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Discover the Magic of a Swedish Christmas

London, UK – 14th October 2024 – Christmas in Sweden is a celebration steeped in tradition, warmth, and togetherness. From cosy gatherings around candle-lit windows to indulging in the festive *julbord* (Christmas buffet), Swedish Christmas traditions offer a unique and enchanting way to celebrate the season. This year, embrace the Swedish spirit by learning how to celebrate Jul (Christmas) like a Swede and exploring the best places to experience these traditions, both in Sweden and here in the UK.

How Christmas is Celebrated in Sweden

Swedish Christmas celebrations begin long before the 25th of December, with the Christmas season truly kicking off on the first Sunday of Advent. From late November, Sweden is transformed into a winter wonderland, with streets lined with twinkling lights and star-shaped paper lanterns glowing in windows. Each Advent Sunday, a candle is lit in a traditional four-candle candelabra, and families gather to enjoy mulled wine (*glögg*), gingerbread (*pepparkakor*), and saffron buns (*lussekatter*).

Lucia Day: A Festival of Light

One of the most beloved Swedish traditions is *Lucia Day*, celebrated on 13 December. This ancient festival marks the winter solstice and honours Saint Lucia, the bringer of light. Lucia processions take place across Sweden in Churches, schools, offices and shopping centres, featuring children and adults dressed in white gowns, carrying candles, and singing traditional Lucia songs. This magical event is often accompanied by the sharing of saffron buns and gingerbread biscuits, with families and communities coming together to bask in the warm glow of candlelight.

Christmas Eve: The Heart of Swedish Celebrations

In Sweden, the highlight of the festive season is Christmas Eve on 24 December. This is when families gather to enjoy the iconic *julbord*, a bountiful smörgåsbord of traditional Swedish Christmas foods. The *julbord* includes:

- *Julskinka* (Christmas ham)
- Swedish meatballs
- Pickled herring (*sill*)
- Beetroot salad (*rödbetssallad*)
- A selection of cheeses
- *Ris à la Malta* (vanilla rice pudding with orange slices)

These delicious dishes are complemented by *julöl* (Christmas beer) and *julmust* (a seasonal soft drink). After the feast, it's time for *jultomten* (Santa Claus) to make an appearance, delivering presents to excited children. One charming Swedish custom is for an adult to 'pop out to get the newspaper' only to return dressed as Santa, delighting the children with gifts.

An essential part of the Christmas Eve tradition in Sweden is gathering around the TV at 3:00 PM to watch the annual "Donald Duck and his friends wish you a Merry Christmas" (*Kalle Anka och hans vänner önskar God Jul*), a Disney classic that has become a cultural fixture in Swedish households.

Sweden's Best Christmas Markets

For travellers looking to experience Swedish Christmas firsthand, the country boasts some of the most atmospheric Christmas markets in Europe. Here are a few must-visit markets to experience the true magic of a Swedish Christmas:

- **Skansen Christmas Market, Stockholm**: Set in the open-air museum on Royal Djurgården, this historic market has been a highlight since 1903. Here, visitors can shop for traditional Christmas foods, handicrafts, and gifts, while enjoying live music and festive workshops for children. 12 dates starting 29th Nov, through to 22nd Dec 2024.
- **Stortorgets Julmarknad, Stockholm Old Town**: Stockholm's oldest Christmas market, held in the beautiful square of Gamla Stan, features stalls selling Swedish Christmas sweets, artisanal goods, and handcrafted gifts.
- **Liseberg Christmas Market, Gothenburg**: Liseberg Amusement Park transforms into a winter wonderland, with thousands of twinkling lights, an ice rink, and stalls offering Swedish Christmas delicacies. A *julbord* at Liseberg is a must for food lovers. November 16 to December 29 2024.

- **Falun Mine Christmas Market, Dalarna**: Located at the UNESCO World Heritage site, this market is known for its

traditional carollers and locally made crafts, all set against the stunning backdrop of Falun Mine. It is said to be the largest Christmas fair in Sweden with the market attracting 12,000 visitors and is held on 8th Dec 2024.
- **Jämtli Christmas Market, Östersund**: Held at the Jamtli Museum, this market offers a mix of snow-covered historic buildings, sleigh rides, and nearly 200 vendors selling local handicrafts and Christmas foods. Open: 6-8 December 2024.

Other notable markets include those at Tjolöholm Castle in Halland and Huseby Bruk in Småland, both offering traditional Swedish food, gifts, and a festive atmosphere filled with Christmas cheer.

Experience a Touch of Swedish Christmas in the UK

For those unable to travel to Sweden, there are plenty of opportunities to celebrate like a Swede here in the UK.

The Swedish Church in London offers a range of events and activities to bring a slice of Swedish Christmas magic to the UK:

- **Sankta Lucia Celebrations**: Lucia processions will be held across the UK, where audiences can experience the beauty and tranquillity of this beloved Swedish tradition. The Lucia celebrations are filled with the sound of traditional songs, the glow of candles, and an atmosphere of serene beauty. Tickets go fast and are sell-out events.
    - **Sankta Lucia at St Bartholomew's Church, Brighton** – 7 Dec, 4:00 PM
    - **Sankta Lucia at Southwark Cathedral, London** – 8 Dec, 7:00 PM
    - **Sankta Lucia at Westminster Cathedral, London** – 13 Dec, 7:00 PM
    - **Sankta Lucia at York Minster, York** – 14 Dec, 7:00 PM

For more information about Sankta Lucia events in the UK, visitSwedish Church London.

- **Swedish Christmas Market (Julmarknad), London**: The Swedish Church in London also hosts a traditionalChristmas market at Harcourt Street, Marylebone, offering visitors the chance to buy Swedish handicrafts, enjoy festive food, and take home a touch of Swedish Christmas spirit. The market runs from 22 to 24 November 2024.

Create a Swedish Julbord (Christmas diner) at home with food supplies fromTotally Swedish and Scandi Kitchen, our food supply experts here in London.

Whether you're celebrating at home with a Swedish*julbord* or visiting a festive market, experiencing a Swedish Christmas will fill your holiday season with warmth, joy, and cherished traditions. As we say in Sweden; God Jul!

Jul Toolkit:

Press photos and videos:

https://contentbank.visitsweden.com/selection/38d3a1cb01772c1067fd479e868690a2 and https://imagebank.sweden.se/my-selections/1tu7fwc62e

Recipes:

https://sweden.se/culture/food/janssons-temptation and https://sweden.se/culture/food/schnapps-and-glogg and https://sweden.se/culture/food/saffron-buns-and-gingerbread-biscuits

Spotify list with Swedish Christmas songs:

https://open.spotify.com/playlist/2oT68lhMF9xVsOjJGYDuyj?si=d12fc4f11d9a4c23&nd=1&dlsi=3d7184424965400a

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