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festivals

455

Western Europe

0 500 km
0 300 mi



Danish

Dutch

French

German

Greek

Italian

Norwegian

Portuguese



- Spanish
- Swedish
- Turkish

*Note: Language areas are approximate only.
For more details see the relevant introduction.*



Swedish

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swedish alphabet

<i>Aa</i> aa	<i>Bb</i> bey	<i>Cc</i> sey	<i>Dd</i> dey	<i>Ee</i> ey
<i>Ff</i> ef	<i>Gg</i> gey	<i>Hh</i> hoh	<i>Ii</i> ee	<i>Jj</i> yoy
<i>Kk</i> koh	<i>Ll</i> el	<i>Mm</i> em	<i>Nn</i> en	<i>Oo</i> oh
<i>Pp</i> pey	<i>Qq</i> ku	<i>Rr</i> er	<i>Ss</i> es	<i>Tt</i> tey
<i>Uu</i> u	<i>Vv</i> vey	<i>Ww</i> do-belt vey	<i>Xx</i> eks	<i>Yy</i> ew
<i>Zz</i> set	<i>Åå</i> aw	<i>Ää</i> e	<i>Öö</i> eu	

swedish



SVENSKA

introduction

The Swedish language (*svenska sven-ska*) gave us *ombudsman* and *smorgasbord*, which just confirms the image of the Swedes as a nation that's good at making the most of life in more ways than one. As a member of the Germanic language family, Swedish shares common roots with English and German. German, in particular, has influenced Swedish in the form of numerous loanwords. However, the closest relatives of Swedish are, of course, the other Scandinavian languages, Danish and Norwegian – all of them descendants of Old Norse, which started branching out from the 9th century and the Viking age.

The oldest inscriptions in Old Norse, dating from the same period, used the runic alphabet and were written on stone or wood. The missionaries who introduced Christianity in the 12th century brought the Roman alphabet (and the custom of writing on parchment) to the emerging Scandinavian languages, but some modification was necessary to represent the specific vowel sounds, so additional letters were eventually developed. The turning point in the evolution of Swedish coincided with the achievement of independence from Danish rule in 1526, when the first translation of the New Testament appeared. The modern literary language was shaped after the first Swedish translation of the whole Bible, known as *Gustav Vasas Bibel* as it was published under the patronage of King Gustav Vasa in 1541.

The standard language or *Rikssvenska reek-sven-ska* (lit: kingdom-Swedish) is based on the central dialects from the area around Stockholm. Some of the rural dialects that are spoken across the country are quite diverse – for example, *Skånska skawn-ska*, spoken in the southern province of Skåne, has flatter vowel sounds (and sounds a lot more like Danish), whereas *Dalmål daal-mawl*, spoken in the central region of Dalarna, has a very up-and-down sound.

Interestingly, Swedish once didn't have official status in Sweden itself, but it did in neighbouring Finland. This is easily explained though – Swedish is the national language of Sweden, spoken natively by about 10 million people, and it simply wasn't felt necessary to enforce its use by law. Finland, on the other hand, was part of Sweden from the mid-14th century until 1809, and Swedish was the language of administration. Today, it shares official status with Finnish and is a mandatory subject in schools, but it's the first language for only about 300,000 people or 6% of Finland's population. PS: any traveller to Sweden should know that the Swedish Chef from the Muppets doesn't really speak Swedish at all.