

Created by: Debra C. Argen

Sweden - A Green Destination

Lately, the word "green" has taken on a new meaning, no longer is it simply a color, it is the new hot buzz word on everyone's lips and has become a way of life. [Sweden](#) has always been a "green" destination with its deep respect for nature, and its dedication to eco and sustainable tourism.



On April 8, 2008, Ambassador Jonas Hafström of Sweden welcomed guests to the stunning [House of Sweden](#) in Washington, DC, which opened in 2006, for an exciting day of learning beginning with a luncheon and EcoPod Seminar. As the Moderator for the panel discussion, I had the opportunity to work with a cross-section of industry experts in their field to help whet the audience's eco appetites and give the flavor of Sweden.

Panel members included **Ms. Lena Andersson**, Project Manager Culinary Skåne, [Position Skåne](#); **Ms. Christina Cavaliere**, Director of Training and Education, [The International Ecotourism Society \(TIES\)](#); **Mr. Edward F. Nesta**, President, [Luxury Experience Company](#); and **Mr. Joel Thevoz**, President, [Main Event Caterers](#).

We have all heard the words "green" and ecotourism frequently bantered about, which is why it was important to establish what exactly is ecotourism. I called on Christina Cavaliere's expertise to enlighten the audience on ecotourism.



"Eco is a term that is put into everything now, but it is important to establish the true definition. [The International Ecotourism Society \(TIES\)](#) is the world's largest and oldest ecotourism and non-profit association. Established in 1990 in Burlington, Vermont, the organization is now located in Washington, DC and has over 1000 members in 100 countries.

TIES definition is the most heavily quoted in the world. The definition of ecotourism is to promote responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment and improve the wellbeing of the local

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people; to be environmentally responsible, socially responsible, and economically viable."

Skåne and West Sweden have many programs in place that emphasize their dedication to being a green destination. Lena Anderson highlighted some of the interesting programs that this area is doing.



"There is a network of 25 of the best restaurants in Skåne and West Sweden that take care of nature, buy locally produced products, and ecological is very important for the restaurants. Each of the restaurants has at least one dish on the menu that is completely ecological."

Sweden has long been a green destination, and Edward F. Nesta shared some of the eco-friendly programs being done in Sweden that would be of interest from travelers' perspectives.



"Responsible travel begins with [SAS Scandinavian Airlines](#) who are dedicated to making a difference and had Europe's first transatlantic green flight (Continuous Descent Program). The transatlantic green approach with Airbus A330-300 estimated to save 150 kilos (330 pounds) of aircraft fuel and 470 kilos (1036 pounds) of carbon dioxide. Also, SAS is enrolled in a voluntary program to offset carbon dioxide emissions.

[Handelsman Flink Restaurant](#) and [Handelsman Flink Hotel](#) in West Sweden belongs to the "Svanenmärkas" program, and is one of the few restaurants in Sweden labeled by the government as "taking care of the environment." The restaurant works hard at recycling and composting, serves locally produced food, uses energy saving products, and works with ecological products when possible.

The hotel has a water heating and filtration system, which works through a biological purification and cleaning, where natural bacteria works together with oxygen, and breaks down the filth in three steps. The process takes 24+ hours and the dirty water passes through three filtration tanks throughout this time. The total capacity per day is 14 cubic meters of dirty water processed through the system. The resultant clean water is drinkable and is pumped out directly into the sea, which is very important as the area is unique as the population grows by 15-20% in the summer with people coming to enjoy nature and boating.

The **Koster Islands** in West Sweden is almost completely car free. Visitors travel by ferry to the island, and travel by foot or bike once on the island. The [Göta Canal Steamship Cruises](#) are one of the most eco-friendly ways to travel across Sweden, is the world's oldest registered passenger ship, and its menus are based on local ingredients from local suppliers. The [Icehotel](#) located 200 kilometers north of the Arctic

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Circle uses water from the River Torne to create the hotel, and when the ice melts the water is returned to the river.

The sophisticated capital city of Stockholm has 24,000 small islands to visit in the archipelago, and the water is so clean that people can swim and fish in the heart of the city center. In addition, camping is permitted almost everywhere as long as you respect nature."

Sweden is so dedicated to maintaining its green reputation and sustainable tourism, that even the catering company for the luncheon, [Main Event Caterers](#), is a green company. Joel Thevoz described ways in which his company is making a difference.



"Last year we observed the amount of waste created by the city, and it was one of the moments when it was an epiphany. We decided to do something about it, and began a composting project to recycle organic waste, and had 150 gallons of vegetable peelings, etc, which I decided to compost in my backyard. That snowballed into other areas, and as of January 1, we offset the equivalent amount of electricity purchased from Dominion Power by purchasing an equal amount of energy from a wind farm. This energy is then funneled to the electric grid.

We recycle almost everything that we can, which is a savings of 70% of the landfill mass that we had contributed in the past. It has been a great, if short journey of 12 months, but we are continually trying to do what we can."

The gastronomy in Sweden has changed over the years and has evolved into much more than just Swedish meatballs and lingonberries. Lena Andersson described some of the changes in the culinary world.

"Skåne as a culinary destination has 25 best restaurants, and there is a great tradition of food here. We have 400 km of coast, long summers, and we can feed almost everything from this region. We need to maintain cultural recipes but make them contemporary with new and exciting recipes. We have cooking classes to teach the Skåne way, where students can go and pick the tomatoes and potatoes.

Skåne's Olympic games with two Swedish teams will compete in October 2008 in Erfurt, Germany, which will be lead by Chef Martin Hansen, proprietor of Skanörs Gästgivareregård who was one of the finalists in the "Chef of the Year." Gothenburg in West Sweden and Stockholm have Michelin restaurants, although Skåne does not due its proximity to Copenhagen."

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Sweden is also promoting itself as a culinary destination with television cooking programs with renowned Chef Tina Nordstrom that combine cooking and travel. Lena added that Tina Nordstrom and other colleagues from Denmark and Norway came to Skåne to film a new series of "A Perfect Day" programs, which will continue to support Sweden as a culinary destination.

Christina Cavaliere shared a few tips on how we can all become more informed and responsible travelers. "To be responsible travelers, we should understand what true and responsible travel is and not green-washed. TIES has travel tips on the website www.Ecotourism.org. What we do as travelers, hopefully we will bring back home. Buy certified products from certified vendors. Sweden is world renowned for its stringent adherence to its certification. Although we all want a bargain when traveling and that is how we get to meet and interact with the people, when purchasing products from craftsmen it is important that we pay a fair price. When entering natural or protected areas, it is important to stay on the trails as one step can have great impact on the environment. Pay entrance fees which for many areas often mean the ability to stay open or not. Choose carbon offsetting flights and travel with the climate in mind. Once you arrive at a destination, use non-motorized transportation, walking, or public transportation whenever possible. Hopefully what we learn when traveling we will bring back home."

The seminar ended with Mrs. Annika Benjes, Director Public Relations, [Visit Sweden](http://www.VisitSweden.com), advising guests that they did not have to be "green with envy" as they would have the opportunity to meet with the representatives from Sweden who could answer any questions that they might have after the program.

It is important to remember that we do have a choice when it comes to responsible and sustainable ecotourism, and that each one of us can make a difference in the world.

For more information on **Sweden**, please visit the website: www.VisitSweden.com. For information on SAS Scandinavian Airlines, please visit the website: www.FlySAS.com. For information on The International Ecotourism Society, please visit the website: www.EcoTourism.org.

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