

# Common Sense and the Right of Public Access



Photo: Johnér/Hans Bonnevier

Do not disturb, do not destroy – that is the basic principle of Sweden's right of public access. It is not an unrestricted right. Here, you can read about the rules that apply. Please note that the Swedish Environmental Code places especially strict demands on those who conduct organized activities in nature.



## **Right of Public Access on the Internet**

The web site of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency includes information on the following:

- bathing, boats and ice
- camping
- bicycling
- campfires
- private roads
- dogs
- hunting and fishing
- organized activities
- gathering berries, etc.
- horseback riding
- signs and fences
- hiking and skiing

## Respect others' privacy

You may travel through the countryside on foot, bicycle, horse or skis, and temporarily remain in one place, as long as there is no risk that your presence or activities will damage crops, tree plantations or other sensitive areas. But you must respect the privacy of others, and you may not cross or intrude upon private property.

Residents are entitled to be left in peace within the areas immediately surrounding their homes, which are not always fenced off. If private areas are open to view, you must keep at a substantial distance so as not to disturb. Also, your presence in the countryside should in no way interfere with the activities of landowners.

Horseback riders must exercise special care. There is a great risk of damage to the ground, especially when riding in groups. It is not permitted to ride on marked jogging, hiking or ski trails, or on soft and sensitive ground. Mountain-biking also poses a risk of ground damage and requires special caution. You may cross fenced grazing land and the like, only if you do not damage fencing or disturb livestock. Close gates after passing through them in order to prevent the escape of livestock.

Photo: Ingemar Ahlström





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There are usually special regulations for tenting in protected natural areas.

### **Motor vehicles not allowed**

There is no right of public access for motorized vehicles. Sweden's Terrain Driving Act forbids the operation of cars, motorcycles, mopeds and other motor vehicles on snowless terrain. It is also forbidden to operate motor vehicles on private roads that are closed to traffic. Such prohibitions should be clearly indicated with road signs or some other means.

Normally, you may park along the side of a road if you do not violate traffic regulations, damage ground or interfere with landowners. But do not park in such a way that you pose a traffic danger, or hinder others from passing.

### **Camping**

It is permitted to set up a tent for a day or so on ground that is not used for agriculture and is far from the nearest dwelling. The closer to a residence and the greater the risk of disturbing others, the more important it is to ask the landowner for permission. The obligation to show consideration is all the greater when a caravan or motor-home is involved; this form of camping is restricted by the Terrain Driving Act.

## **Fires**

Never light fires if there is the slightest risk of igniting the surrounding countryside. Open fires are often forbidden during dry periods. If uncertain about conditions and requirements, contact the local municipality's fire brigade or tourist bureau. If you do light a fire, extinguish it thoroughly with water. You may be subject to fines and damages if the fire spreads.

Never light a fire directly on rocks. It may cause them to split, and leave ugly scars that never heal.

## **Do not litter**

All sorts of littering are forbidden in the countryside. A cigarette butt in a dry summer forest can destroy resources worth millions. Glass, tins and bottle caps can harm both humans and wildlife, and plastic bags can cause great suffering to animals that ingest them. For this reason, bags full of litter should never be left beside a rubbish bin if it happens to be full.

## **Blossoms and berries**

You may not take such items as twigs, branches or bark from living trees, including birches. Obviously, you may not take entire shrubs or trees, either. But you are allowed to pick wild berries, flowers and mushrooms, as well as twigs and branches that have fallen to the ground.



Photo: Ingemar Ahlström

Cycling on private roads is permitted.

Certain flower species are so rare that they risk becoming endangered. These species are protected and may not be picked. Information about them is available from county administrative boards. Orchids are protected throughout Sweden.

### **Bathing and boating**

You may bathe, moor a boat and go ashore nearly everywhere. The only exceptions are grounds of private homes and special areas that are off limits, such as sanc-



Photo: Ingemar Ahlström

For overnighting on boats, the same rules apply as for camping.

tuaries for birds and seals. Otherwise, the same principles of consideration apply as for camping. Boats may only temporarily be moored to someone else's pier, and then only on the condition that they present no obstacle to the owner. If in doubt, contact the owner.

You are free to travel by boat on seas, lakes and water-courses. Note, however, that special prohibitions may apply, such as speed limits and entry restrictions. Those who operate motorboats are under an especially great obligation to show consideration.

## Dogs

Dogs may accompany their owners in the countryside. But they are not allowed to run loose during 1 March – 20 August every year. It is during this period that wildlife is most vulnerable, when even the gentlest little pet dog can cause great harm by its very presence. It is also necessary to ensure that your dog does not harm or disturb wildlife during other times of the year.

## Hunting and fishing

Hunting and fishing are included in the right of public access. You may fish freely with rod and other handgear along the Swedish coastline – except for salmon-fishing along the coast of Norrland – and in the five largest lakes: Vänern, Vättern, Mälaren, Hjälmaren and Storsjön. Fishing in all other waters requires some form of permission, e.g. a licence. Always inform yourself of the rules that apply for the waters that you want to fish. Never leave hooks or lines in nature – they can be death traps for wildlife.

You must leave the young and the dwellings of wildlife in peace; and you may not take bird's eggs, etc., which is classified as hunting. All wild mammals and birds are protected, and may only be hunted in accordance with Swedish hunting law.

Foto: Ingemar Ahlström





### **Protected natural areas**

This is the symbol for protected natural areas, including nature reserves and national parks.

Such areas usually have special rules that restrict the right of public access.

Additional information, including a list of available materials on the right of public access, is available on the web site of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency: [www.naturvardsverket.se](http://www.naturvardsverket.se)

#### **To order:**

E-mail: [natur@cm.se](mailto:natur@cm.se)

Telephone: +46/8-505 933 40

Telefax: +46/8-505 933 99



Swedish Environmental Protection Agency  
Postal address: SE-106 48 Stockholm. Street address: Blekhölmsterrassen 36  
Telephone: +46/8-698 10 00