

Extreme Comfort In The Nordic Countries: Is It Fairy Tale or Fact?

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"I wish I was born in one of the Nordic countries, everything would be much easier.", "Is this even a 'life' when compared to the lives of the Nordic people?", "They do not have any problems up in the North, they live in an amazingly comfortable environment." These are just some example sentences that most of us hear in our lives. Actually, according to many, Nordic countries are a dreamland where the words such as injustice, inequality, violence, or unhappiness do not exist. However, is this accurate? Are the foreign speculations the reality of our dear Northerners? Is this comfort really as charming as it is thought?

Well, now let's dig deep into the lives of our beloved Scandinavians.

First things first, to clarify, the Nordic region consists of five countries and three autonomous territories: Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Iceland; the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland Islands. Although each of them have their own cultures and traditions, it is possible for us to talk about a common Nordic culture. Besides these shared traditions and values, we also witness similar living conditions amongst all, which enable us to evaluate them as a whole. [\(1\)](#)

Well, the word *comfort* is often thought to be an outcome of *prosperity* and many believe that *prosperity* is reached through a *never-ending working process* or in other words, *fatigue*. Looks like Northerners disagree as we see that they adopt a different approach than even from the other developed countries when it comes to working days/hours. For instance, in Norway, people work approximately 359 hours less than Americans and still have a higher annual GDP per capita than the United States. Moreover, the Swedish government permits its employees to take a 480-day paternity leave at about 80% of their salary. This not only results in an increase in the father's job satisfaction but also helps the mother to enhance her earnings to circa 7%. On the other hand, virtually all of the Scandinavian countries have legislations obliging a minimum of five weeks of paid vacation and thus their workforces are the recipients of some of the most paid yearly leave in the world. In addition, according to OECD's *"The Most Productive Countries in the World"* list, Finland, Sweden and Denmark are in the top 15, what's more, Norway shines in second place. In consideration of all of these aspects, looks like instead of a super tiring working environment, a new modern style which is based on a balance between work and social life helps countries to receive more beneficial outputs that ensure both comfort and wealth. [\(2\)](#)

Of course, under such circumstances, we all assume that happiness is inevitable. Well, surveys also prove those speculations. According to Global Finance's *"The Happiest Countries in 2020"* Report [\(3\)](#), Finland takes the lead, followed by Denmark in second place, while Iceland ranks as the fourth, Norway as the fifth, and Sweden as the seventh. This once again displays us the relation between physical, mental happiness and a balanced work-life system.

However, besides all of these rankings, there is one question we specifically need to talk about:

What about the ex-pats? Are they happy?

As the Nordic countries are some of the most desirable destinations to migrate, there is a considerable number of foreigners residing up in the North that we can not ignore. As it is generally observed, expatriates are so pleased because of all the opportunities they have related to their occupation, daily life, education, and healthcare. However, the challenge here, which leads to social isolation thus unhappiness in some cases, is socializing with the locals. Since the Scandinavian culture values privacy and is a more introverted one rather than the others, it can be challenging for foreigners to adapt to the culture at first. Hence, sometimes, this can obstruct the interaction between the ex-pats and the locals. [\(4\)](#)

To sum up, according to research and surveys, all of the stories that are being told about the Nordic countries are not fairytales, they are facts. Their astoundingly balanced work-life system, educational opportunities, and humane laws are indeed great examples for most of the countries all around our world.

Well, let's hope that this *comfort* does not only stay in Scandinavia in the future and spreads and becomes a worldwide phenomenon.

Till then, *ha det, farvel, adjö, bless, hyvästi* (goodbye) ☺