

The South of France: More than sun, beach, lavender & rosé

By Louise Ling-Vannerus, SVIV Representative



Beautiful mountain villages are popular amongst the Swedes in Provence. (Bormes-les-Mimosas)

Beautiful weather, delicious food, world class wine and rich culture have attracted Swedes to the **French Riviera** for centuries. Starting with Swedish Queen Victoria and inventor Albert Nobel (founder of the Nobel Prize) in the 19th century, the number of Swedish tourists has grown to over half a million annually.

Many of them, approximately 15,000, have settled down more or less permanently to enjoy the glamorous and beautiful coastline, the charming Provençale villages and, last but not least, the 300 days of sunshine. They have invested in houses and apartments and together created a nice community to make them feel at home. The center of this community is Villa Ingeborg, the beautiful home of the Swedish Church and the Riviera Club. The club was founded in 1975 and has around 3,300 members, which makes it the largest Swedish association in France. If you fancy bridge, golf, yoga, tennis, hiking, arts, concerts or wine tastings, this is the club to join. The Riviera Club also helps its members with insurance, tax issues, moving in and out of France, and other challenges that the Swedish expat community has to face in everyday life.

Many Swedes living on the Riviera are retired, but the younger generation is coming. Nice, Cannes and Sophia Antipolis are hubs that attract many employees. Then there are the people who want to fulfil their dream of running a restaurant or a bed and breakfast in Provence. To stimulate networking and interaction among these professionals, there is an initiative by the Riviera Club called Riviera Business.

Other important assets for younger families are the international schools and the Swedish School Association which helps young Swedes (6 – 18 years of age) keep their language and culture through extra-curricular activities. The mission of the Association is to help the students keep their Swedish heritage, and also to make it easier

for students who want to return to the Swedish school system.

A lot of Swedish women join the Swedish Women's Educational Association (SWEA), as well as the Swedish Golf Society, the *Munskänkarna* wine society, etc. There is also a Facebook group with over 7,000 members where one can find new friends and answers to many questions. More support can be found at Swedish banks, real estate agents and the Swedish Consulate.

All of these organizations interact closely with each other, and you will see most of their representatives gathered at Villa Ingeborg for different activities. Among the most popular Swedish gatherings are Lucia, Midsummer and Easter celebrations, the Christmas fair, etc. They give you an opportunity to get a taste of Swedish traditions and delicacies. If they don't satisfy your cravings, there are quite a few Swedish restaurants and bakeries to save you.

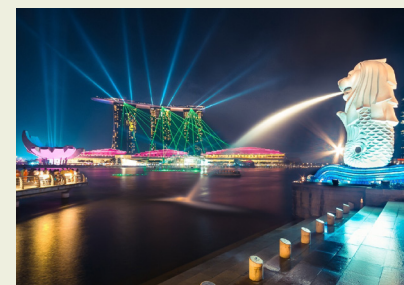


Villa Ingeborg is at the heart of the Swedish community on the French Riviera. Photo: Gösta Wendelius

Facts & Figures:
Swedes in the South of France: approx 15,000
Swedes in all of France: approx 30,000
Immigrants from Sweden to France 2019: 1,007
Total population in Greater Nice area: approx 1,000,000
Extra plus: Quick and cheap flights from Sweden to Nice and Marseille

The Swedish Community in Singapore

By Pernilla Hjelm Danielsson
SVIV Representative



Singapore, the Lion City (singa = lion and pura = city), is a sovereign city-state and island country with a population of close to 6 million. It became independent in 1965, so it is quite a young country. There are no official numbers of how many of those are Swedish, but it is estimated that approximately 2000 Swedes live here.

Most of the Swedes come here for work or to study, and there are many big companies and banks that employ Swedish expats. For an accompanying spouse it is easy to find things to do. There are a lot of interesting places to visit. If you are into sports and want to be active, the choice of opportunities is vast.

A challenge confronting most people moving here from Sweden is the climate. It is a tropical climate and the temperature stays around 30 degrees Celsius every day, all year around; but the most exhausting aspect is the humidity. Like someone said: you have to learn to love your own sweat. It is also difficult to keep track of the passing of time when there are no changes in the weather. So even if it sounds lovely with the warm weather all the time, most Swedes miss the seasons after a while.

In Singapore there are various Swedish organisations such as SWEA and SwedCham. We also have the Swedish School which has been here since 1974. They have lessons once a week, two hours at a time, and the children come from different schools all over the island. Besides practicing their Swedish, it is also a place for the kids to meet friends that speak the same language, and a great place for parents to mingle. Every family can enjoy some Swedish traditions like Lucia and the end-of-the-year celebration before the summer holidays. Some Swedish activities and celebrations, like the National Day, are arranged jointly by the different organisations and the Embassy of Sweden.

It is very easy to move to a country like Singapore, not least because the official language is English. The country is very well organised and extremely safe mainly because of the strict laws and the fact that there are surveillance cameras everywhere. One thing that impresses many newcomers is that in Singapore people from many different religions and cultures live peacefully side by side. They all have their own places

of worship and celebrate their own holidays.

Many Swedes who move to Singapore stay longer than they planned initially because it is very easy to love the lifestyle here, and it is tempting to compare one's next assignment to Singapore. Some Swedes here live abroad for the first time, while others have been to one or more countries before. Some move back home to Sweden after their years here, and some continue to another country – just like most expats do all over the world.



Photo above and below: Svenska Skolan i Singapore

In international surveys, Singapore is always listed as one of the top countries to live in. It is easy to understand why. Even when you move away, a piece of your heart will probably always remain here!

