Välkommen till Sverige!
Welcome to Sweden!

GUIDE FOR OUR AFS STUDENTS
AFS is an international, voluntary, non-governmental, non-profit organization that provides intercultural learning opportunities to help people develop the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to create a more just and peaceful world. AFS operates in more than 60 countries, and organizes and supports intercultural learning experiences through exchange programs. Founded by volunteer ambulance drivers following Second World War, and sustained to this day by an international cadre of tens of thousands of volunteers, AFS has transformed the lives of millions of students, families and individuals.

AFS Interkulturell Utbildning was established in Sweden in 1948. Our members and volunteers are former AFSers, their families, host families and people who support the objectives of AFS.

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CONGRATULATIONS!!!

You are about to start an exciting and very rewarding year in Sweden! This booklet will introduce you to Sweden and provide you with some suggestions on how to prepare yourself for your year in Sweden.

The exchange program you are going to be part of will not only give you a better understanding of Swedish culture, your own country and its values but also provide you with a deeper understanding of yourself! After the conclusion of the program we also hope you will have a better understanding of global issues. The orientations during the year will be a way for us at AFS to help and guide you through this process.

You will have the opportunity to meet a lot of new people and establish lifelong relationships with many of them. Enjoying the benefits of improving your language skills, learning about Swedish life in your host community and experiencing a new culture. You will probably experience both good and not so good times, and it will demand your effort and interest in adapting to a different way of living.

As a member of the world-wide AFS family, we welcome you into this international community and hope that your stay in Sweden will be exciting, fun but most of all an enriching learning experience from which you will benefit in the future.

We want to start out by giving you some general advice regarding your personal well-being during the year:

- Get to know the host culture well through questions, dialogue and discussions with your host family, classmates and the AFS volunteers. Observe their behaviour and do as they do as much as possible.

- Take feelings of any kind or misunderstandings between you and your host family or school seriously. Talk to AFS volunteers and/or staff and follow their advice.

- As stated in the Participation Agreement that you sign before leaving home, the AFS-office in Sweden will make recommendations and give guidelines for physical welfare and security. Take this advice seriously and comply with these guidelines.

LYCKA TILL!
GOOD LUCK!
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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT SWEDEN

FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT SWEDEN

**Capital**  Stockholm (1.2 million)
**Population**  9.8 million
**Immigration**  20% (2011, defined as born abroad or born in Sweden by two parents born abroad)

**Population density**  25 person per sq. Km
**Area**  450,000 km²
**Forest**  53%
**Lakes**  Around 97,500
**Islands**  Around 267,000
**Longest N-S distance**  1,574 km
**Longest E-W distance**  499 km
**Highest point**  2,111 m (Kebnekaise)
**Official language**  Swedish
**Money**  Svenska kronor – SEK (Swedish kronor)
**Form of government**  Constitutional monarchy, parliamentary democracy
**Religion**  64.6% Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sweden
HOLIDAYS

1st of January      New Years’ day      Nyårstdagen
6th of January      Epiphany             Trettondag jul
Friday March or April Good Friday         Långfredagen
Monday March or April Easter Monday       Annandag påsk
1st of May          Labor day            Första maj
A Thursday in May   Ascension day       Kristi himmelsfärdsdag
6th of June         National day        Sveriges nationaldag
A Friday in June    Midsummer           Midsommarafton
31st of October     All Saint’s day     Alla helgons dag
24th of December    Christmas Eve       Julafton
25th of December    Christmas            Juldagen
26th of December    Christmas            Annandag jul

MONEY

The monetary unit in Sweden is the krona, SEK (plural “kronor”). Bank notes are printed in
values of 20, 50, 100, 500 and 1000 kronor. Coins are in denominations of 1, 5 and 10 kronor.
Credit cards as Visa, MasterCard, Maestro or Cirrus are accepted almost everywhere, as are
international cards. You can withdraw cash at any cash machine.

We recommend you NOT to bring much cash with you. In case you have cash with you
ask your host family upon arrival for a safe place to put it.

You will need approximately 1 000-1 500 SEK a month to cover your basic needs, i.e.
television, pocket money, clothes, activities. To open a bank account in Sweden you need to
have a Swedish personal number, which you can only get if you live in Sweden for more than
one year. If you want to open a bank account during your stay, we recommend you to ask your
host family to help you. Some bank may sometimes create fictive personal number.

Examples of living costs in Sweden: (US $1 is approximately equal to 8,50 Swedish kronor;
EUR 1 is approximately equal to 9,50 Swedish Kronor.

- “Fika” = coffee & a bun/cake   60-70 SEK  • Cinema ticket    100-120 SEK
- Eating out varies             50–120 SEK  • Sweater          250-800 SEK
  (fast food and lunch)           • T-shirt          50-150 SEK
- Restaurants (dinner)          150-500 SEK  • Shoes            250-1500 SEK
- Concert tickets               250 SEK and more • Winter jacket   400-1000 SEK

AFS Interkulturell Utbildning and its local chapters do not have any funds to cover extra
costs for you. AFS as an organization can only cover the costs written in your participation
agreement, i.e., costs related to AFS-activities and school.
TELEPHONE AND INTERNET CONNECTION

The best option for you will be to buy a Swedish mobile number. There are several mobile operators offering different payment plans ranging from 99SEK/month to 600SEK/month depending on the internet connection and calls. Talk to your host family for help and advice for the best option. For international calls Skype, Viber and the like are the cheapest options.

In Sweden you have access to Internet in many public places and many families have wifi at home. Ask your family for how they have arranged it and if you can use it as well.

Always remember to ask for permission from your host family before making a call to a cell phone or an international call. Swedish phone bills itemize all local, cell phone, long distance and international calls, so your host family will notice all calls! International calls are very expensive!

Remember that you came to another country to meet new people and try new activities. Don’t spend too much time talking to friends and family in your home country or at your computer.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Public transportation is well developed in Sweden and perfectly safe to use. It is generally the most common way to travel longer distances. Walking or taking your bike to the bus/train, to school or to meet friends is often how youth (and adults) go around. If you use public transportation to a nearby town, check the timetable before because most of the public transportation stops running at a certain time in the evening.
The price for the travel card varies much throughout Sweden and ranges generally from 500 – 800 SEK/month. There are often special prices for youth and sometimes travel cards valid for a full semester. If the school does not provide you with a travel card for day travel to and from the school, AFS will cover that expense. You will have to buy the additional card for evening and weekend travel yourself.

For longer travels within Sweden, the train is often used and sometimes also flying (depending on the distance). The fast train between Göteborg and Stockholm takes 3 hours, and Malmö to Stockholm 4, 5 hours. Going between, for example, Umeå to Stockholm takes 9 hours as there is no fast train. There are youth tickets available for the train. You can book your ticket 3 months ahead: the earlier you book, the cheaper the price will be.

**WEATHER**

Sweden is situated at the same latitude as Alaska but thanks to the Gulf Stream, there are four distinctive seasons with cold winters and semi-warm summers. The weather in Sweden differs quite extensively depending on if you are on the Northern half or in the South. In the winter, the difference is the greatest with a lot of snow and cold in the North, while there seldom is snow in the very South.

**However, be prepared for a cold winter. In the coldest months the temperature can be from 0°C to -20°C. In the North it often drops to -30°C.** Most Swedes appreciate the snow, not only for skiing but during long winter nights, it also reflects a bit of light and make the days seem a bit lighter.

**Summer temperature in Sweden average 15°C to 20°C, but it can occasionally rise up until 30°C.** Swedes love the summer even if some days will also be a bit rainy and windy. They are spending their time outside as much as they can. In summer, the sun hardly sets in the very North.

**CLOTHING**

It’s a common saying in Sweden that “Det finns inget dåligt väder, bara dåliga kläder” which means “There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothes.” In other words, as long as you are dressed appropriately you will be comfortable in all kinds of weather. Swedes tend to be very practical when it comes to clothing. So wearing warm boots, hat and warm jackets in the winter or protective clothes against rain in the fall and spring is common.

**For the winter**, you absolutely need warm clothes (a hat, a scarf, warm sweaters, socks, a waterproof coat and a winter coat) and winter boots.

**For the summer**, you can wear lighter clothes and remember to bring your swimming suit, the water temperature of the lakes is around 18 / 20°C.
If you are in contact with your host family before you leave, ask them for suggestions on what to pack, as they know what is appropriate where they live.

SWEDISH CULTURE

WHAT IS FAMOUS FROM SWEDEN

Famous writers
One of the most famous Swedish writers is Astrid Lindgren. She wrote a number of children’s books of which Pippi Long Stocking (Pippi Långstrump in Swedish), is one of the most well-known internationally.

Sweden also has a number of writers known for detective stories. Maybe you have read the Millennium trilogy of Stieg Larson, the adventure of Fjällbacka by Camilla Läckberg or the story of The hundred year old man who climbed out of the window and disappeared by Jonas Jonasson?

Some classical writers are Selma Lagerlöf who wrote The Wonderful Adventures of Nils and Gösta Berling's Saga and August Strindberg who wrote both plays and novels, some of the most famous are The red room and Miss Julie.

Famous musicians
For sure you have at least listened to ABBA once, the Swedish pop band who were very famous in the 70’s and 80’s. Their more popular songs are Mamma Mia; Gimme! Gimme! Gimme!; Money, money, money.

Maybe have you heard about Roxette, Ace of Base and the Cardigans? They are all Swedish artists that have been very successful in and outside of Sweden.

Today the Swedish music industry is one of Sweden’s biggest exports to the rest of the world. Did you know that Swedish House Mafia, Avicii, Loreen, Zara Larsson, Ghost, In Flames, Tove Lo, Robyn and Icona Pop is Swedish musicians?

Sweden do not only have great bands and singers, we also produce music. Maybe you have heard Baby one more time with Britney Spears or I kissed a girl with Katy Perry. They were actually written and produced by Max Martin a famous Swedish songwriter and producer.
Famous actors and directors
Current Swedish actors are for example, Alexander Skarsgård who plays in True Blood, and Naomi Rapace who among other international movies played in Sherlock Holmes: A game of shadows and The drop. Rebecca Ferguson have been seen in Mission Impossible-Rouge nation. Have you seen The girl with the dragon tattoo you might have noticed Joel Kinnaman a Swedish-American actor. Ingmar Bergman (1918-2007) is recognized internationally as one of the world’s most influential directors.

Famous stores
There are two famous Swedish consumer chains, IKEA and H&M. IKEA was created by Ingvar Kamprad in 1943 and is now a multinational group of companies that designs and sells ready-to-assemble furniture (such as beds, chairs and desks), appliances and home accessories. As of June 2015, IKEA owns and operates 353 stores in 46 countries. H & M (Hennes & Mauritz), founded by Erling Persson is a multinational retail-clothing company, known for its fast-fashion clothing for men, women, teenagers and children.

Games
Sweden is one of the leading country within game development, maybe have you played or heard about Minecraft, Starcraft or Battlefield? They are all created by Swedish game developers!

FOOD CULTURE
The most common meal in Swedish families consists of fish or meat and potatoes, rice or pasta. You will also quickly learn the concept of “fika”. That is coffee/drinks with cookies or often “kanelbulle”, a bun with cinnamon. Typical traditional Swedish food include for meatballs, herring and Smörgåsbord (buffét).

Vegetarianism is becoming more popular in Sweden and you can get vegetarian food in almost every restaurants. School food is often influenced by other cultures, although changed to suit a Swedish context.
LIFESTYLE AND FAMILY LIFE

Swedish society is based on equality and individualism. Swedes are proud of their nation and its accomplishments. “Lagom” which means “not too much, not too little…just right” is a word often used and heard in Sweden. Swedes also have a profound respect for integrity. Although we may appear to be reserved and shy at first, there is a good sense of humour, sharing and taking care of each other. Being a teenager in Sweden, you are generally treated as a young adult with the capacity to take responsibility and speak for yourself.

Family life is important but family structure is diverse and offers differing lifestyles and beliefs from one family to another. In an average family, both parents work. Housework tasks are usually divided amongst the family members without considering age or gender.

It is very unusual to have a “stay-at-home-mom”, unless the mother is on parental leave. Parental leave means that the parents have the right to stay at home with their newborn baby for 480 days, 60 of them are reserved for each of the parents. It is common to split the leave between the parents.

It is quite common to have “Fredagsmys” - Cozy Friday on Fridays. Then you usually hang out with your family and friends and have a nice time, maybe watching a movie and having some snacks. On Saturdays the younger children usually get “Lördagsgodis” - Saturday Candy.

During their free time many Swedish families like to spend time outdoors, in the forests, by the lake or sea or in the mountains. Of course it depends on where you live, in the city or on the countryside, but camping, picking berries and mushrooms, hiking, sailing, skiing, skating or just taking a nice walk is a part of many Swedes life.

Environment in general and recycling in particular is important to Swedes. Most people recycle glass, metal, carton and other materials at special recycling stations but also at their workplace, in schools and restaurants. This is something you will get used to during your year in Sweden.

Swedish host families, like AFS host families worldwide, are not paid. They open their homes to you in order to share their community and culture as well as to enrich their own family life. Every student must be willing and able to help at home. It means cleaning, helping to cook, doing your own laundry, etc.
MANNERS AND CUSTOMS
Some customs in Sweden are of course different to what you may be used to at home. Here are some which AFS-students coming to Sweden have mentioned.

Introduction and greetings
In a group setting, Swedes may not introduce people to you as much as in other countries. It is perfectly alright to introduce oneself. Swedes shake hands at the first meeting and say goodbye to people when leaving. Nowadays, it is getting more common to hug once you have met a few times, especially among young people and friends.

Tack
Swedes say “tack för maten” (thank you for the meal) after a meal and “tack för senast” (thank you for last time) when you see the person again after having spent some time together. In general Swedes say “thank you” more often than you may be accustomed to, as in Swedish there is no word for “please”.

Eating
Swedes eat with a fork and knife, using both during the meal. Eating manners are of great importance in Sweden, learn from observing. Dinner is between 5 - 7 pm.

Social life among youth
Among young people in Sweden it is common to both spend time in each other’s home and in public settings. It depends on the place where you are going to live. In small towns it is more common to stay at one’s house. Informal get-togethers with friends are more common than large parties which usually only happens at special occasions such as birthdays, graduation etc. To enjoy your stay as much as possible participate actively in the everyday life of your community! Don’t miss opportunities offered to you!

Paying
In Sweden, people normally pay separately, each buying their own tickets to the cinema or coffee at the café for example. It is not impolite for a female to offer to pay for her ticket and it is not impolite for a male not to pay for a female.

Alcohol
It is customary for adults to sometimes drink wine or beer together with food in Sweden, especially on weekends. By law you are required to be 20 years old to buy alcohol in Sweden, although you can consume it from 18. Alcohol can only be bought at Systembolaget, a store chain run by the government.

Religion
Sweden is a secular country with a minority of the population actively practising religion. It is your personal decision, how you will conduct your own religious life. It is a good idea to talk about this with your family at the very beginning of your stay.
THE UNWRITTEN RULES

Taking your shoes off
When you enter someone’s home, you will have to take your outdoor shoes off at the entrance. It is then normal to walk around in your socks. At formal events or dinners at someone’s house, it is common to bring indoor-shoes.

Keeping the distance
Swedish people normally stand about an arm’s length apart from each other when talking. Swedes are quite reserved when it comes to personal space and if you get too close, you will probably see that the Swede will start to back off. Do not feel offended by this, as it is just normal for us to keep some distance between each other.

Greeting someone
Greetings are generally made verbally or perhaps with a pat on the back or a hand shake. You only hug close friends or family. It is very rare that you would kiss someone’s cheek or touch the face of someone you meet in any way.

Standing in line
In Sweden standing in line is a serious business. Lines are respected and cutting in line is very much frowned upon. In some stores or official offices there is ”kölappar”. This means that you take a number from a dispenser and wait until that number is shown on the display. This way everyone can wait for their turn without actually having to stand in a line.

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT SWEDEN

Swedes are blonde, blue eyed and good looking people.
That’s probably the most common picture of Swedes among other nationalities. However there are, like in any other country, people with various hair and eye colors. Moreover, 20% of the Swedes have a background in another part of the world.

People in Sweden can speak perfect English. Therefore it is not necessary to learn Swedish when you live in Sweden.
It’s true that many people in Sweden can speak English very well and it can seem like you don’t need to learn Swedish, but to get to know and understand the Swedish culture you need to speak Swedish. Although it will be hard in the beginning to speak a different language, at the end of your stay here you’ll be able to understand and speak it very well. And even if your Swedish won’t be 100% perfect all Swedes will appreciate your effort!

Be aware of polar bears!!!
On the contrary to popular belief, we have no polar bears walking in the streets. In fact, there are no wild polar bears in Sweden at all. The wildest animal you’re likely to see here is a moose which is quite common.
DID YOU KNOW THAT...?

- The local hamburger chain Max was so popular in Luleå that McDonald’s had to close down.
- There are more than 300,000 people, having the surname “Karlsson”.
- The coldest hotel in the world – “Ice Hotel” – is located in the village Jukkasjärvi in northern Sweden. It is rebuilt of ice each year.
- The main industries in Sweden are information technology (telephone, radio, and computer equipment), communications, pharmaceuticals, high-quality steel, automobiles, electrical motors, printed and published goods (including software and popular music), home and office furnishing, and processed foods.
- Sweden has the highest percentages of women in the parliament in the world, 45%.
- Sweden has the second-largest proportion of people aged 80 or over among the EU member states, totaling 5.3 per cent of the population.
- The average age of university students in Sweden is the highest in Europe – about 25.5 years.
- Mårten Trotzigs Gränd which is a street located in the Old Town of Stockholm – Gamla stan is considered one of the narrowest in the world – a width not exceeding 90 cm.
- In Sweden you can pay your taxes by SMS.
- Instead of using your credit card, you can pay with Swish, an online payment from your phone. You just need to register the amount you want to transfer and the phone number of the person. It has been created for friends to make it easier when paying a bill at the restaurant for example, but now it’s also use in some shops.
- The computer mouse was invented in Sweden, as are the zipper (Gideon Sundbäck), the marine propeller (John Ericsson), the refrigerator (Carl Munters and Baltzar von Platen), the pace-maker (Rune Elmqvist), TetraPak (Erik Wallenberg), three point seatbelt (Nils Bohlin), the safety match (Gustaf Erik Pasch), dynamite (Alfred Nobel).
- As of 2015, Sweden had received 30 Noble prizes, including 5 peace prizes.
THE SWEDISH SCHOOL SYSTEM
Every child in Sweden has equal access to free education. The school system is regulated through the Swedish Education Act, which mandates nine years of school attendance for all children from the year they turn seven.

Schools open in the middle of August and continue until mid-June. There is a one-week holiday at the end of October, two-week holidays around Christmas, one-week in February or March and one-week at Easter.

Classes run from Monday to Friday. They usually start around 8 a.m. and end around 2pm in primary school and around 4 pm in high school. Lunch is provided by the school, either in a canteen at the school or in a restaurants nearby. If the school does not cover the cost of lunch for you, AFS will arrange for it directly with the school.
The majority of the AFS students are placed in the upper secondary school, gymnasiet, in grade 1-3. Depending on your age and the specific circumstances in your host city, you may be placed in 9th grade which is the last year of the compulsory education in Sweden. In gymnasiet, you will attend one of the theoretical or vocational, national 3-year programs. All of the programs offer a broad general education, while the vocational programs prepare students for a specific profession. There are also a number of specially designed and individual study programs. Many courses are structured as lectures with some classroom discussion and group work/assignments.

The atmosphere in Swedish schools, both in 9th grade and in gymnasiet, is fairly relaxed compared to most countries. You address your teachers by their first name. Swedish students have to take a lot of responsibility for their own studies. This means that they are not always told exactly what to do but are expected to ask questions to find out if unsure. Students are asked for their opinion, and expected to actively participate, analyse and criticize in class. A large part of their grades is based on the active involvement, and although you will not receive grades like the Swedish students, you are expected to actively participate in accordance with your ability. If you are not sure what you should do, ask!

The school will of course understand that you don’t speak Swedish from the start, but you are expected to do the best you can in school and to take an active part in work and activities. The schools also expect you to learn Swedish and one way to do that is through participation in school.

An important reason for schools accepting exchange students is that they expect you to share your perspective, experiences, or views as that increases the cultural knowledge and understanding. In addition, the school may ask you to give presentations on your country and culture or participate in language classes to teach your native tongue.

Remember: the Swedish school aims to foster independent individuals. Therefore, students have a lot of freedom AND responsibilities, and you will be in charge of your own learning process!

School attendance is compulsory! Your presence at school is reported daily. Frequent absence can cause being expelled and you will then be sent home!

**AFS ACTIVITIES**

**THE ORIENTATION CAMPS**
The orientation camps play a central role in the AFS Exchange Program as we as an organization believes that just living in and experiencing another country is not necessarily
going to help you better understand their culture. Or your own. Therefore we work with the orientation camps as an opportunity for you, and our volunteers, to get together and reflect on what you are experiencing. The camps organised on a national level are part of the exchange program and compulsory for all AFSers. Your travel expenses will be paid by AFS. All camps are organized by AFS staff and volunteers. They are a great opportunity for participants to meet each other (for a weekend or for a few days), to talk about both expectations for the years, future and past experiences. The main aim is to help you better understand your own intercultural learning experience. What are the things you like, understand and enjoy? What is it that you have difficulties with or dislike? And why is that?

Arrival Camp
When you arrive in Sweden you will be met at the airport by volunteers from AFS. You will then travel to the Arrival Camp which lasts for 2-3 days. The main purpose of the camp is to give an introduction to Swedish culture, customs and language; AFS expectations on you and your expectations for the year as well as a chance to meet the other AFS students from all over the world. On the whole, the stay at the camp is informal, very busy and a lot of fun!

Depending on where in Sweden you’ll live, your host family will either pick you up at the camp or at the train station in your host community. All the travelling will be arranged by AFS so you don’t have to worry about that.

We advise you to change about 500 SEK before your arrival in Sweden, in case you need to buy something during the first few days or on the train journey to your host family. You will not have time to change money upon arrival!

Orientation during the program
At the end of January, AFS organizes regional Mid-Stay orientations during 3 days (Friday - Sunday). The aim of the Mid-Stay Orientation is, apart from getting a chance to meet again and have fun together, to discuss and reflect on how your experience is so far. What are the challenges and the fun things? And what do you want to achieve during the second half of your exchange year?

End of Stay Camp
You will also attend an “End-of-Stay orientation” just before you leave. The End-of-Stay is about looking back at your exchange experience and sharing memories with other AFSers. It is also about thinking of the future and preparing you for your arrival home.
VOLUNTEERS AND LOCAL SUPPORT

Volunteers are the core and foundation of AFS. Without volunteers being engaged for youth exchanges as a means for a better world, AFS would not exist. These volunteers include former AFS participants and their families, former host families, contact persons, etc. The volunteers are energized by the passion, interest and appreciation for what they have learned and experienced.

AFS Sweden is a non-profit member based association. Once a year, members and volunteers gather for a General Assembly. There is a small office in Stockholm with five full-time staff and 2-4 part time during different times of the year. The volunteers are organized in chapters (nätverk) or taking on individual roles or missions. There are currently 5 active chapters in Sweden covering most of the southern part of the country. In the north, individual volunteers help out as needed.

The local chapters generally organize 2-4 events or activities per semester for the exchange students and their host families. Sometimes there are also informal get-togethers. The number and type of activities varies between local chapters but you are always encouraged to come with ideas and suggestions for what you would like to do.
Your Contact Person
A volunteer will be your and your host family’s local support /contact person (“kontaktperson”). He/she will help you with both practical issues and issues you wish to discuss, questions you might not know how to ask your host family, etc.

Your contact person is your closest AFS contact and he/she should be the first person you turn to if you have any issues to discuss. It is good to have a contact with him/her within the first month so you get to know each other. If he/she doesn’t contact you during the first weeks, it might be because the person wants to give you and your host family space. Don’t hesitate to contact him/her!

AFS recommends a contact between you and your contact person at least once a month. He/she should also talk to your host family regularly. It can be a phone call or a personal meeting. You can discuss how you feel in your host family, about learning Swedish, getting to know people in school, adapting to school work in Sweden, etc. Your local contact person should document your contacts and your questions when they need attention. This standard has been developed in AFS in order to help you so that you and your host family can solve any difficulties or uncertainties as soon as possible in order to avoid a potential conflict situation.

You should get the name of your contact person at the Arrival Camp or within two weeks of arrival. Don’t hesitate to contact him/her yourself!

YOUR HOST FAMILY
When you meet your host family you will already know a bit about them. You will have seen their AFS family profile, but most Swedes find it hard to describe themselves on paper. If your placement has been made early, you might have exchanged some e-mails with the family.

Welcome families – your host families for the first 2, 5 months
Welcome families are very common in Sweden. About 25% of you will be living with a welcome family during the first 2, 5 months. Welcome families want you to be part of their family as much as a permanent family but for different reasons, they might not have the possibility to host you for your entire stay. AFS in your country will inform you about the type of host family you get together with your general host family information. If you are not sure please contact AFS!

After your stay with your welcome family, you will move to a permanent host family. Most of the time, the next family lives in the same chapter but sometimes you will move to a new chapter. We will be in close contact with you and your welcome host family to keep you informed on your next family.
Becoming part of a new family
The first important step you will have to take is that of becoming a member of your family. During the first days it can happen that nothing will be demanded of you and you will be treated more like a guest. If this happens, try offer to help with housework, etc. We have asked your family to tell you about special “house rules”, which they may want you to follow such as the time you should be at home, making your own bed, helping with dishes, etc. We think you will appreciate knowing this from the beginning rather than finding out later.

When you arrive at your family’s home there are many expectations from both sides, which are good to be talked about openly. To avoid misunderstandings and problems, ask your host family about things which may be done differently at your home. Do it as soon as possible! Try to agree on a solution of these differences.

Remember: communication is your most important tool as an exchange student in a host family.

The following are some questions which may help you:

Generalities:
- What should I call you? Mamma/ pappa, your first names?
- What are my daily tasks at home/in or around the house?
- What things can I use around the house? (Microwave, computer, piano, TV, stereo, wifi, etc.)
- Can I personalize my room by moving the furniture, putting up pictures, etc.?
- What types of articles/activities will I be expected to pay for? What will you pay for?

Meal:
- Do you eat certain meals together?
- What is the meal time?
- Can I take food myself from the fridge?

Hygiene:
- Who is washing clothes?
- Am I expected to help with something (folding, sorting, ironing…)?
- Where can I leave my bathroom toiletries/towel?
- When can I shower or bathe?
- How often can I shower?
- How long showers can I take?

Friends:
- Can I go out with my friends at night during the week or only on weekends?
- How will I normally get home from social activities with friends?
- When would you like me to return home?
- Can I invite friends over?
School:
- How do I get to school?
- When am I expected to leave on schooldays?

Family habits:
- When does the family wake up on weekends?
- Does your family share certain activities, i.e. attend ball games, ski, go to concerts, take trips/vacations, etc.?
- Do you have any likes or dislikes? (Chewing gum, playing loud music, punctuality, tidiness, etc.)
- What else would you like to discuss?

IN Volvement in AFS
Be prepared to give some presentations about your country and about being an exchange student during your year in Sweden. Also be prepared to help out in communicating AFS and our purpose of creating a greater cultural understanding in different ways locally and during AFS events. This is usually a lot of fun. Some of you might also be interviewed by local newspapers or a local radio station.

Don’t forget to bring pictures of your home, your family and friends, school, activities you do, to be able to present your country. You can take brochures, music from your home country, traditional costumes, recipes of traditional food etc. It is very likely that you will need some of this at some point during the year.

What Does AFS Expect From You?
- An open, honest and positive attitude
- Willingness to share your culture with the host family and community
- A good ambassador of your home country
- Flexibility and willingness to experience intercultural learning
- Active attitude in the family, school and host community
- Respect for the culture of the host country and willingness to accept it
- An open and communicative attitude towards the family, the liaison and AFS in case of problems.

AFS’ expectations from the natural parents
- Support during the year
- Willingness to consider both sides of a story without rushing to any conclusions
- Give the host family enough room to work on their relationship with you
- Give you enough room to adapt to the new situation, i.e. not to phone you all the time
- Realize that this is the son’s/daughter’s time abroad and that visits are not always recommended and generally not allowed
- Give the son/daughter the chance to make mistakes and learn from them.
AFS' Expectations from the Host Family

• To accept the student as a member of the family
• To support the student during his/her stay and to help him/her with possible (language) problems
• To come to concrete agreements together with the student
• To talk to the student if something is bothering them
• To be open and honest
• To be flexible and give the student space to make mistakes and learn from them.

LEARN SWEDISH

It is good to start learning Swedish as fast as possible. Knowledge of the language helps you to understand the culture much better and assimilate. You will also need the language for active participation in the school work.

AFS Sweden gives out the online language course, Rosetta stone, in order for you to start learning Swedish before your arrival. This course will be your main tool to get a head start. We therefore ask you to finish level one before arrival. Once here in Sweden you can and should work with level two and three to finish them before Mid-stay orientation in January.

There are a few useful links that could help you learn Swedish:

• http://www.freelang.net/online/swedish.php - On-line dictionary
• www.babbel.com – easy exercises focused on useful phrases for beginners
• http://ielanguages.com/swedish.html - Grammar, vocabulary, basic phrases
• www.kreativpedagogik.se - more useful links about Sweden and Swedish language
SAFETY TIPS

IN OR AROUND THE HOME
In general, the family is not likely to know what you are worried or concerned about, so you need to inform them.

Some helpful questions that you can ask your host family when it comes to safety are:

- Do you always lock your doors and windows?
- Will I get my own key to the house?
- Do you have a first aid kit?
- Do you have a fire extinguisher?
- What should I do in case of emergency?
- How should I answer the telephone?
- Where do you keep emergency telephone numbers?
- What should I do if I am alone and a stranger is at the door?
- Are there any appliances that could cause a problem and that I should be aware of?

Let your host parents know whenever you are insecure or frightened. Inform your host family when you are going out, where you are going and leave a telephone number, if possible, where they can reach you. Your host family knows about the local community and is best prepared to give you advice about places that would be better for you to avoid and how to best get around. You should take their advice seriously and follow their recommendations.

Do not bring large amounts of cash! If you do have a larger amount of cash or other valuables, you have to talk to your host family about how to best store it.

**Sweden is known as a safe country** but like any other country, you need to be careful. There may be some places where you should avoid going, you should dress appropriately, always be careful about your belongings (cameras, bags, mobile, computer, etc.). In general, you should avoid being out alone late at night. If you are walking, make sure that the streets are well lit and used by local people. Avoid walking on a road or a street alone. Being in crowded areas you need to take care of your valuables because of pick pocketing.

In Sweden the **voltage is 220V.**

**EMERGENCIES**
In case of emergency, call your host family, the local contact person or the AFS-office.

**Emergency - Police, Fire station, Ambulance call:**

112

No-charge services
If you need to go to the doctor make sure to bring a copy of “The report on medical expenses” (sjukvårdsrapport). Once in Sweden, you will be given this form, your host family will have additional copies. They must be signed by the doctor. The report should be sent to the AFS office with the bill. Often the doctor/hospital can send the report and the bill directly to the office but they still need to fill in the forms.

European citizens must also bring the “European Insurance Card” every time they visit a doctor/hospital in order to get the medical care. Please note that dental care is NOT covered by the AFS insurance if not caused by accident.

There is a local health center, called vårdcentral, that you contact if you are sick, or you can turn to the emergency room, called akutmottagning at the closest hospital. Your host family will help you to get the information about how to contact them.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT SWEDEN

If you want to know more about Sweden, we suggest that you visit the following web pages:

- The Swedish school system  
  http://skolnet.skolverket.se/polopoly/utbsys-eng/
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
  http://www.government.se/government-of-sweden/ministry-for-foreign-affairs/
- The Swedish Institute  
  http://eng.si.se/
- National Atlas of Sweden  
  http://www.sna.se/e_index.html
- A bit about everything  
  http://www.smorgasbord.se/
- Statistics Sweden  
  http://www.scb.se/en/
- Swedish Tourist Board  
  http://www.visitsweden.com/sweden/
- The official gateway to Sweden  
  http://www.sweden.se
A WARM WELCOME TO SWEDEN…
AFS Volunteers and staff look forward to getting to know you and be part of your exchange experience!

A canola field in Skåne