

Värdskap Stockholm

Why does hospitality matter?

International visitors regard Stockholm as one of the world’s best cities for hospitality. In a survey comparing Stockholm to ten other European cities, Stockholm ranked highest for seven of the nine hospitality aspects that were considered. But why is it so important for Stockholm to be a good host city and how well does our hospitality chain stand up to the competition?

Guests who keep coming back

Each visitor to Stockholm is unique and each one has their own expectations. For some, great food is most important. For others, it’s the accommodations and having a range of fun and exciting things to do. Or, they could just be wanting a break from it all, and a bit of peace and quiet. What then are the most important things that make the experience good for visitors? Here is the Top 5 list of what visitors to European cities value the most, according to a 2019 survey by TCI Research:

1. Hospitality of local inhabitants
2. Safety feeling
3. Accommodation experience
4. Food experience
5. Landscape, Architecture

A large percentage of the visitors to Stockholm are actually from Sweden. In a normal year, they account for around 2/3 of the city’s visitors. And so, what do Swedes value most when choosing a destination? Here is the Top 5 list, based on the survey on travel within Sweden, “Resa i Sverige 2022”:

1. The city is perceived as safe and secure
2. The city has a good atmosphere
3. The People in the city are friendly
4. A good selection of food and drinks
5. Walking in the city is easy and pleasurable

Hospitality, therefore matters a lot if visitors are to leave feeling satisfied. And that applies to both international visitors and visitors from elsewhere in Sweden. When a destination excels in hospitality there is a higher chance that visitors will stay longer and come back again sometime in the future. We also know that people tend to share their impressions from the experience. Not only do they talk about it with friends and family, but also post about it in social media. If we succeed at

being a good host, we can impact the influx of new and returning guests to Sweden.

Hospitality – Value for the money

Thoughtful hospitality doesn’t necessarily need to cost more. But it does add meaning and value to the experience for both the guest and the host. The quality of hospitality can also be measured: A survey by TCI Research at the end of 2019 revealed that even though Stockholm is perceived as an expensive city, visitors nevertheless felt that they got good value for the money. For most items, Stockholm held up well against the competition when compared to other cities worldwide. One of the main contributing factors is high calibre hospitality.

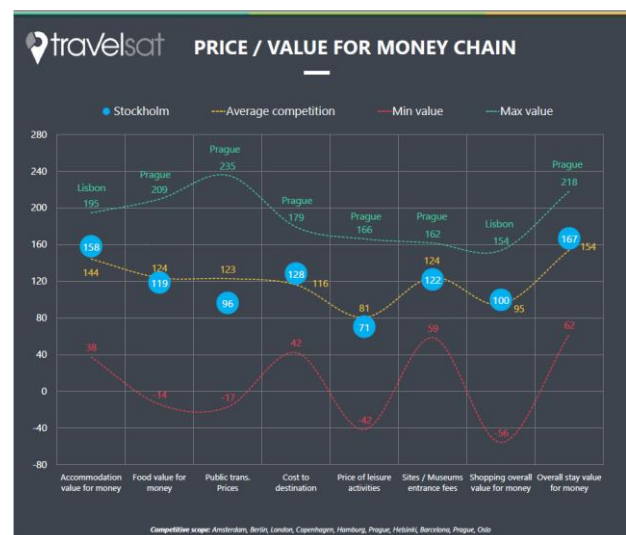


Chart 1: On the price/value money chain, Stockholm (blue dot) is on par with the average (yellow line) for most items. TCI Research, TRAVELSAT Competitive Index, Dec 2019

The personal hospitality chain in Stockholm

The hospitality industry is broad, with many types of businesses involved. It includes fine dining, local transport and everything in between that comprises the full offering of Stockholm as a destination. Guests have high expectations when it comes to certain experiences during their visit, while other things simply need to work. It's sometimes easy for us who work in the hospitality industry to forget that we are part of a larger series of experiences, which, overall, will (hopefully) exceed the guest's expectations. So, if we all work as one large team, helping our guests and encouraging them to explore more of Stockholm, we can contribute in create amazing overall experiences for them. It might even encourage them to extend their stay, return sometime in the future and promote the city when sharing their impressions with others. How well does Stockholm succeeded with this difficult task?

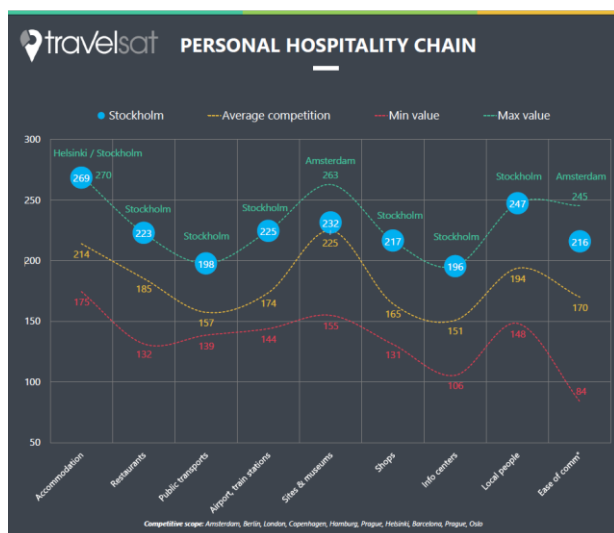


Chart 2: In a comparison with 10 European cities, Stockholm (blue dot) ranked the highest, offering best value (green line) for 7 of the 9 hospitality aspects. TCI Research, TRAVELSAT Competitive Index, Dec 2019

Based on the TCI Research survey, we're doing quite a good job! Compared to ten other European cities, Stockholm ranked highest for seven of the nine hospitality aspects that were considered. Here's what TCI Research had to say about Stockholm in its report:

"Stockholm undoubtedly delivers the highest standard in terms of personal interaction, at all steps of the visit."

It's an outstanding result that we should certainly be proud of – and work hard to maintain!

Let's then take a look to see if our valued Swedish guests feel the same. Compared to other cities in Sweden, people from elsewhere in the country who visited Stockholm ranked the city slightly below average for its "friendliness". The chart below shows that Stockholm's average was 3.52 on a scale of 1 to

5 when it came to friendliness. The average for all cities covered in the survey was 3.89 (3,77 for the big cities).

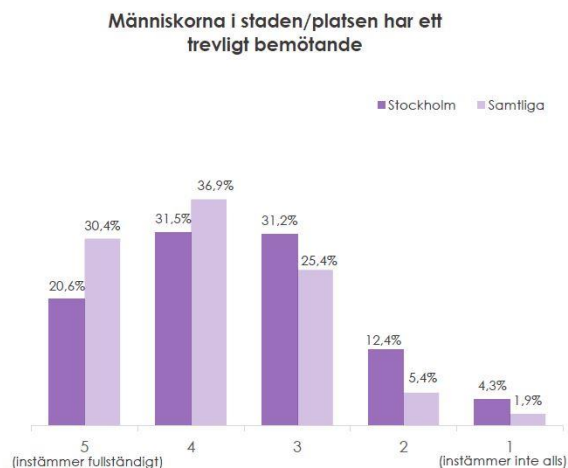


Chart 3: Based on the survey on travel within Sweden, "Resa i Sverige 2022". (SNDMO)

This is an area where we definitely could improve! Together with your colleagues, take a minute to reflect on how expectations might differ between international guests and those visiting the city from elsewhere in Sweden. What can we do to meet or exceed these expectations?

Let us look at a survey conducted by Visit Stockholm during the summer of 2022 as further examination. This survey focuses primarily on private citizens.



Chart 4: Visitor's experience of Stockholm. Sweco/Visit Stockholm 2022

Treatment by both residents and service personnel received good grades between the scale's two highest values. Here, too, international visitors were slightly more satisfied. In

In addition to this, five further aspects of hospitality were investigated. These connect to the host in different ways. Please reflect for a moment on how you can influence these parameters in your business.

Visitor service

One important way of raising the quality of hospitality is for those working in the industry to be well-informed about Stockholm so that they can recommend and encourage guests to visit other establishments within the city. For this, it's important to know how visitors prefer to get such information both prior to, and during, their stay. Visit Stockholm investigated this in the survey "Framtidens besökservice" (KPMG, 2019). Here are the five areas that visitors valued the most:

1. Individually-tailored advice

In order to be able to give guests *relevant information* we need to be interested in them and ask questions. How they answer helps us understand them and their needs. Here are some examples:

"Is this your first visit to Stockholm? Is it your first visit to Sweden?"

"How many days have you been in Stockholm so far? How long are you planning to stay?"

Try to put yourself in the guest's shoes. Are they exhausted after a long journey? Or are they excited to get out and explore right away? Adapt your suggestions and behaviour to where your guest is in their travel cycle.

2. Being able to validate the information

The amount of information that visitors need to process is enormous. The person who books the trip or experience needs to keep track of many things. Typically, guests will want to check and double check to make sure that they have the correct information. It might feel time-consuming if you are on the receiving end of that, perhaps getting asked the same thing more than once. It's an important function however, which creates a sense of control for the guest. It might also sometimes be the case that information is only available in Swedish. When that happens, an international guest might want to double-check their information with you, since you work in Stockholm and knows the language. Our best tip is to regard "repeat questions" as an opportunity for offering the guest something more that they might not have thought of.

3. Getting an authentic experience

An authentic experience is one that feels more meaningful and valuable. Visitors want to experience the "real Stockholm", which is the same experience that someone who lives here would get. The personal tips that you offer are therefore highly valued. This might be one of very few occasions when the guest you are speaking with is able to travel and experience a new city and its people. So why not offer some personal tips?

"I usually walk this route myself. It is so beautiful!" "If you're tired after your visit to the Old Town, I suggest that you stop for coffee, which we call fika here in Sweden, at Strömparterren. It is a lovely quiet place down by the water."



Chart 5: Visitor Service model, Visit Stockholm

4. Getting a “seamless” experience in all channels

Visitors want to be able to access information as simply and easily as possible. It's therefore a good idea to give your guests information through multiple channels, and in ways that are easy for them to access using their mobile phone. That way, they can easily access the information when they need it.

5. Easily accessible and farsighted support

A guest will feel like they've been well taken care of when we offer support that is easily accessible and farsighted. Can we make things easier for the guest, by anticipating what difficulties they might encounter, or other possibilities? Can we then be proactive with suggestions?

“They are doing some maintenance work at these stations, so it will be quicker if you get off earlier and take the bus the rest of the way.”

“This museum will be less crowded when the cruise ships have departed, so you might want to save your visit until tomorrow and do this instead?”

It's also great if we can recommend others in hospitality chain and refer the guest to them.

“On the way back, I suggest that you visit this place. They have information and staff there who can answer any questions you might have.”

“If you want to find a smooth itinerary, I suggest that you use this app. I use it myself”

Typically, we are able to provide information that the guests didn't even realize they wanted. If the visitor service and support that we offer, both personally and digitally, does that and meets these “requirements”, there is a good chance that we will exceed the guest's expectations. Consider whether the information that you and your colleagues provide does that. If so, how?

Sustainable destination

If we consider sustainably, we can hopefully ensure the well-being of both residents and visitors. It also helps them both to be participants in the creation of Stockholm as a destination. We will offer better hospitality if, for example, we can get guests to spread out over a wider geographic area and influence the times when they are travelling to a particular destination, so that it doesn't cause traffic congestion and keeps crowding to a minimum. Doing so benefits the guest as well as the next host that they will visit in the personal hospitality chain. We can also explain how things are done in Stockholm and what the behavioural norm is for certain things. For example, we can explain where to throw away garbage, where you aren't allowed to go, and even that it is polite to stand to the right on the escalator so that others can pass on by on the left.

Digital hospitality

Personal service is certainly an important part of a guest's experience at any given destination. Today however, much of the interaction with guests occurs digitally, via email and in social media, for example. We therefore need to also ensure that our digital hospitality is good. When we at Visit Stockholm answer questions by email and on social media, we want to create a desire to travel, provide service and promote ambassadorship. We want our responses to be personal and competent. We have also decided on a tonality, i.e. in which ways we express ourselves. Do you regularly answer questions through digital platforms? If so, what tonality do you have in your answers? Have you formulated guidelines to lean on?

At Visit Stockholm, we have also decided how we will work to exceed expectations in our digital responses.

We then work based on three key phrases:

1. Speed

To monitor our digital channels and ensure that comments, messages and questions are answered within a reasonable time. The requirements for quick feedback are higher than ever and visitors like to validate that they have the latest information. If you do not have the ability to give feedback quickly, it is good if it is stated so that the visitors' expectations are adjusted.

2. Being considerate

When we respond personally, pleasantly and relevantly, we get more satisfied customers and more engagement in our channels. We are appreciative and respond, even if no specific question has been asked.

3. Constructive

We try to answer briefly and concisely. If we link to other pages with information, we summarize the information briefly in our answers. It is also good to have guidelines on how to handle complaints, sensitive issues and illegal content.

Hospitality and COVID-19

The 2020-21 corona pandemic affected the hospitality industry in many ways. We needed to adapt and renew our hospitality services. More focus and effort needed to be put on helping visitors feel safe before, during and after their visit. During fall 2021, Visit Stockholm surveyed 1,000 Stockholm residents, asking them, for example, what they thought was important when visiting events. At the time when the survey was conducted, the three most important things for making people feel safe at an event were being able to book online so that they did **not have to stand in line**. Visitors also wanted there to be **hand sanitizer** at the entrance, near toilets, etc. And lastly, they wanted there to be **enough staff working there** to make sure that people adhered to the rules and social distancing.

Now that Covid-19 does not affect us to the same extent anymore, it may be good to reflect on what changes we made in our hosting. How do these changes continue to affect our guests?

It starts with us

Long-term sustainable hosting must start with us treating each other well. The fact that we are respectful to each other in our workplace and to our colleagues in the destination creates the conditions for a good treatment of guests. It is only together that we can deliver a successful hosting.

Hospitality Stockholm

For those of us working at Visit Stockholm, hospitality is extremely important and we are constantly striving to improve it even further. Please visit our website for more information on hospitality:

[https://professionals.visitstockholm.com/sv/varskap-stockholm/](https://professionals.visitstockholm.com/sv/varenskap-stockholm/)