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CONCIERGE

Sean Naughton of the Rival Hotel is our pre- eminent insider guide to where you should eat, drink, shop, and play in one of the world's most exciting cities: Stockholm, Sweden.

Stockholm Concierge: Sean Naughton, Rival Hotel



by **Matthew Wexler**

Born and raised in Hawaii with an American father and Swedish mother, Sean Naughton studied international relations at the University of Oregon before moving to Sweden. He has now called Stockholm home for over 23 years. After several years of working in restaurants and bars in management, he made the switch to the hotel side of the hospitality industry. Sean has been a member of the **Rival Hotel** (Mariatorget 3. Tel: +46-0-8-545-789-24. www.rival.se) team since the property opened in 2003. Considered Stockholm's first boutique hotel, the Rival features an art deco design, 700-seat theater, and popular restaurant and bar. For the past five years, Sean has held the position of concierge, drawing on his love and knowledge of Stockholm to help visitors make the

most out of their stay. His blog, **The Stockholm Tourist** (www.stockholm-tourist.blogspot.com), has received over one million page views since its inception in 2010 and has become a practical online tool for visitors planning their trip to the city. Sean has been a proud member of the prestigious Les Clefs d'Or for three years and is a board member of concierge union's Swedish chapter.

Where are the coolest places to go for cocktails? And are there any traditional Swedish cocktails or spirits?

Cocktail culture has really exploded in Stockholm in recent years producing many great cocktail bars. **Pharmarium** (Stortorget 7. Tel: +46-0-820-0810. www.pharmarium.se) in Gamla Stan is a favorite. They are located in the building that once housed the city's first apothecary, and they have built their concept around this fact. Besides resembling an apothecary, many of the ingredients in both the cocktails and dishes were once used for medicinal purposes. **El Diablo** (Norra Agnegatan 43. Tel: +46-0-8650-5069. www.el-diablo.se) on Kungsholmen has one of Europe's widest assortments of fine tequila and Stockholm's best margaritas. The island of Södermalm has built up a reputation of being the home of the city's hipster population, and **Linje 10** (Hornsbruksgatan 24. Tel: +46-0-822-0021. www.linjetio.com) is a great bar to experience this side of Stockholm. Tweed Bar (Lilla Nygatan 5. Tel: +46-0-8506-40082. www.tweedbar.se) in Gamla Stan resembles a gentlemen's club in London with Chesterfield chairs and tartan-clad walls. Their tagline says it all: "comfortable bar."

What are the best restaurants for a romantic dinner in the city?

In the trendy SoFo neighborhood you will find **Oxelblom** (Skånegatan 51. Tel: +46-0-8615-0010. www.oxelblom.se). Its cozy interior reminds one of a living room from the early 1900s with mismatched vintage furniture, warm colors, and filled bookshelves. **Kryp In** (Prästgatan 17. Tel: +46-0-820-8841. www.restaurangkrypin.se), located in Gamla Stan, is another cozy restaurant. The name means "walk-in nook" in Swedish and lives up to its name with small dining alcoves. Sharing food can be very romantic (think Lady and the Tramp) and this is taken to the next level at the recently opened **Melt** (Hökens Gata 3. Tel: +46-0-8644-6070. www.meltbar.se), where you can enjoy sharing dishes like fondue.

Who serves the greatest weekend brunch in town?

For several years now, the premiere place to have Sunday brunch in Stockholm has been the **Rival Hotel's Bistro** (Mariatorget 3. +46-0-8545-78915. www.rival.se). This is a classic brunch buffet filled with Swedish and American favorites. Reservations are suggested. New to the scene is **Mister French** (Tullhus 2, Skeppsbrogajen. Tel: +46-0-820-2095. www.mrfrench.se) on the waterfront in Gamla Stan. Besides the classic brunch buffet dishes, they also have loads of fresh shellfish and grilled meats. Another great weekend brunch, albeit completely different, can be had at **Berns Asiatiska** (Berzelii Park 9. Tel: +46-0-8566-32222. www.berns.se/restaurant/berns-asiatiska). This is one of Stockholm's best Asian-fusion restaurants, and their brunch buffet is filled with favorites from the Far East.

What are the hottest shows in town, and how do I get tickets?

The royal opera house, **Kungliga Operan** (Gustav Adolfs Torg 2. Tel: +46-0-8-791-4300. www.operan.se), is a gorgeous venue to enjoy performances of opera and ballet. Besides

being the location of the annual Nobel Prize ceremony, **Konserthuset** (Hötorget 8. Tel: +46-0-8-786-0200. www.konserthuset.se) is also the home of the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra as well as the venue for other concerts. One venue of special note is **The Ericsson Globe** (Globentorget 2. Tel: +46-0-8-600-9100. www.globearenas.se), which is the world's largest hemispherical building and a Stockholm landmark. The vast majority of tickets to shows and events in Stockholm are sold online at www.ticnet.se or can be purchased in person at the **Stockholm Visitors Center** (Sergels Torg 3. Tel: +46-0-8-508-28508. www.visitstockholm.com)

What are Stockholm's must-see museums?

Stockholm is filled with more than 70 museums that cover every subject imaginable. In 1628 the ostentatious royal warship Vasa sank in Stockholm harbor. It was salvaged three centuries later, almost perfectly preserved thanks to the brackish waters of the Baltic Sea. These days it can be seen at the **Vasa Museum** (Galärvarvsvägen 14. Tel: +46-0-8-519-54800. www.vasamuseet.se). The world's largest museum featuring photography, **Fotografiska** (Stadsgårdshamnen 22. Tel: +46-0-8-509-00500. www.fotografiska.eu), is located in Stockholm. They have some great exhibitions, like the recent retrospective on Herb Ritts.

Which guided tours do you recommend most often to your guests?

Stockholm is often described as having equal parts city, water, and green areas. This enables many creative ways to tour the city besides the typical bus tour, such as by walking, boat, or bike. There are even jogging tours! **Strömma** (Strömkajen. Tel: +46-0-8-12-00-4000. www.stromma.se) is the largest sight-seeing company in the city. I recommend their "Under the Bridges" boat tour. **Stockholm Our Way** (Tel: +46-0-8-410-77330. www.stock-holmourway.com) offers several guided tours (walking, kayak, bike), and the **Stockholm City Museum** (Tel: +46-0-8-508-31620. www.stadsmuseet.stockholm.se) offers themed walking tours (like the Millennium trilogy or ABBA) depending on the time of year. **Food Tours Stockholm** (Tel: +46-0-8-120-57578. www.foodtoursstockholm.se) offers several guided tours where you explore different neighborhoods in the city, sampling the cuisines offered at local restaurants.

Where can you go to get the best views of the city?

While Stockholm is a relatively flat city geographically speaking, the northern coast of the island of Södermalm does have a slightly higher elevation, offering views of the downtown area and Gamla Stan. The best places to experience this view are on the streets **Monteliusvägen** and **Fjällgatan** or to visit one of the restaurants/bars located in this area, like **Gondolen** (Stadsgården 6. Tel: +46-0-8-641-70-90. www.eriks.se). On the outskirts of the city you have two great opportunities to view the city/countryside. One is the tower **Kaknästornet** (Mörka kroken 28-30. Tel: +46-0-8-667-2180. Tel: www.kaknastornet.se), and the other is to ride the **Skyview** gondola (Globentorget 2. Tel: +46-0-771-811-000. www.globeare-nas.se/skyview) to the top of the Ericsson Globe arena (mentioned above). Some of the most exciting views to be had are by taking a rooftop tour with **Upplev Mer** (Tel: +46-0-8-22-3005. www.takvandring.com) or a hot-air balloon ride with **Upp & Ner** (Regeringsgatan 25. Tel: +46-0-8-644-0400. www.uppner.se). Both of these are available only during the warmer months.