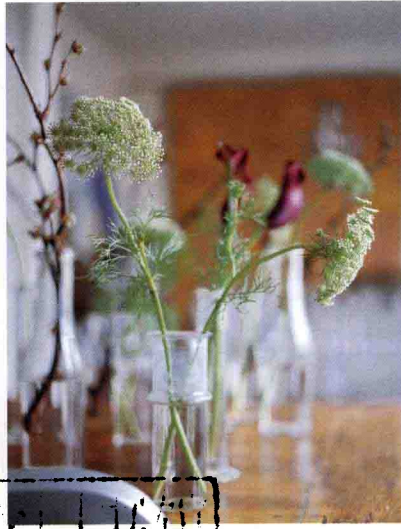


Simply Scandinavian



CONTRIBUTING EDITOR Sara Horman



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Scandinavian

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introduction

Interior trends come and go, but Scandinavian style remains. Homes in the Nordic countries – Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark and Iceland – have a relaxed way of living that is copied and emulated the world over. These countries are

incredibly varied in cultural heritage, but all share a very similar design aesthetic – from Tromsø to Esbjerg, Scandinavian homes are light, friendly and simply gorgeous.

In this book, we showcase a range of stylish homes, from Ilkka Suppanen's minimalist dream home on an island off the Finnish coast, to Anja Alfieri's feminine and ornate house in southern Sweden. They are miles apart when it comes to aesthetics, but are both unmistakably Scandinavian – there is an illusive quality that unites them. This quality could be the unique light on these northern shores that gives any interior a dream-like and slightly melancholy aspect. Or perhaps it is simply the owners' eternal quest for said light – in countries that see whole months of near-total darkness, the need to create homes that invite in the smallest of sunrays is overwhelming.

Households in Scandinavia did away with dark furniture and heavy textiles on a larger scale from as early as the mid-1950s. The post-war era brought with it a revolution in design and architecture that went hand in hand with the social democratic political movement that swept the nations – good design,





like free healthcare and schooling, was available to everybody. As opposed to many other movements, the Scandinavian look has not grown out of palaces, unlike the gilded splendour of French baroque, nor from the imports of exotic colonies, as in the swathed shapes of Victorian Britain. Scandinavian style is affordable, practical yet beautiful – it is a form of design that works hard on all levels.

A love of pale and muted colours can be seen in most homes. You can decorate with any colour in a Scandinavian interior – as long as it's white. And the white palette runs the whole gamut from the brightest gallery whites to the softly pale grey Gustavian whites – it is, perhaps, the interiors equivalent to the many words for snow in the Inuit language.

But if the walls, floors and ceilings remain stubbornly quiet, there has always been scope for loud and colourful textiles and accessories in Nordic homes.

In the Swedish county of Dalarna, the 18th-century kurbits paintings on cupboards and chests are flamboyantly bright, while Finnish traditional clothing comes embroidered with roses that are far from pared back. This love of joyful textiles continues to this day, with the larger-than-life blooms of Marimekko.

When it comes to designers worth name-dropping, Scandinavia is second perhaps only to Italy. This mix between cutting-edge designs and more traditional craft is a winning combination in Scandinavian design – revolutionary items like the Cobra phone, Verner Panton's moulded plastic chair and the PH light now exist





happily alongside a thriving craft-based industry, with Nordic linen, glass and ironwork enjoying a revival.

The main inspiration in Nordic homes is taken from right outside the window – nature. The Scandinavians were bringing the outside in, in the shape of wooden floors and wool rugs, when everybody else in Europe was busy laying synthetic carpets. Even highly designed items take natural shapes, like Alvar Aalto's iconic Savoy vase, which is shaped like an undulating beach line.

Wood is perhaps the most common of the natural materials, due of course to the abundance of forests. Other popular materials that are an instant Scandi hit in the home are stone, hides, felt and pewter – when it comes to metal, bling is bad; think brass instead of gold, or pewter instead of silver. The open flame is also an important component – many homes have wood-fired ovens. Modern households that have only central heating are still fond of lighting candles, to create a cozy ambience.

As much as Scandinavians love their homes, they are also (and have always been) avid travellers. Many interiors bear traces of journeys abroad, and treasures brought back from exotic lands often sit comfortably with the calm Nordic interiors. Mixing local and foreign is one Scandinavian knack; mixing old and new is another. This is partly due to environmental awareness and partly a pride in heritage and traditions. Whatever the history, natural backdrop or design heritage, when styles are mixed up, it creates homes that are all about relaxed comfort; places where everybody should feel at home. And perhaps this is the elusive component that defines Scandinavian homes – it's a style that is so much more than fabric swatches or paint samples. It's a style formed by life.





Elegant Simplicity

One of the clearest examples of Scandinavian elegance comes in the form of the Gustavian style, which was inspired by the French court in the late 18th century. But on their way north, the lines of the adorned chairs and cabinets became simpler, the colours toned down and the luxurious fabrics substituted for tougher materials – all the better to suit the simpler conditions and harsher usage in the homes of Scandinavia where the furniture ended up taking residence. Today, Gustavian furniture with its elegantly simple lines in pale greys and whites remains popular. The timeless look has been updated and reproduced many a time since, and sits equally well in a modern house as in a manor.



norwegian wood

Brekkestø is a small village located on the southern coast of Norway, in a region known as Sørlandet (the South Land). The village forms part of the municipality of Lillesand, in the county of Aust-Agder. These might all sound like geographical references lifted directly from *The Lord of the Rings*, and indeed could well be, given that J. R. R. Tolkien was an expert on Scandinavian languages, in particular old Norwegian and Icelandic.

Fishing and sailing are still important industries in Norway, and its coast is made up of long fjords, cutting deep into the country. The history of Brekkestø is closely connected with these activities. During winter, when the fjords freeze over, the seafarers of old had to base their fleets as far out into the ice-free ocean as possible so that they would be in a position to set sail early each spring. Villages

ABOVE The extension table in Gustavian style in the dining room is early 20th century. It may well be made up of several unrelated parts that have been put together. **RIGHT** When the tide is high, the water line reaches right up to the front of the house. The water retreats after a few hours, its salt impregnating the timber and making it rock hard.



OPPOSITE The central core of the house is clad in raw timber that has been painted, while the rooms leading off it have plastered walls. The house seems to be full of pieces of furniture that have been there for years, but the reality is different; old fishing houses such as this one often relied on foreign imports.