

The National Emblems of Sweden

The Swedish Flag

The exact age of the *Swedish Flag* is not known, but the oldest recorded pictures of a blue cloth with a yellow cross date from the 16th century. As decreed in a royal warrant of 1569, the yellow cross was always to be borne on Swedish battle standards and banners, as the Swedish Coat of Arms was blue divided quarterly by a cross of gold. The design of the Swedish flag is probably taken from the Danish flag, and its blue and yellow colours possibly come from the Coat of Arms. Not until the 1620s – i.e., during the reign of Gustav II Adolf – do we find any reliable evidence of the blue flag with a yellow cross being carried by Swedish vessels. According to our oldest existing flag warrant, from 1663, a triple-tailed flag was to be used except by merchant ships, whose flag was square-cut. Nowadays the use of the triple-tailed pennon is reserved for the Royal Family and the armed forces. The Royal Family may also charge its flags either with the Lesser or the Greater Coat of Arms in the centre of the cross.

Since 1916, 6 June has been celebrated as the Swedish Flag Day. This finally also became Sweden's National Day in 1983 and a public holiday from 2005. The reasons for the choice of date are twofold: the election of Gustav Vasa as Sweden's king on 6 June 1523 laid the foundation of Sweden as a separate state; and on the same date in 1809, Sweden adopted a new constitution which included the establishment of civil rights and liberties.

The colours and design of the flag are laid down in the Flag Act of 1982. www.riksdagen.se Swedish Code of Statutes No. 1983:826, Ordinance concerning Guidelines on the Shades of Colour in the Swedish Flag.

The flag is usually hoisted at 08:00 hrs from 1 March to 31 October, otherwise at 09:00 hrs. It is lowered at sunset. If the flag is lit up, it does not have to be lowered at sunset. There are about 15 official flag days, including the special celebrations of the Royal Family, May Day, Election Day, United Nations Day (24 October) and Nobel Day (10 December). The flag may also be flown on special local or private family occasions.

The National Coats of Arms

As laid down in the National Coats of Arms Act of 1982, Sweden has two Coats of Arms, the Lesser and the Greater.

The *Lesser Coat of Arms*, the one more frequently used, is blue with three crowns of gold, two over one. A closed crown is upper imposed on the escutcheon which is sometimes encircled with the chain of the Order of the Seraphim. (The Order of the Seraphim, established in 1748, is Sweden's most distinguished order.) The triple crown device has been used as the emblem of Sweden at least since 1336, when it had long been a familiar symbol of the "Three Wise Kings". According to one theory, King Magnus Eriksson (1319–64) adopted the device to symbolize his title, "King of Sweden, Norway and Scania".



The Lesser Coat of Arms



The Greater Coat of Arms

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The *Greater Coat of Arms* is that of the monarch, and is used on special occasions by the Government and by Parliament. Its arrangement dates from as early as the 1440s when it was used in the seal of King Karl Knutsson Bonde, and has been in use ever since. The escutcheon is divided quarterly and charged with the triple crown device and the "Folkunga Lion" (i.e., the arms of the ruling house of Sweden, 1250–1364). In the centre are the arms of the current ruling house. Since the early 19th century these have been the arms adopted by the then newly elected Crown Prince, the French marshal, Jean Baptiste Bernadotte, who acceded to the Swedish throne as King Karl XIV Johan. These arms are those of the "Vasa garb" representing the Vasa dynasty (1523–1654) together with the bridge representing the Principality of Ponte Corvo in Italy (given to Bernadotte by the Emperor Napoleon in 1806), complemented by the Napoleonic eagle and seven stars.

DU GAMLA, DU FRIA

Ej för långsamt Ord: R. DYBECK
Svensk folkmelodi

Du gam-la, du fri-a, du fjäll-hö-ga Nord, du
tys-ta, du gläd-je-ri-ka skö-na! Jag
häl-sar dig, vä-nas-te land uppå jord, din
sol, din him-mel, di-na äng-der grö-na, din
sol, din him-mel, di-na äng-der grö-na.

2. Du tronar på minnen från fornstora dar,
då ärat ditt namn flög över jorden.
Jag vet, att du är och du blir vad du var.
Ja, jag vill leva, jag vill dö i Norden!
Ja, jag vill leva, jag vill dö i Norden!

Translation of the Swedish national anthem

Thou ancient, thou freeborn, thou mountainous North,
In beauty and peace our hearts beguiling,
I greet thee, thou loveliest land on the earth,
Thy sun, thy skies, thy verdant meadows smiling.
Thy sun, thy skies, thy verdant meadows smiling.

Thy throne rests on mem'ries from great days of yore,
When worldwide renown was valour's guerdon.
I know to thy name thou art true as before.
Oh, I would live and I would die in Sweden,
Oh, I would live and I would die in Sweden.

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