

## Press information

# From ten thousand to ten million guest nights in 100 years.

During the 1912 Olympics, Stockholm was invaded by athletes, officials and tourists from around the world. That put the city's entire tourism industry to the test, raising concerns, but even more so, offering opportunities. New hotels sprouted up and Stockholm took its place on the international tourism map. Today, Stockholm is Europe's second fastest growing capital city in terms of number of guest nights, and ranks third as Europe's best capital city for tourists.

### **"EXTRA! Stockholm invaded by foreigners!"**

Hosting the fifth Olympic Games presented Stockholm with numerous challenges, one of which was housing all the officials, athletes, visitors and spectators. The predictions were all unanimous: tourists would flood the royal capital, and getting either a hotel room or a table at a restaurant would be impossible during the games. An entire year before the Olympics, newspapers cried: "Tens of thousands of foreigners expected. Rooms already reserved at the Grand Hotel!" The Organization Committee appointed an Accommodations Committee to ensure enough housing to deal with the impending onslaught.

### **"Stop there! There's dust in the corner"**

One task of the Accommodations Committee was to sign agreements with Stockholm's rental agencies. A memo containing a 16-item checklist of requirements for Olympics housing accompanied the agreement. Beds were required to be at least 190 centimeters long and 80 centimeters wide, and it was clearly stated that "liquor, beer, grease and other stains on the chairs, tables, carpets and wallpaper detract from a pleasant atmosphere and must be removed immediately for the room to be considered tidy."

### **Inspector Ekström, with the right to knock**

Of course, many people saw the coming invasion as an opportunity to do good business. To prevent hotels from deceiving tourists, chief of police W. Ekström was appointed hotel detective and price controller. He took the assignment very seriously and frequently reported the results of his searches to the Accommodations Committee. For example, the rental agency told Dr. Eklund's wife on Grev Turegatan 69 to charge at least SEK 7 (almost one euro) for the room, which Ekström complained was "way too much".

### **The Olympics gave rise to one of Stockholm's historic hotels**

Massive efforts were made to arrange housing before the anticipated invasion of tourists and athletes. Schools and gymnasiums were filled with beds, but new hotels were built as well. Strand Hotel at Nybroviken was built specifically for the Olympics. On February 24, 1912, the hotel opened its elegant doors, but the papers were skeptical: "Only time will tell if it is wise to put a hotel in such a remote location".

### **Many slept on the water—and many still do**

Because of the high demand for accommodations during the Olympics, some countries chose their own solutions to make sure they got what they wanted. The big USA team traveled across the Atlantic on the SS Finland. The ship anchored in the inner harbor on June 29, and the athletes ate and lived there. The Russian team had a similar concept: the SS Birma anchored in Värtahamnen.

Even today, visitors can stay on the water in Stockholm in both hotels and hostels. The af Chapman, a three-masted ship, is a unique hostel anchored on Skeppsholmen in the middle of the city and offers a view of the royal palace. And just a five hundred meter-walk from the palace in the other direction is Riddarholmen, where the ship Mälardrottningen is anchored. Built in 1924, the ship was the biggest diesel-driven yacht at that time. Today, Mälardrottningen is a hotel and as you head up the gangplank, you are walking in the footsteps of royalty, politicians and movie stars.

### **Stockholm ranks second in growth in all of Europe**

During the 1912 Olympics, "thousands of foreigners" were expected in Stockholm. The number of guest nights in the same month 99 years later totaled just over one million. Quite a bit has happened. In just the last ten years, the number of guest nights in Stockholm has risen by 50% and currently amounts to more than ten million.

City tourism has risen sharply in the last few years, becoming an engine for European growth. Stockholm ranks third as best capital city for tourists in

Europe and has the second highest increase in number of hotel nights, according to the recent report European Capital City Tourism.

The fact that the international travel guide Lonely Planet named Stockholm one of the world's top five cities to visit for 2012, together with London, also contributes to the increase in Stockholm's attractiveness.

For more information:

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### **Stockholm Business Region**

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