

National Day Speech at the Swedish Church, Melbourne 2025

Thank you so much for the word and the honour of speaking for a little while at this lovely National Day celebration.

Maybe I should start by saying Hi! Hello! Hey! Or perhaps Good day! You really can pick and choose among all the Swedish greetings, because, as we say: “A beloved child has many names.”

In any case, I hope my speech will be just *lagom*. *Lagom* long and *lagom* short—yes, *lagom* in every way. Just as long as it's not *lagom* funny. Because if something is *lagom* funny, then it's not actually funny, it's maybe only half as funny—or even less...funny...

Now you might be starting to guess where this is headed and what kind of tone this National Day speech will take?

I don't have “*gnomes in the attic*”, no—this speech is straight up stuffed with Swedish words, expressions, phrases, and a lot of other things that I believe contribute to making a Swede *feel* Swedish. I hope you get the gist—that this has absolutely nothing to do with nationalism in the political sense...

No, I'm in search of that general sense of “Swedishness.” Can you put your finger on it without putting your foot in it or stepping into a pile of trouble? “Swedishness,” that is. I'll try! So let's hit the accelerator and raise anchor!

Aside from the obvious and simple—being born in Sweden and speaking Swedish... Should one, perhaps, also be blond and blue-eyed? Hm...

Take me, for example. I tick all those boxes: born in Sweden, I speak Swedish, and I'm blond and blue-eyed. But oh, looks can be deceiving! Did you know my parents are Hungarian? You could say I grew up on a fairly equal mix of *schottis* and *czardas*, *kalops* and *goulash*, but despite that, I feel much more Swedish than Hungarian.

So the environment—a Swedish environment—seems to be very important, no matter your background.

But hey! Speaking of environment—here at the church, we have a *fantastic* Swedish environment! It's almost enough to turn anyone into a Swede! It's like sliding in on a shrimp sandwich, in the most positive sense of the phrase. Because here at the Swedish Church, you can take part in all kinds of Swedish cultural traditions.

Here, you can celebrate Walpurgis Night, Midsummer, Lucia, and Christmas—you can eat real Swedish cinnamon buns, buy Swedish candy, sing in a Swedish choir, join a meatball competition, and much more.

Hmm... How much of Swedishness lies in the fact that we fully accept—without question—that we dance about little tailless frogs around both the Maypole and the Christmas tree, and that we happily wash down our punch rolls and *semlor* with authentic Swedish coffee or rosehip soup?

And by the way, is there a difference between a Swede living in Sweden and a Swede living abroad—like here in Melbourne? I suspect there is. Take T-shirts, for example. Would you, as a Swede in Sweden, walk around with a T-shirt featuring a Swedish flag and a moose? Or one that says “Pike,” “Meatball,” or “Blueberry” in both Swedish and phonetic English? Doubtful! Not in Sweden. But here—absolutely! My husband Paul has five of them and it's super cute—*here!*

Anyway, we Swedes are a rather mixed bunch in many ways, so take what I say with a grain of salt. If you lined up ten Swedes, you'd probably get ten wildly different answers on what it means to be Swedish.

If you ask Google, Swedes are: Fair, Polite, Competitive, Quiet, Honest, Creative, Empathetic, Orderly, Imaginative, Cool-headed, Open to new ideas, Responsible, and Humble.

Swedes value equality and respect personal space. We have dry but rich humour, and we're straight to the point, so to speak.

Right! Many of those traits could apply to other nationalities too, right?

But that doesn't really tell you what it *fee/s* like to be Swedish...

Maybe we get closer if we look into ethnicity.

Google says that your ethnicity is defined by a common language, culture, and history—and it's based on one's self-identification and sense of belonging to an ethnic group.

NOW we're getting warmer!

So, to help you get a real sense of your own Swedishness and your feeling of belonging, I've put together a little test in the form of a story—a truly *Swedish* story—so you can figure out what level of Swedishness you possess.

This story is packed with all sorts of Swedishness, and if something resonates within you, or you feel a little tug at your heart when you hear certain words or phrases, then you've got proof that you too can identify as Swedish. If you want, you can even try counting how many "Swedishnesses" I mention...

But just so you don't feel any pressure, I'll tell you that I did a DNA test last year because I was curious if I had any roots other than Hungarian. It turns out I actually have a whole 14% Scandinavian heritage! I mean—what?! Incredible!! When I told my mother, she said, "Well, that's not surprising. You've lived in Sweden." ...Classic non sequitur.

So as long as you score 14%, you pass the test!

So listen up, dear friends, and I shall now tell you a brand-new, fully Swedish National Day story:

Once upon a time, in a quaint, old land far up in the mountainous North, it was quiet and joyfully delightful. But it wasn't free—not yet. There had long been a bunch of feisty little kings bickering from right to left about who should sit on the throne and run the show. Even a Danish king joined the fight, and he had, mind you, snatched up power over a whole bunch of Scandinavian countries.

But after much fussing and quarreling, the land finally gained independence. Gustav Eriksson Vasa was elected king on Wednesday, June 6, 1523. He ruled until 1560, and that's why Sweden celebrates its National Day on June 6. More or less. Roughly.

What happened next isn't really worth arguing over, so we lift on the wings of history and—whoosh—we slide forward on a banana peel to the year... 2025!

Now it's Carl XVI Gustaf who's king, though he doesn't really have much say anymore. That's just how it is. Anyway, it's been a hectic year. It was freezing in January, but by the

end of February, the thaw arrived, of course. Typical! The snow turned to slush. Luckily, the King and Silvia still managed to enjoy some of their winter break during Week 9. There, the skis finally slid in Sälen after the snow cannons had filled the slopes with artificial snow.

Soon it was time for Walpurgis Night and spring's arrival was celebrated with men's choirs singing "Winter's Gone" and bonfires crackling.

In May, the King and Silvia closely followed which song would represent Sweden in Eurovision. But, well, that went how it went. The Finnish Sauna Gang had to concede defeat when *We're Going to the Sauna* met its *Waterloo* in the final.

But now, now it's finally National Day. The blue and yellow flags are waving. The sun peeks out from behind rain-heavy clouds and the sea shimmers in a *lagom* blue tone. Summer has arrived, the birches rustle, and it's a whole 16 degrees cold—I mean warm!

After celebrating with speeches and tributes at Skansen, the King and Queen begin their statutory holiday, and first on the agenda: a forest excursion to enjoy the right of public access. They plan to pick blueberries, lingonberries, and cloudberries. With luck, they might find some chanterelles too! And imagine if they caught a glimpse of a bear, a lynx... or a moose migration! Well, otherwise the King will just have to stick to the moose hunt in August to see a moose...

When they arrive, they're met with a wondrously beautiful sight—the fields are full of wood anemones, liverworts, and coltsfoot. Birds are chirping, bumblebees buzzing. *Rönnerdahl* himself could easily be frolicking with a laugh in the hills.

In his backpack—a Kånken, of course—the King has a thermos of coffee and some cheese rolls. After their morning coffee and having picked just the right number of berries, it's time to move on. They swing by IKEA to check out the *Stockholm* sofa, which they find just *lagom* stylish. While there, they enjoy a special National Day buffet with herring, potatoes, and meatballs with lingonberry jam.

On the way home, they stop for afternoon fika—cinnamon buns and Princess cake. Yum! Now they're stuffed, so they cruise along in their VOLVO (a Polestar, naturally), listening to ABBA at a *lagom* volume and snacking on a *lagom* number of Ahlgrens bilar.

They're babysitting Princess Estelle and Prince Oscar that evening, because Victoria and Daniel are going to the Royal Dramatic Theatre to see an Ingmar Bergman play. Probably *lagom* entertaining...

After reading from *Pippi Longstocking* and *Mio, My Son* by Astrid Lindgren as a bedtime story, and the kids are asleep, they unwind in front of the TV. It's a bit early for bed, so they channel-surf a bit—*Wallander* and *The Sandhamn Murders*. The King takes a small schnapps—Akvavit, of course—and Silvia sips on her favourite, Rekorderlig apple cider. It's a *lagom* cozy Friday evening, after all.

But soon their eyes grow heavy, and Silvia—who usually decides where the "*blue cupboard should stand*"—suggests sitting on the porch a while to enjoy some fresh air. The summer evening is mild and pleasant, and they chat about maybe taking a sail through the archipelago, among skerries and islets, eventually. Before heading to bed in their ergonomic Hästens beds, they take one last look at the midnight sun, hoping to catch a glimpse of the predicted Northern Lights in July. That would be just perfect—or what luck, I mean!

Nighty-night! Snip, snap, snout—and the story is out!

But to be *really* sure you're feeling truly Swedish, you of course have to be able to say:

“Sju tusen sju hundra sjuttio sju sjösjuka sjömän på ett sjunkande skepp togs om hand av sju tusen sju hundra sjuttio sju sjungande sjuksköterskor!”

Thank you for listening! se

– Suzann Frisk