

## 6 Steps to Scandinavian Research Success



SINA ETTIMER / EYEEM GETTY

Despite popular belief, Vikings never wore horned helmets. Christians added horns to depictions of Vikings, considered pagans, to lend a barbarian look.

**1 START AT HOME.**  
Begin with the most recent person about whom you have information, then work back to previous generations. Look for a person's parents' names, including mother's maiden name, and their residence. Search for the birth city or village of your Scandinavian immigrant ancestor.

**2 SEARCH SCANDINAVIAN CHURCH PARISH RECORDS.**  
Search for the ancestor's birth, as well as before and after the birth to find other children of the same parents. You may find records of siblings with the same or similar given name. If a child died at birth or in infancy, the parents might give the same name to the next child of that gender. Sometimes a similar name might be given to a child of the other gender.

Resist the temptation to accept the first person you find with the name you're searching. This can send you on a wild goose chase, especially in patronymic systems where a par-

ish may have several same-named members. Use dates and parents' names to help you distinguish people of the same name.

**3 DOCUMENT THE PARENTS' MARRIAGE.**  
Search marriage records to find the parents' marriage. This record will often give you their birth, christening and confirmation dates, and parish of origin for both members of the couple.

**4 SEARCH FOR THE PARENTS' RECORDS.**  
Check the parishes indicated by the marriage record for each parent's birth or christening, confirmation and other records. These will likely name their parents with places of origin.

**5 RESEARCH EACH CHILD.**  
Now look for marriage and/or death records for all the children you've identified, and for the parents of their spouses. Repeat these steps for each generation.

**6 RECORD YOUR FINDS.**  
Transcribe each record into your notes in the native language, then translate it into your language. This will be essential to confirm you've found the right person or family. Glean all possible information from every record, including witnesses and references to other church records. Carefully cite the source of the record, as well.

### WHAT IS SCANDINAVIA?

"Scandinavia" usually refers to Denmark, Norway and Sweden, which are the focus of this guide. Some people use the term to mean the Scandinavian Peninsula (which includes Norway, Sweden and parts of Finland and Russia), or to the broader region also including Finland and Iceland. "Nordic countries" generally means Scandinavia plus Finland, Iceland and Greenland.

# SCANDINAVIAN NAMES

One-third of all Swedish surnames today end with *-son*.

## PATRONYMIC SURNAME SUFFIXES

Through the 19th century, most Scandinavians followed a patronymic surname system: a child's surname was based on his father's given name with the addition of a suffix, shown below. Niels' son Hans would be Hans Nielsen; Hans' daughter Olga would be Olga Hansdatter. People slowly began adopting fixed surnames as countries began requiring them. Late in the 19th century, many families, especially in Denmark, began using the male extension for both sons and daughters.

Country		Son	Daughter*
Denmark		-sen	-datter
Sweden		-son	-dotter
Norway	before 1814 (Danish rule)	-sen	-datter
	1814-1905 (Swedish rule)	-son	-dotter
	after 1905 (independence)	-søn	-dotter

\* Names may be abbreviated with *-dtr* in records.

## 6 RULES FOR SCANDINAVIAN NAMES

**1.** Women began adopting their husbands' surnames in the late 1800s. Ane Jensdatter (daughter of Jens) who married Nils Andersen (son of Anders) could become Ane Andersen. Watch for this when looking at a child's parents: Where you might normally expect to see the parents as Nils Andersen and Ane Jensdatter, you'd instead see Nils Andersen and Ane Andersen. Search for the couple's marriage record to confirm the woman's father's name.

**2.** A Scandinavian woman might have adopted her husband's surname upon immigrating. Check both ways.

**3.** Only one man with a particular name could be in a military unit, especially in Sweden. The next arrival with the same name got a new surname, usually based on a physical or other attribute (bearded, strong, etc.). He sometimes kept the name after his service ended.

**4.** Primarily in Denmark and parts of Norway, a family might take the name of their farm. They might carry the "farm name" to a new area to show where they came from.

**5.** Some families took geographic names rather than patronyms. Primarily in Sweden and sometimes Norway, these names usually represent a feature of the land, such as Lindberg ("tree" plus "mountain"). In Denmark and sometimes Norway, a geographic surname might be the name of a town.

**6.** Scandinavian alphabets have characters not appearing in English (see below). These are properly alphabetized after Z (except for *aa*, a now-obsolete letter that goes before *a*), but may be incorrectly alphabetized in English.

## PATRONYMICS TIMELINE

<b>1526</b>	Danish law requires fixed surnames for nobility.
<b>1771</b>	Law requires fixed surnames in Duchy of Schleswig in Denmark.
<b>1828</b>	Danish law requiring fixed surnames for all is largely ignored, especially in rural areas.
<b>1856</b>	Danish law "freezes" family names.
<b>1900</b>	Most Danes use fixed surnames.
<b>1901</b>	Swedish Name Adoption Act requires children to take a fixed surname.
<b>1904</b>	Danish law again requires fixed family names, establishing practices for selecting surnames.
<b>1923</b>	Norway requires all families to have a single, heritable surname.
<b>1966</b>	Sweden abolishes the patronymic system.
<b>2006</b>	Denmark reintroduces patronymics as an option for children's surnames.

## UNIQUE LETTERS IN SCANDINAVIAN ALPHABETS

Language	Lower case	Upper case	Often translated/transcribed in English as
Danish and Norwegian	æ	Æ	A, E, AE, Ae, a, e, æ
Danish and Norwegian	ø	Ø	O, e, o
Danish, Norwegian and Swedish	å or aa*	Å or Aa*	Aa, A, aa, a
Swedish	ä	Ä	A, a
Swedish	ö	Ö	O, o

\* *Aa* was used in Danish and Norwegian before 1915; it was alphabetized before *A*.

# GENEALOGY RECORDS

## TOP THREE SCANDINAVIAN GENEALOGY SOURCES

	DENMARK	NORWAY	SWEDEN
<b>Church records</b>	Records for most parishes date before 1700, with the earliest in Copenhagen in 1619. Record organization varies, usually by district, then parish. Search Rigsarkivet and MyHeritage	Records begin in 1685, organized in parishes or mother parishes. Records may be in Danish or Swedish. Search Arkivverket, no, Arkivalieronline, and Norwegian Historical Data Centre.	Records begin in 1686, organized in parishes or mother parishes. Search Riksarkivet, SVAR, ArkivDigital, MyHeritage, FamilySearch, and Umea University Demographic Database.
	Records include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• births/baptisms</li> <li>• confirmations</li> <li>• vaccinations (starting about 1810)</li> <li>• marriages/betrothals</li> <li>• deaths</li> <li>• incoming lists (indicate parish from which a new member transferred)</li> <li>• outgoing lists (indicate where a member was transferring to, sometimes "USA")</li> <li>• clerical surveys/household examination rolls (regular censuses of congregations, Sweden only)</li> </ul>		
<b>Censuses</b> (records may be missing or incomplete)	1840, 1845, 1850, 1855, 1860, 1870, 1880, 1890, 1901, 1911, 1916, 1921, 1925, 1930, 1940, 1950. Various years are at FamilySearch, MyHeritage and DDD.	1701, various in the 1700s, 1801, 1865, 1870, 1875, 1885, 1891, 1900 and 1910. Various years are at Norwegian Data Centre, Norway Digital Archives, Ancestry, FamilySearch, and MyHeritage.	None; use church household examination rolls as substitutes.
<b>Emigration records</b>	Copenhagen police emigration registers begin in 1869. Search Danish Emigration Archives, FamilySearch and DDD. Also search Hamburg, Germany, departure records for those from Southern Denmark.	Outgoing passenger lists and passport registers exist for varying years and ports. Search Digitalarkivet and Norway Heritage.	Emigration records begin about 1783 and consist of passport holders, police emigration registers and more. Search Ancestry, ArkivDigital and Emibas.

## SWEDISH HOUSEHOLD EXAMINATION ROLL

year, month and day of birth

parish moved from

death

attended examination and received Holy Communion

moved to

This Swedish household examination roll (*husförhör*) is from Värmland county, Svanskog parish, for the years 1861 to 1865. You can find a full translation of the column headings on ArkivDigital <[www.arkivdigital.net/swedish-genealogy/late-1800s-household-examination-record-example](http://www.arkivdigital.net/swedish-genealogy/late-1800s-household-examination-record-example)>.

## SCANDINAVIAN GENEALOGICAL WORD LIST

TERM	DENMARK	NORWAY	SWEDEN
birth	<i>født</i>	<i>fødte</i>	<i>födde</i>
census	<i>folketælling</i>	<i>folketelling</i>	<i>folkräkning</i>
child/children	<i>barn</i>	<i>barn/barna</i>	<i>barn</i>
christening	<i>døbt</i>	<i>døpte</i>	<i>dop</i>
confirmation	<i>konfirmation</i>	<i>konfirmasjon</i>	<i>konfirmation</i>
church books	<i>kirkebøger</i>	<i>kirkebøker</i>	<i>kyrkböcker</i>
communion	<i>communion</i>	<i>communion</i>	<i>nattvard</i>
vaccination (for smallpox)	<i>vaccination</i>	<i>vaksinasjon</i>	<i>vaccination</i>
marriage	<i>copulerede, viede, ægteskab</i>	<i>copulerede, viede, vigde</i>	<i>vigda, förbindelse</i>
banns	<i>lysning, forlovelse</i>	<i>lysingen, forlovelse</i>	<i>lysning, trolovning</i>
betrothal/engagement	<i>forlovelse</i>	<i>forlovelse</i>	<i>trolovning</i>
death	<i>døde</i>	<i>død</i>	<i>död</i>
burial	<i>begravelse</i>	<i>begravede</i>	<i>begravning</i>
genealogy	<i>slægtsforskning, genealogi</i>	<i>slektsforskning</i>	<i>släktforskning</i>
incoming list	<i>tilgangelister</i>	<i>tilgangelister, innflyttede</i>	<i>inflyttningsbok</i>
outgoing list	<i>afgangslister</i>	<i>afgangslister, uttflyttede</i>	<i>utflyttningsbok</i>
index	<i>register</i>	<i>Hovedsiden</i>	<i>fösamlingsböken</i>
household examination roll	<i>not used</i>	<i>not used</i>	<i>husförhörlängd</i>
name (given)	<i>fornavn</i>	<i>fornavn</i>	<i>förnamn</i>
name (last)	<i>efternavn</i>	<i>etternavn</i>	<i>efternamn</i>
parents	<i>forældre</i>	<i>foreldre</i>	<i>föräldrar</i>
parish (ecclesiastical)	<i>sogne</i>	<i>sogne</i>	<i>söcken, församling</i>

## DANISH BIRTH RECORD

birth date	place of birth	child's name	parents' names and marital status	baptismal date	officiant and whether baptized at home or church	witnesses	remarks
1905 den 29de Marts	Torslundevollen og Løge Smarum Sogn	Vilge Margrete Eliabeth Jensen	Peterson Jens Jensen og Fruen Sofie Katalde Ulsøe, 76 Aar, Torslundevollen.	den 7de Maj 1905	Løgesproester Kirken	Jordbønder Jens Jensen, Hjertede Niels de Ederose og Frøken Jens J. Jensen, og Fruen Sofie Ulsøe, alle Torslundevollen.	79

This 1905 Danish birth record is from Copenhagen county, Smørum district, Torslunde parish. Find a full translation of the column headings at [www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Denmark\\_Parish\\_Register\\_Headings](http://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Denmark_Parish_Register_Headings).

# GEOGRAPHY GUIDE

	DENMARK (DANMARK)	NORWAY (NORGE)	SWEDEN (SVERIGE)
<b>National capital</b>	Copenhagen	Oslo (called Christiania through the early 1900s)	Stockholm
<b>Other major cities</b>	Aarhus, Odense, Aalborg	Bergen, Hordaland, Stavanger/Sandnes, Rogaland, Trondheim	Gothenburg, Malmö, Uppsala
<b>Major emigration ports</b>	Copenhagen; Hamburg, Germany	Bergen, Stavanger, Oslo, Trondheim, Kristiansund	Goteborg, Malmö, Helsingborg, Kalmar, Norrköping, Stockholm
<b>Predominant religion</b>	Lutheran (Church of Denmark)	Lutheran (Church of Norway)	Lutheran (Church of Sweden)
<b>Historical administrative divisions</b>	counties ( <i>amter</i> ) 1793-1970: Abenrå Aalborg Aarhus Bornholm Frederiksborg Haderslev Hjørring Holbæk København Maribo Odense Præstø Randers Ribe Ringkøbing Roskilde Skanderborg Sorø Sønderborg Svendborg Thisted Tønder Vejle Viborg	counties ( <i>amt</i> ) 1760-1918 Akershus Bratsberg Jarlsberg Laurvigen Lister and Mandal Nedenes Nordlands Opplands Romsdal Stavanger Smålenenes Vardøhus	counties ( <i>län</i> ) (1810-1990s): Älvsborg Blekinge Gotland Gävleborg Göteborg och Bohus Halland Jämtland Jönköping Kalmar Kopparberg Kristianstad Kronoberg Malmöhus Norrbotten Örebro Östergötland Skaraborg Södermanland Stockholm Stockholm city/ county Uppsala Värmland Västerbotten Västernorrland Västmanland
<b>Modern administrative divisions</b>	regions ( <i>region</i> ): Hovedstaden Midtjylland Nordjylland Sjælland Syddanmark	counties ( <i>fylker</i> )* Akershus Aust-Agder Buskerud Finnmark Hedmark Hordaland Møre og Romsdal Nordland Oppland Oslo Østfold Rogaland Sogn og Fjordane Telemark Trøndelag Troms Vest-Agder Vestfold	counties ( <i>län</i> ): Blekinge Dalarna Gävleborg Gotland Halland Jämtland Jönköping Kalmar Kronoberg Norrbotten Örebro Östergötland Skåne Södermanland Stockholm Uppsala Värmland Västerbotten Västernorrland Västmanland Västra Götaland

**tip**

Ministers may have recorded when a birth or death happened by the religious feast day, which was based on the liturgical calendar. See [www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Scandinavia\\_Feast\\_Day\\_Calendar](http://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Scandinavia_Feast_Day_Calendar) for help decoding the dates.

\*Fylker will be reorganized into 11 larger regions by 2020.

Scandinavian countries consistently rank in the top 10 happiest countries in the UN's annual world happiness report.



BOGDANSERBAN/STOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS

# Timeline

<b>793</b>	The Viking Age begins with a raid against Lindisfarne, an island off the northeast coast of England.
<b>850-870</b>	Viking King Harold Fairhair unites Norway into one kingdom.
<b>883</b>	King Gorm unites the kingdom of Denmark.
<b>800s</b>	Norwegians discover Iceland late in the century.
<b>980s</b>	Norse explorer Erik the Red and a group of Icelanders settle on Greenland.
<b>c. 1000</b>	Leif Erikson, son of Eric the Red, discovers Newfoundland in what's now Canada.
<b>1004</b>	King Olof Skötkonung is baptized and makes Christianity the official religion of Sweden.
<b>1013</b>	Denmark, Norway and England unite in the North Sea Empire. It collapses after the death of Cnut the Great in 1035.
<b>1252</b>	The regent of Sweden, Birger Jarl, founds the city of Stockholm.
<b>1261</b>	Greenland and Iceland form a union with Norway under Magnus Lagabøte.
<b>1380</b>	Olaf Haakonsson inherits both the Norwegian and Danish thrones, creating a union between the two countries.
<b>1397</b>	The Kalmar Union joins Norway, Sweden and Denmark.
<b>1495</b>	The Russo-Swedish War begins and it lasts for two years.
<b>1524</b>	The Treaty of Malmö is signed. Denmark-Norway recognizes the independence of Sweden, while in return Sweden renounces its claims to Scania and Blekinge, provinces at the country's southern tip.
<b>1536</b>	The Lutheran Reformation begins in Denmark with a decree by King Christian III.
<b>1619</b>	King Christian IV of Denmark and Norway commissions an expedition to the New World. On board is the Rev. Rasmus Jensen, a priest of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark.
<b>1660</b>	Treaty of Copenhagen establishes the boundaries of Denmark, Sweden and Norway.
<b>1700</b>	The Great Northern War pits Sweden against Russia, Saxony-Poland and Denmark-Norway. It eventually leads to the 1721 Treaty of Nystad and Sweden's cession of its Baltic provinces back to Russia.
<b>1728</b>	Danish explorer Vitus Jonassen Bering documents the strait separating North America and Asia. He later was the first European to arrive in Alaska, in 1741.
<b>1729</b>	Greenland becomes a province of Denmark.

In the 2000 US census, 30 percent of the population of North Dakota claimed Norwegian roots, followed by Minnesota (17.3%), South Dakota (15.3%), Wisconsin (8.5%) and Iowa (5.5%).

<b>1807</b>	Denmark-Norway enters the Napoleonic Wars on France's side, devastating Norway's economy.
<b>1814</b>	With the Treaty of Kiel, Denmark cedes Norway to Sweden.
<b>1825</b>	The first immigrants leave Norway for America.
<b>1833</b>	Alfred Bernhard Nobel, the inventor of dynamite, is born in Stockholm. He later wills 2 million pound sterling to fund awards in literature, chemistry, physics, medicine and peace.
<b>1839</b>	Copenhagen-born blacksmith Peter Lassen leads a group from Missouri to California, establishing a trail later used by thousands of "Forty-niners" out for gold.
<b>1840s</b>	Swedish immigrants found American settlements in western Illinois, Iowa, central Texas, southern Minnesota and western Wisconsin.
<b>1865</b>	Norway's population reaches 1.7 million; an increase due to improved nutrition, hygiene and infant mortality rates.
<b>1866</b>	The Treaty of Prague cedes Denmark's Schleswig-Holstein region to Prussia.
<b>1905</b>	Norway proclaims its independence from Sweden.
<b>1918</b>	Iceland becomes an independent state under the Danish crown. The countries abolished the union in 1944.
<b>1920</b>	Northern Schleswig rejoins Denmark from Germany.
<b>1940</b>	Germany begins six-year occupation of Denmark and invades Norway. Sweden successfully maintains neutrality and becomes a haven for Jews from other Scandinavian countries.
<b>1943</b>	Swede Ingvar Kamprad founds IKEA, which now has more than 300 stores in 38 countries.
<b>1945</b>	German forces in Norway surrender; the royal family returns from exile in England.
<b>1971</b>	Oil production begins in the North Sea.
<b>2000</b>	A bridge and tunnel link Copenhagen, Denmark, with Malmö, Sweden, making it possible to travel between the countries in just 15 minutes.

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR SCANDINAVIAN DNA RESULTS

Scandinavian ethnicity in DNA test results doesn't necessarily indicate Scandinavian ancestry. In addition to Sweden, Norway and Denmark, Scandinavian DNA is commonly found in these geographic areas:

- Great Britain
- France
- Germany
- Netherlands
- Belgium

- Finland
- the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania)

How can this be? Scandinavian DNA made its way around the European continent with the Vikings as they raided and settled coastal areas. Germanic tribes (including some with origins in what's now Denmark) migrated to England starting in the fifth century, and England had a dynasty of Viking kings in the 11th century. The French Normans also descended from the Vikings.

## RESOURCES

***The Age of the Vikings*** by Anders Windroth (Princeton University Press)

***The Conversion of Scandinavia: Vikings, Merchants, and Missionaries in the Remaking of Northern Europe*** by Anders Windroth (Yale University Press)

**\$ Ancestry.com** <ancestry.com>

**\$ EmiWeb** (emigration records) <emiweb.se/en/home>

**FamilySearch** <www.familysearch.org>

**\$ MyHeritage** <www.myheritage.com>

### Denmark

**Arkivalieronline** (digitized church, census and other records) <www.sa.dk/da/brug-arkivet/arkivalieronline-se-originale-dokumenter-paa-nettet>

**Danish Demographic Database (DDD)** (indexed census and other records) <www.ddd.dda.dk/ddd\_en.htm>

**Danish Emigration Archives** <www.udvanderarkivet.dk/udvanderprotokollerne>

**Danish Migration Museum** <immigrantmuseet.dk/english>

**Danish National Archives (Rigsarkivet)** <www.sa.dk/en>

***A History of Denmark, 2nd ed***, by Knud J.V. Jespersen (Macmillan International Higher Education)

**Museum of Danish America** <www.danishmuseum.org/explore/genealogy/resources>

**National Danish-American Genealogical Society** <danishgenealogy.org>

### Norway

**Ancestry & History (Slekt & Historie)** <www.borgos.nndata.no/jborgose.htm>

**National Archival Services of Norway (Arkivverket)** <www.arkivverket.no/en>

**Norway Digital Archives** <www.digitalarkivet.no/en>

**Norway-Heritage: Hands Across the Sea** <www.norwayheritage.com>

**Norwegian-American Genealogical Center & Naeseth Library** <www.nagcni.org>

**Norwegian Farm Names** <www.dokpro.uio.no/rygh\_ng/rygh\_form.html>

**Norwegian Genealogical Society (Norsk Slektshistorisk Forening)** <www.genealogi.no/about-us>

**Norwegian Genealogy and Then Some** <martinroe.com/blog>

**Norwegian Historical Data Centre** <www.rhd.uit.no/indexeng.html>

### Sweden

**\$ ArkivDigital: Swedish Genealogy** <www.arkivdigital.net>

**Demographic Database for Southern Sweden** <www.ddss.nu>

**Rötter (Roots)** <genealogi.se>

**Släktdata** (church records) <emiweb.se/en/home>

***A Student's Guide to Scandinavian American Genealogy*** by Lisa Olson Paddock and Carl Sokolnicki Rollyson (Oryx Press)

***The Swedish American Genealogist*** edited by Elisabeth Thorsell (quarterly of the Swenson Swedish Immigration Center)

**Swedish Emigrant Institute** <www.kulturparkensmaland.se/1.0.1.0/750/2>

**Swedish National Archives (Riksarkivet)** <sok.riksarkivet.se>

**Swenson Swedish Immigration Center** <www.augustana.edu/swenson>

**Umea University Demographic Database** <www.cedar.umu.se/english>

***Your Swedish Roots: A Step-by-Step Handbook*** by Per Clemensson and Kjell Andersson (Ancestry)