

# Town & Country TRAVEL

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# Stocking Up in Stockholm

This city devoted to beauty is a wonderful place to find the chicest, sleekest new designs.

by Raphael Kadushin

**Y**ou can tell a lot about a city from its local heroes. In Paris they are the Michelin-starred chefs. In Milan no one gets a reservation at Nobu faster than Donatella. Ask Stockholmers whom they most admire, though, and you probably won't recognize the names. Forget Ingmar Bergman. Thomas Sandell and Mats Theselius are the city's current cultural standard-bearers.

Mats who? Theselius and Sandell are top young Swedish architects and furniture designers, a distinction that means everything in a capital devoted to the sheer beauty and innate value of domestic design. This is a city where subway stations double as art galleries. You may not come to Sweden for the clothes (which are tastefully but generically minimalist), but if you want the perfect final accent for a loft or a country house, you'll find it here. Even better, a shopping spree provides a focused tour of the city, and most shop owners can easily ship your purchases back to the States for you. (Shipping costs range from about \$60, for a ceramic vase, to \$500, for an armchair.)

## Östermalm: Shopping Central

Composed of a string of islands, Stockholm is really an urban archipelago. The best place to start island-hopping is the district of Östermalm, home to opulent 19th-century hotels, grand theaters and seductive stores. The neighborhood's real landmark, however, is **Modernity** (6 Sibyllegatan; 011-46-8-20-80-25; [www.modernity.se](http://www.modernity.se)), a furniture boutique devoted to the Scandinavian classics that defined mid-20th-century modernity.

"Sweden didn't have to deal with any wars or revolutions in the past two centuries," owner Andrew Duncanson explains. "So, unlike in other countries, production continued, the nation could develop its own aesthetics undisturbed, and its design stayed pure. The subdued lines you see in Swedish decor are really an echo of Swedish society, with its stress on social equality, modesty



and the philosophy that no one individual or design should be too obvious or too loud."

That's a heavy metaphysical weight for a coffee table to bear, but Duncanson's finds—all vintage, though some styles are still in production—stand up under the load. A Lamino lounge chair, a fluid swoop of blond wood, conveys a purely Swedish democratic ease; Duncanson's fifties original, designed by Yngve Ekström, goes for \$2,015. Just as sleek are an Arne Jacobsen drop chair (\$22,240)—a big teardrop of cognac-colored leather crowning skinny copper legs—and a collection of mid-20th-century Swedish ceramics, including a round green-glazed vase (\$4,725) designed by Berndt Friberg in the sixties.

At **Asplund** (31 Sibyllegatan; 011-46-8-662-52-84; [asplund.org](http://asplund.org)), the 21st-century housewares display the same clean forms, executed in natural materials. "We always take something away when we create a piece," designer Eero Koivisto says. "At a time when so much is going on in the world, we need calm surroundings." Koivisto is one-third of a trio of leading Swedish

Owner Andrew Duncanson in his gallery-like boutique, Modernity.

## The Cultivated Shopper



Asplund's wares, above; a Josef Frank chair at Svenskt Tenn, right.

designers who make up the firm Claesson, Koivisto & Rune, which creates everything from blankets to buildings, as well as much of Asplund's furniture

collection. Their pieces are abstract yet look comfortable in a smart living room—especially the Totone dhurrie carpet (from \$220 to \$890), which combines gray and black color blocks. Similarly tempting items pop up at the **Pukeberg Stockholm shop** (9 Sibyllegatan; 011-46-8-545-850-02), where the glass vases and apothecary jars (\$10 to \$650) come in neon colors.

### An Antiques Hunt Along the Harbor Front

Although current streamlined designs are firmly grounded in the mid-20th century, their roots reach further back, to the old, rustic Sweden where farms and country houses exhibited the airy blond-on-blond interiors that have become a global standard. This continuity means you can seamlessly mix antiques with post-modern pieces. The best place to find both is the series of antiques shops that edge the Östermalm harbor. The various 18th-century items at **Polstjernen Antiques** (5 Arsenalsgatan; 011-46-8-611-39-73) embody the familiar Swedish devotion to restraint. Particularly elegant are a circa 1780 birch chest inlaid with flower blossoms (\$72,555) and a duo of stately candelabra (\$31,275).

Across the street at **Bukowskis Auction House** (4 Arsenalsgatan; 011-46-8-614-08-00; [www.bukowskis.se](http://www.bukowskis.se)), Stockholm's answer to Sotheby's, shoppers browse among an array of mostly 18th- and 19th-century articles about to go up for auction. (The house also holds sales of modern works.) On a recent visit, most striking were a pair of Empire ormolu candlesticks (\$1,670 for the two), two deep blue Göteborg jars (\$1,390 for the set) and a vivid painting of a Norwegian girl standing beside a fjord (\$4,170).

Two blocks down, in the gift shop of the **National Museum** (Södra Blasieholmshamnen; 011-46-8-519-543-00; [nationalmuseum.se](http://nationalmuseum.se)),

you can scan the fool-the-experts collection produced jointly by the museum and the manufacturer MOVE Möbler & Bohag—serious reproductions of 18th-century chairs, cupboards and beds. Neighboring **Svenskt Tenn** (5 Strandvägen; 011-46-8-670-16-00; [www.svenskttenn.se](http://www.svenskttenn.se)) sells exquisite furniture and table linens.

### Local Color

The design legacy gets a lot funkier over the bridge on Gamla Stan, Stockholm's medieval island. The old town's cobbled backstreets and multihued town houses form a fitting setting for the single-themed mom-and-pop shops, which could pass for Aunt Inge's exploding attic. Among the best are **Trångsundsboden Antiques** (10 Trångsund; 011-46-8-20-05-18), where the prewar copies of gilded wall clocks include a dramatic timepiece framed by a sailing ship and sea monsters (\$650), and **C. E. Thomas** (2 Köpmantorget; 011-46-8-10-73-01), which carries Audubonesque avian prints (\$10 to \$15) and John Gould bird prints (\$500).

For a sustained blast of color, hike across one more bridge, to Södermalm, a gentrified former working-class district similar to New York's SoHo. The crowds here are artier, and so are



the new-generation shops, which show off the gathering design response to all those centuries of Scandinavian austerity. The exuberant pieces at **Carneruds** (21 Götgatan; 011-46-8-556-969-40) may be the best gauge of updated Swedish style. Lollipop-colored couches line the walls, bracketing a skinny canary yellow cupboard designed by Theselius (\$3,300). Eva Jobs canvas bags (\$110) have sunny flower blossoms printed on them. But even Stockholm's attempts at kitsch and a more manic kind of cool manage, in the end, to look resolutely tasteful. ✕

### MORE TIPS ON STOCKHOLM

Telephone and fax numbers listed below should be preceded by 011-46-8 when dialed from the United States.

**DINING** The best places for lunch in Östermalm are the imperial court at Swedish department store **NK** (18-20 Hamnagatan; 762-80-00) and **Sturehof** café (2 Stureplan; 440-57-30), where the Baltic seafood is sushi grade. For dinner try the six-course tapas feast at **Bon Lloc** (111 Regeringsgatan; 660-60-60).

**LODGING** The newly opened **Rival Hotel**, co-owned by original ABBA member Benny Andersson, is a tranquil retreat overlooking a leafy square in Södermalm. Amenities are state-of-the-art, and the svelte Nordic furniture is designed by the best young maestros, including Theselius. This is the kind of decor you'll go home to if you buy right in Stockholm. Double rooms from \$355 to \$400; suites \$515 and up. 3 Mariatorget; 545-789-00; fax: 545-789-24; [www.rival.se](http://www.rival.se). —R.K.