

# The Swedish monarchy

Sweden's head of state is King Carl XVI Gustaf. In 1980, Sweden became the first monarchy to change its succession rites so that the first-born child of the monarch is heir to the throne, regardless of gender. Heir apparent to the Swedish throne is Crown Princess Victoria.

Sweden is one of the world's most stable and egalitarian democracies, with a monarchy that has strong roots.

As head of state, the King is Sweden's foremost unifying symbol. According to the 1974 constitution, the monarch has no political power or affinity. The King's duties are of a ceremonial and representative nature.

## Carl XVI Gustaf

King Carl XVI Gustaf is the seventh monarch of the House of Bernadotte. He was born on 30 April 1946 as the fifth child and only son of Hereditary Prince Gustaf Adolf and Princess Sibylla. Hereditary Prince Gustaf Adolf died in an airplane crash in Denmark the following year. ►

Clockwise from left: Crown Princess Victoria, heir apparent; King Carl XVI Gustaf, head of state; Princess Estelle, second in line to the Swedish throne.



In 1950, Carl Gustaf became Crown Prince of Sweden when his great-grandfather Gustaf V died and was succeeded by the then 68-year-old Gustaf VI Adolf, the Crown Prince's grandfather.

After serving as monarch for 23 years, King Gustaf Adolf passed away in 1973. That same year, at the age of 27, the Crown Prince became King Carl XVI Gustaf. His motto is 'For Sweden – with the times'.

In 2018, King Carl Gustaf became Sweden's longest reigning monarch, surpassing the 14th century king Magnus Eriksson.

### Keeping busy

King Carl XVI Gustaf is an active monarch who keeps up to date on current affairs, both through his work and privately.

Each year in September, he formally opens the annual session of the Riksdag, the Swedish parliament. Regularly, he also chairs Councils of State at the Royal Palace. During these meetings, the King is briefed by government ministers about political initiatives, investigations and legislation.

The King also chairs the Advisory Council on Foreign Affairs, a parliamentary forum where the government informs on foreign policy matters with potential impact on Sweden.

According to the Constitution, it is the prime minister's responsibility to ensure that the head of state remains informed about matters regarding the nation.

Together with his wife Queen Silvia, King Carl XVI Gustaf performs two to three state visits per year, either as host of Sweden or as a guest abroad. These events are of important symbolic value as they underline good relations between Sweden and a specific country. The visits abroad have the intent to strengthen personal relations and also increase trade, political exchange and cultural interest.

King Carl XVI Gustaf has remained strongly committed to the global environment ever

since he took part in the UN Conference on the Human Environment – the first of its kind – in Stockholm back in 1972.

He is likewise deeply committed to the preservation of Sweden's cultural heritage and considers it important that the public has access to the royal palaces with their collections and parks.

### Queen Silvia

In 1972, while still the Crown Prince, Carl Gustaf met his German-Brazilian future wife, Silvia Sommerlath, who was born in 1943 in Germany. They met in Munich during the Olympic Games, where Silvia Sommerlath was chief hostess.



Photo: Anna-Lena Ahlström/Royal Court of Sweden

Queen Silvia.

A trained interpreter without royal or noble origins, she is the first Swedish queen to have had a professional career.

Silvia Sommerlath married King Carl Gustaf in 1976. At the time royal weddings that included non-nobility were highly unusual, and Queen Silvia has since modernised the position of queen so that it is in step with the times.

She has taken strong initiatives to pursue several social issues close to her heart, in particular children's rights as well as care for people suffering from dementia.

## A modern move

In 2019, King Carl Gustaf relieved five of his grandchildren – Prince Carl Philip and Princess Sofia's two children and Princess Madeleine and Christopher O'Neill's three – from royal duties.

Prince Alexander, Prince Gabriel, Princess Leonore, Prince Nicolas and Princess Adrienne remain Royal Family members and keep their Duke and Duchess titles, but no longer have the style of Royal Highness and are no longer members of the Royal House.

With the change, the King wanted to signal that in the future, his grandchildren – with the exception of Princess Estelle and Prince Oscar – will not be expected to perform royal duties.



Photo: Jonas Ekström/Royal Court of Sweden

The Royal Family in 2017.

### The Royal Palace

The Royal Palace of Stockholm is the King's official residence. While most of the monarchy's official receptions are held here, the palace is also open to the public all year round. As a royal residence, workplace and culture-historical monument in one, the Royal Palace is unique in Europe.



Photo: Ola Ericson/imagebank.sweden.se

Built in baroque style by architect Nicodemus Tessin the Younger and formed as a Roman palace, it has more than 600 rooms divided between eleven floors. It was erected on the same spot as the medieval Tre Kronor Castle, which was destroyed in a fire in 1697. King Adolf Fredrik and Queen Lovisa Ulrika were first to move into the Royal Palace in 1754, into what is now known as the Bernadotte Apartments.

King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia lived here until 1981, when they chose to take up residence at Drottningholm Palace, on the outskirts of Stockholm.

### Drottningholm Palace



Photo: Ola Ericson/imagebank.sweden.se

Drottningholm Palace, outside Stockholm, is on UNESCO's World Heritage List. The palace was built by the architect Nicodemus Tessin the Elder in the 17th century and is highly characteristic of European royal architecture of the time. Large parts of the palace and park are open to visitors. It is home to the Royal Family since 1981, but only the King and Queen live here today.

All of Sweden's royal palaces are state owned, and most of them are open to the public.

# Sweden's future queen

As the eldest of three siblings, Crown Princess Victoria is first in line to the Swedish throne. As such, she has become a highly popular ambassador for the country.



Photo: Sara Friberg/Royal Court of Sweden

The Crown Princess during a visit to RFSL – the Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex Rights – in 2020.

Already before the Crown Princess was born (14 July 1977), there were discussions about reforming the Act of Succession and make it gender neutral. The change came into force two-and-a-half years after Princess Victoria's birth but was made retroactive, which immediately changed her title from Princess to Crown Princess.

When she succeeds her father, Crown Princess Victoria will become Sweden's 70th monarch, the fourth female monarch in Sweden's history and the first since 1720.

She already assumes the duties of temporary regent when the King is prevented from performing his duties as head of state, for example during his travels abroad.

## Ambassador and advocate

Crown Princess Victoria's regular agenda includes visits to various parts of Swedish society, and visits from foreign dignitaries. She also attends the Councils of State and the Advisory Councils on Foreign Affairs.

Together with her husband Prince Daniel, the Crown Princess each year undertakes a couple of official visits overseas at the request of the government.

Issues surrounding crisis and conflict management, including international peace-building, are of particular interest to the heir to the throne. In 2009, she earned her bachelor's degree at Uppsala University, Sweden, majoring in peace and conflict studies.

As one of 17 ambassadors in the Sustainable Development Goals Advocacy Group during 2016-2018, the Crown Princess promoted the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) for 2030.

As an SDG Advocate Alumni, she continues to contribute actively to SDG Advocacy in Sweden and around the world, especially on issues concerning health and water, such as sustainable fishing and equitable access to clean water.

Both Crown Princess Victoria and Prince Daniel – previously a gym chain owner and personal trainer – are strong advocates of physical activity. In 2017, in connection with her 40th birthday, the Crown Princess initiated a project to walk through all 25 provinces of Sweden, while promoting the importance of outdoor activities and movement. She completed the project with walk number 25 in Fulufjället National Park, Dalarna, in 2019.

## Royal nuptials

On 19 June in 2010, Crown Princess Victoria married Daniel Westling in Stockholm Cathedral, *Storkyrkan*. The televised event was covered by nearly 2,000 journalists, with celebrations around the wedding lasting for three days – both in the capital and across the country.

Daniel Westling was given the title HRH Prince Daniel, Duke of Västergötland, upon his marriage to the future Queen of Sweden. ▶

## French origins

Swedish monarchs date back around a thousand years and have belonged to eleven dynasties, with the current one, the House of Bernadotte, ruling the longest.

In 1810, Prince Karl August – adopted son of King Karl XIII and heir apparent – suddenly died of a stroke. This left King Karl XIII, whose two biological children had died during infancy, without a successor.

## Adopted heir

King Karl XIII – himself appointed in 1809 following his nephew King Gustav IV Adolf's deposal – opted to adopt Frenchman Jean Baptiste Bernadotte (1763–1844), a former general under Napoleon Bonaparte, thus finding his heir to the throne.



Photo: Alexis Daffos/Royal Court of Sweden

Bernadotte as Crown Prince Karl Johan; oil painting by François Gérard (1811).

## A valid successor

Why Bernadotte? At the time, Sweden's power in Europe was declining, with the country having lost Finland to Russia in 1809.

With his experience as military commander, Bernadotte was deemed a valid successor. Also, as a marshal under Napoleon, Bernadotte had actively advised against an invasion of Sweden, which made him a popular choice.

## Karl XIV Johan

Bernadotte's name, first as prince and then as king, would be Karl Johan. His formal reign as King Karl XIV Johan began in 1818, following King Karl XIII's passing.



Photo: Elisabeth Toll/Royal Court of Sweden

Crown Princess Victoria and Prince Daniel in Gustav III's Pavilion, next to Haga Palace where they reside.

Eighteen months later they had their first child: Princess Estelle, Duchess of Östergötland, second in line to the Swedish throne, was born on 23 February 2012. On 2 March 2016, the Crown Princess gave birth to their second child, Prince Oscar, Duke of Skåne. Crown Princess Victoria, Prince Daniel and their children live in Haga Palace outside

Stockholm, the birthplace and early home of King Carl XVI Gustaf.

### Younger siblings

Prince Carl Philip, second child of the King and Queen, married Sofia Hellqvist – a former model, reality television contestant, and founder of a charity organisation – on 13 June 2015 in Stockholm. The couple has two children: Prince Alexander (born 19 April 2016) and Prince Gabriel (born on 31 August 2017). The family resides in Djurgården, Stockholm.

Princess Madeleine is the youngest child of the King and Queen. In 2013 she married British-American businessman Christopher O'Neill in Stockholm. The couple has three children: Princess Leonore (born 20 February 2014), Prince Nicolas (born 15 June 2015) and Princess Adrienne (born 9 March 2018).

Mr O'Neill has retained his UK and US citizenships, and declined a royal title to be able to carry on his business. The family resides in the United States.

## Famous monarchs

### Gustav II Adolf

Gustav II Adolf ruled from 1611 to 1632. By intervening in the Thirty Years' War, he came to assume great political importance and is internationally the most renowned of Sweden's kings. Under his rule, Sweden became a leading military power. Gustav II Adolf was killed in 1632 at the Battle of Lützen. Parliament chose to honour his memory by calling him Gustav Adolf the Great.

### Queen Kristina

Queen Kristina became the second female monarch of the Kingdom of Sweden when she succeeded Gustav II Adolf in 1632, just before her sixth birthday. She abdicated in 1654, primarily because of religious convictions. She converted to Roman Catholicism, settled in Rome and was succeeded by her cousin, Karl X Gustav.

### Gustav III

Gustav III ruled from 1771 to 1792 and is often called the Theatre King. A keen patron of the arts, he founded the Royal Swedish Opera in Stockholm in 1782, as well as the Swedish Academy and the Swedish Royal Academy of Music. Gustav III's reign was not popular with the high nobility. Opposition culminated in a conspiracy in 1792, when Gustav III was shot by Jacob J. Anckarström at a masked ball at the Royal Swedish Opera. The King died shortly after. Anckarström admitted to the assassination and was executed.

## Helping the children

**The Swedish Crown Princess Couple's Foundation** combats social isolation and promotes good health among children and youths in Sweden. Established by Crown Princess Victoria and Prince Daniel to mark the occasion of their marriage, the foundation provides grants to organisations working with these issues, but also runs projects of its own within the field.

The Crown Princess Couple have also initiated **Generation Pep**. This non-profit organisation works to spread knowledge and engage both people and organisations in making it easier for children and young people to live healthy lives with sufficient exercise and correct nutrition.



Photo: Sara Friberg/Royal Court of Sweden

**Fritidsbanken is a public library for sports equipment supported by the Crown Princess Couple.**

## Useful links

[www.royalcourt.se](http://www.royalcourt.se)  
[www.government.se](http://www.government.se)

Swedish Royal Court  
 Government Offices of Sweden

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