

# Blekinge - Garden of Sweden!

Blekinge is situated in the heart of the dynamic south **Baltic Sea area**, in the **south-eastern corner of Sweden**. Blekinge is a small county, just over 110 kilometers from east to west and with no more than 40 kilometers between the Baltic coast in the south and the Småland border in the north.

Blekinge has about 150,000 inhabitants, and excluding the country's major metropolitan areas, is one of the most **densely populated** counties with 51 inhabitants per square kilometre. The land area is 2,941 square kilometres and there are five municipalities. From the north to the south, the county extends about 40 kilometres, and from east to west, 110 kilometres. Blekinge has about 950 lakes 12 watercourses and about 800 islands.

Blekinge is frequently described as a **miniature Sweden**. Just like a garden, the county offers varied scenery within a limited area. Here you find leafy, deciduous forests dominated by oak and beech. Deep pine forests surround lakes with clear, glassy water. The Blekinge rivers normally flow peacefully, but in some places rush eagerly through beautiful valleys. The Mörrum River is famous for its salmon fishing. A cultivated landscape with meadows, fields and pasture lands - in the midst of which you find cottages, villages and small, charming towns, located along the coast just like pearls on a string.

Most of all, however, **Blekinge is associated with sea and coast**. A long coast, often adorned with deciduous forests, with numerous bays and beautiful views of glittering water and charming archipelago.

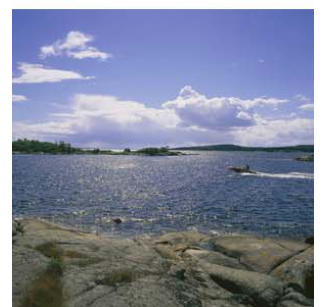
**The Naval City of Karlskrona** is an active and vibrant World Heritage Site see [http://www.navalcity.org/index\\_eng.htm](http://www.navalcity.org/index_eng.htm)

## History of the Region

Blekinge has always been in a vulnerable position, situated as it was between Denmark and Sweden. Prior to the Peace of Roskilde in 1658, the county was part of Denmark and on many occasions the scene of clashes between hereditary foes. Blekinge's towns and countryside were burned and pillaged numerous times by Swedish and Danish troops alike. Blekinge became part of Sweden for good with the Peace of Roskilde.

The two towns of Karlskrona and Karlshamn were founded as part of the integration of Blekinge into Sweden, as well as for commercial and military purposes.

**Karlskrona** was founded by King Charles XI as a base for the Swedish navy. Karlskrona is now the seat of Blekinge's county government, once again with a central, strategic location. The Naval City of Karlskrona is a UNESCO world heritage.



**Karlshamn** became the number one merchant town, with strong commercial links by land and by sea. The town has kept its importance as a port, and has one of Sweden's largest deep-water harbours.

**Ronneby** is the oldest town in Blekinge, being mentioned as early as the 13th century. The town first started to thrive, however, as the health resort of Ronneby Brunn was established in the late 19th century. Today, Ronneby Brunn is a large and modern hotel-, conference and spa centre.

**Sölvesborg** dates back to medieval times as well. The town boomed during the mid-nineteenth century and became the centre of a rapidly growing spirit distilling industry. Today, agriculture, fishing and fur farming are the major industries.

**Olofström** is Blekinge's only inland municipal district. The town itself is relatively young, but grew up around an iron foundry which was established as early as 1735. The small iron works is the basis of Blekinge's and south Sweden's largest company today - Volvo Cars Body Components.

## Blekinge today

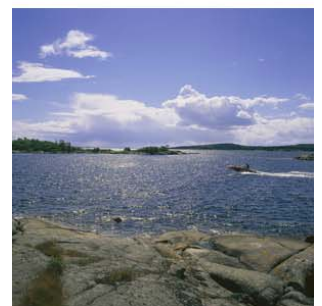
Developments in the countries on the other side of the Baltic Sea have given Blekinge quite a **new geographical importance**, its harbours now being the natural gateway to the new Europe. Blekinge is a central part of an expanding Baltic Region, which certainly has quickened the pulse of the county's business life. **New technology** has also made it possible for local industry to consolidate its strong position. Blekinge is now leading within the IT area, with numerous IT companies. Smaller enterprises are growing in number as well as in strength. The Blekinge Institute of Technology provides undergraduate studies as well as research in areas such as technology, arts subjects, nursing and social sciences - all of this within the framework of **applied IT**.

Communications are improving, tourism expanding. The short distance to the Malmö-Copenhagen area in combination with the bridge across Öresund is advantageous for Blekinge. In brief: Blekinge is one of Sweden's most interesting areas in view of the 21st century. There are two daily ferry connections between Karlskrona and Gdynia in Poland and daily ferry connections between Karlshamn and Liepaja in Latvia and Klaipeda in Lithuania. There is a daily flight connection between Ronneby airport and Palanga, Lithuania.

## Renewal in trade and industry

Blekinge has a **long-standing industrial tradition**. Thanks to wise investments in modern technology, local industry has maintained its strong position and today employ one out of four inhabitants. At the same time, smaller enterprises are growing in number.

The service sector expands rapidly. Blekinge was in the forefront when it came to information technology, and is today a leading region with science parks like Soft Center, organisations such as TelecomCity, development centres in both Sölvesborg and Olofström as well as a number of projects which have introduced IT on a broad scale, all through the county to all its inhabitants.



A vital part of the development of this "New Blekinge" is the university **Blekinge Institute of Technology**, focused on Applied IT and Sustainable Development of Industry and Society.

**Soft Center** in Ronneby is a development centre, science park, with companies, training/ education and research in IT all under the same roof. Some of the IT companies operating out of Soft Center are highly specialised consultancy and soft-ware companies; others are research and development departments belonging to well-known Swedish and European multinationals. The Blekinge Institute of Technology has established itself at Soft Center as well, and there is today a comprehensive co-operation between industry and university.

**TelecomCity** is an internationally leading development centre specialised in telecommunication - a successful network if ever there was one, a cooperation between some 50 telecom enterprises, the Blekinge Institute of Technology and the Municipality of Karlskrona.

This is a true mixture of large, international companies at Soft Center and TelecomCity like Ericsson, Motorola, Europolitan, Flextronics a.o., and smaller enterprises and development companies such as Manager Zone, SoftHand and UIQ - all of them joining forces to promote growth and development while also attracting additional IT expertise to the region in the form of business, staff, students and researchers.

**Industriellt UtvecklingsCentrum Olofström, IUC** (industrial development centre), has its focus on applied industrial research and training, developing processes and methods for efficient manufacture of light-weight components for the motor industry. IUC has its own workshop, advanced robots, state-of-the-art machinery as well as two software-based industrial laboratories.

**NetPort.Karlshamn** develops a Competence Centre focusing on new media, experience industry and intelligent logistics. The Competence centre will be the hub for the actors, who in concurrence ensures that knowledge and research from the institute will come to practical use in the trade and industry and public business. It will also make sure the needs from the trade and the public sector will be well known within higher education and research.

For more information about Blekinge please visit the web site:

<http://www.blekinge.se/uk/> (in English)

<http://www.blekinge.se/de/> (in German)

<http://www.blekinge.se/de/> (In Danish)

<http://www.blekinge.se/pl/> (in Polish)



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