

Press information

100 years of health.

The 1912 Olympic Games in Stockholm were successful in numerous ways. Sweden received significant international praise and the country's national pride soared, especially given that Sweden took home the most medals of all the participating countries. The successes laid the foundation for the model that gave Sweden both international athletic stars and a healthier people for whom sports and exercise are part of daily life: the government-funded sports movement. In Stockholm, opportunities for exercise and outdoor life are integrated into the city.

SEK 100,000 dedicated to public health

In the national frenzy following the Olympics, the sports movement took the chance to request a grant of SEK 100,000 in government funding for athletics from the Swedish king. The arguments for the state to fund athletics were numerous. One was to ensure Swedish success at the 1916 Olympics in Berlin, and to show that the home turf victories were no coincidence. But perhaps more important was the notion of being able to give more people the opportunity to participate in sports and exercise. It would have positive effects on public health nationwide.

After the complicated process, the money was granted - which was the beginning of Sweden's government-funded sports movement.

Sports are Sweden's biggest popular movement

Nearly half of Sweden's residents between the ages of 7 and 70 participate in at least one of the country's approximately 22,000 athletics clubs. On an ordinary day, over 140,000 young people participate in organized athletic activities, which receive activity grants from the government and the municipality.

These associations would be impossible without all of the leaders engaged in sports on a voluntary, non-profit basis. In total, around 600,000 Swedes have leadership roles in the Swedish sports movement.

Municipalities account for the majority of community support: around SEK 4.5

billion, while the government provides around SEK 0.5 billion. The remaining support comes from sponsors and the county councils.

Sweden's model of an independent, democratic, popular sports movement has no equivalent outside of the Nordic region. Through a democratic and not-for-profit organization, sports can uniquely contribute to social development at the local, regional, national and international levels. Many sports organizations take responsibility for activities other than just the purely athletic. It may be anything from cleaning the country's roads to ensuring a community's store is retained.

The green city

Ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to exercise and get out in nature has been one of Stockholm's guiding principles through the years. That is why today, parks and green spaces account for more than 40 percent of the area of Stockholm, including large recreation areas, nature reserves, sea front promenades and neighborhood parks.

Since 1995, the area of Kungliga Djurgården, Haga and Ulriksdal has been a national city park, the first in the world. This unique area offers fantastic natural, cultural and recreational value. The park is open year-round and is the most visited recreation area in Sweden.

For more information: www.nationalstadsparken.se

...with the green miles

Nine of ten Stockholmers live 300 meters from a green space or park with walking paths and exercise trails.

Anyone that wants to can participate in the races held every year—and many people want to. In 2011, around 90,000 runners took part in the larger races held in Stockholm, 20,000 of whom ran the Stockholm Marathon.

In total in 2011, over 575,000 people participated in various races in Sweden, which is a new record and an increase of 55 percent in less than ten years.

Stockholm moves on two wheels

It is quiet, has no emissions, gets you there quickly and smoothly and improves health to boot. We're talking about the bicycle: the urban transportation of the future.

Cycling is a major focus in Stockholm, and Stockholmers are riding bikes more than ever before. On a typical day, about 150,000 people ride bikes in downtown Stockholm. That is an increase of 65 percent in ten years, made possible by the city's consistent efforts to build and improve the network of cycling paths. Today Stockholm is criss-crossed by about 750 kilometers of bike roads, paths and lanes. Air pumps have been placed in strategic locations to

encourage cycling, and an extremely popular bike rental system has been available since 2006. In 2010, bikes were rented 450,000 times.

The health benefits of cycling are undisputed.

The Accessibility Strategy includes a specific goal pertaining directly to bikes: “At least 15 percent of all rush hour trips should be made by bicycle in 2030.”

Stockholmers rush for the water

Stockholm is built on 14 islands and it never takes more than a few minutes to walk to the water, which is clean and safe for fishing and swimming. Lucky fishers may catch trout below the royal palace or even see a seal.

Just as it was in the 1912 Olympics, Stockholm’s water is currently an arena for various water sports. This is where the final leg of the ÅF Offshore Race is held to determine the winner each summer. In August 2012, the triathlon world championships will be held in Stockholm. The swimming component will take place in Strömmen below Gamla Stan in central Stockholm.

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Stockholm Business Region

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