maritime landscape made up of more than 24,000 islands – of which only about a thousand are inhabited.

Finnhamn lies where the northern edges of the outer archipelago where nature shows off its splendour with forest, beach meadows, flowering meadows, rich floras and is about a two-hour journey from Gamla Stan.

There are also a range of outdoor activities to do on Finnhamn including – kayaking, hiking or horse riding on Icelandic horses or cycling on an neighbouring island.

About an hour away from Stockholm is Vasteras – a town, like Luton, famous for its airport, but also famous for two unusual hotels the Woodpecker Hotel and the Utter Inn, a floating under water hotel.

Both hotels were designed by local artist Mikael Genberg and the tree house is set 13 meters above a Swedish park with rope ladder access only.

The under water hotel lies three metres below the surface of Lake Malaren and is one kilometre out.

Vasteras is about an hour away from the historic village of Grythyttan and other outdoor pursuits like moose and bird safaris.

Grythyttan Inn has been welcoming guests since 1640, when Sweden's Queen Kristina ordered that an inn in the area it is now the country's best known country hotel and is fast gaining a reputation internationally.

It is an extraordinary sensual experience – with fine cuisine, excellent hotel rooms and set in beautiful Bergslage countryside.

Nature is probably Sweden's best kept secret – Kolarbyn is called Sweden's most primitive hotel, set in beautiful forest and a haven for adventure.

It is a place where you can enjoy the environment at its most primitive and take part in mushroom picking, fishing and see moose in their natural habitat.

Svartadalen has a wealth of forests, lakes, hay meadows and open wetlands and they cram in enough room for birds and wildlife.

Best known for its bird safaris – there is an opportunity to see some of the most magnificent European birds like leking black grouse, swans, cranes, owls and eagles.

Joy travelled to Stockholm-Vasteras Airport on a Ryanair flight.

For more information log on to: www.stockholmtown.com, www.grythyttan.com,
www.svartadalen.nu/eng and www.kolarbyn.se

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