

SIMPLE SCANDI STYLE

The second city in any country is never quite as touristy as its capital. So that's one prime reason to visit Gothenburg rather than Stockholm. Winter is low season in Sweden; another good reason to visit in the next few months. Without the hordes following a flag-carrying guide, as in July and August, you'll get a more authentic taste of this stately but friendly student-packed west-coast port city.

Sure, it's snowy and chilly from November to March. Temperatures drop to between 2°C and 4°C in December and January, although they rarely fall much below freezing. But as the Swedes say, there's no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothes, so boots and a cosy puffer jacket take care of the cold, as do the sheepskins, blankets and heaters supplied alongside outdoor tables at the numerous cafes where Swedes take their daily ritual of fika – coffee and cake. Indoors, the Scandinavian obsession with comfort and cosiness coupled with practicality goes into overdrive in winter. Candles

burn all day, cushions and throws turn every seat and sofa into a comforting cocoon, the heating is excellent and the duvets billowy.

And apart from exploring some excellent museums; eating the freshest of fish caught in the flavour-improving icy local waters at the unmissable Fiskekrogen restaurant; walking through the big city-centre Slotsskogen park and zoo, bleakly moody on a winter's day; ice-skating when the lakes outside the city freeze (the 17 bus goes to Harlanda Tjarn); or visiting the opera or a concert; the prime reason to book a trip to Gothenburg is, of course, the chance to shop for that famous pared-back, neutral-palette Scandinavian style, at source.

Worldwide, Sweden has had a profound influence on how people live and look. This is the country that launched the flat-pack furniture and affordable-for-all homewares behemoth Ikea. More recently, Sweden's clothing companies have proved equally alluring. These range from the massive H&M and its offshoots such as Monki, Cheap Monday, & Other Stories and Cos, to cult

Shop for popular Scandi brands such as Cos, right



It's low season in Gothenburg, which means you'll have more room to browse for those pared-back design and fashion buys, writes **Adriaane Pielou**

jeans favourites Acne and Nudie, high-end fashion companies such as Filippa K and J Lindeberg, Vagabond shoes and sportswear giants Peak Performance.

The pleasure of browsing their collections in Gothenburg is that for the most part, you're shopping in little old cobbled streets or broad 19th-century boulevards. There are few malls, and small independent shops are the rule rather than the exception.

Gothenburg has a population of only around half a million and although, as the largest port in Scandinavia, the Gothia riverbanks are lined with cranes and container depots and the like, it's relatively compact. You only need to jump on a tram to get from one shopping area to another. That these are clean, fast and frequent is another one of the joys of exploring. The city's impressive public transport dates back to the 1960s, when a move to rid the city centre of road-clogging private cars and to pull down old residential buildings and put up bright new substitutes was first implemented.

Gothenburg became a showpiece worldwide for cutting-edge urban

design. The bulk of the population is housed in suburban apartment block complexes with integrated playgrounds, sports facilities, clinics and schools, breathing cleaner air and with plenty of open space around them for recreation, yet with easy access to the city for jobs and entertainment.

Buy a travel pass before you've left the airport – the newsagents sell them – and you will never need to take a taxi in this city. A three-day pass costs 198 Swedish kronas (Dh74).

CENTRAL AREA

Conveniently, some of the best interiors and fashion shops lie in the grid of 18th- and 19th-century streets a few minutes' walk south of Central Station and the city's main square that this transport hub opens onto, Drottningtorget. From Gronsakstoget to Kungssportsplatsen, these narrow streets lined with three-story buildings offer much to browse. Magasinsgatan, which means shop street, is the best. It's home to a large loft-like branch of the dreamy, locally famous Da Matteo coffee shop; Grandpa, where men and women ►

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► alike can get the Scandi look and stock up on backpacks and beanies; and the truly wonderful interiors store Artilleriet (think botanical posters, lanterns and Scandi tableware), as well as Floramor & Krukatös and Norrgavel. Södra Larmgatan street, home of a good mix of Scandi labels at Whyre and Weekday, and Vallgatan street, home of Nudie Jeans, are dotted with tempting little shops selling Swedish clothing brands such as 1440 and Rodebjer. Built in the late 19th century, originally as a market hall, the Victoriapassagen that runs between these two streets is an atmospheric setting for the homeware shop Granit and the stationery heaven that is Rum for Paper.

On the other side of the canal, this grid of streets runs off into the historical heart of the city. Kronhuset is a cobbled courtyard lit by old-fashioned gas street lamps, surrounding a tall red-brick 17th-century former armoury, now used as a concert hall for the Göteborg Wind Orchestra. The little stores lining the courtyard include an antiques store, where a gilt-framed print of 19th-century young ladies at a ball at Dh56 might lie beside a 1930s doll for Dh75.

A stop at the candlelit (of course) Cafe Kronhuset is mandatory, for coffee (Dh16) and a delectable cake or two – marzipan, chocolate, coconut and cream abound. After that, you might want to drop into the Stefan Salomonsson jewellers next door, which runs silverware jewellery-making classes daily. A three-hour drop-in class open to all costs Dh281.

AVEYN

This is the smartest shopping street in the city, known generally as just The Avenue. This broad tree-lined boulevard runs up to the city's best art museum, the Konstmuseum (and its brasserie Mr P), and is lined with restaurants and smart stores – no Guccis or Louis Vuittons, but shops such as the leading Scandinavian menswear designer Oscar Jacobson, and multibrand menswear stockists including Holmens and John Henric. For womenswear, there's Oles Döttrar, which stocks Scandinavian designers such as Filippa K, Malene Birger, Stine Goya etc. For interiors, just off Aveyn on Sodra Vagen, there's the terrific Alvhem, with its mix of Scandinavian and French designs.

HAGA AND LINNE

Site of a regular farmers market and, from the end of November, a Christmas market, the cobbled streets of Haga are lined with 70-odd shops and cafes set up in two-and three-storey, stone-based,



wood-built old buildings dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries.

In the 1960s, when a huge programme of pull-down-the-old-and-build-new was being implemented in Gothenburg, this atmospheric old working-class area was also scheduled for demolition. Outraged local residents put up a fight, plans were promptly dropped and in the 1980s, a renovation programme got underway. Today, the neighbourhood is one of the most enjoyable and busiest shopping areas in the city.

The antique shops here provide especially fertile browsing. Finds might include a silver-plated 19th-century coffee pot for Dh40, 1930s matchboxes for Dh4, or antique white linen tablecloths for Dh60 at Fafangen Antik on the main road, Haga Nygata. A

block away, excellent coffee and cakes are not the only reason to stop at Jacobs' Cafe. There's also the bold resident cat, who swishes his way along the benches outside, all equipped with sheepskins and blankets.

A dozen interiors shops sell that signature neutral palette – with a mix of simplicity and enticing textiles. Haga Interior, Little Things, Sol & Var and Tell me More are especially recommended. Haga Tratoffelfabrik sells the traditional wooden clogs that have become fashionable again. Counterintuitively, they're unbelievably comfortable and so easy to just slip on and walk around in, that they might just become favoured travel shoes.

South of Haga, the grander 19th-century buildings of Linne, on



and around the main boulevard, Linnegatan, lack Haga's cosiness but have a similarly engaging mix of small chains, independent shops and alluring little cafes.

MUSEUM SHOPS

The four key museums all have good shops. They're the Konstmuseum, with Van Gogh, Picassos, a Rembrandt and a floor of 19th-century Nordic painters such as Carl Larsson; the Rohsska Museum of Design & Craft; the Stadsmuseet or City Museum, where engrossing galleries about the development of the city include an excavated 10th-century Viking ship; and the Varldskulturmuseet or World Culture museum. The latter two have the best shops, with an imaginative mix

of souvenirs on offer – ranging from glass jugs and candlesticks to paper-doll sets for children.

MALLS AND DEPARTMENT STORES

If it snows or rains and you need to find shelter, there's a branch of the NK department store; the 200-shop Nordstan mall opposite Central Station, where a homeware section at H&M sells irresistible knick-knacks such as bear-head tea-light holders for Dh26; the 20-store 19th-century Arkaden; and Antikhallarna, an elegant 19th-century building whose ground floor is now lined with kiosks run by antique sellers. For lunch, the Saluhallen foodhall in Kungssportsplatsen, built in 1889, features dozens of stalls selling handmade chocolates, cheeses,

the smart shopper



cakes and fresh fish, and plenty of opportunities to eat simply but deliciously for around Dh38.

WHERE TO STAY

The Drottningtorget square by Central Station is flanked by the 19th-century Hotel Eggers, the Clarion Hotel Post, in the former post office, and a Radisson Blu, and makes a convenient place to stay. Each offers cleanliness, functionality – and, in winter, candlelight even at breakfast, which feels delightful. Elsewhere, Elite Plaza, in the former headquarters of an insurance company, has emerged elegantly from a recent refurb. And the fashion crowd likes Hotel Flora, a boutique hotel and workspace. Rates at all these start at about Dh527 to Dh770. ■

Clockwise from main, the shop at Rohsska Museum of Design & Craft offers a selection of apparel and home furnishings; visit the De Matteo cafe for a quick bite; interiors store Artilleriet; the Clarion Hotel Post is a centrally located place to stay