

Holy Shift! Sweden's Kiruna Church Prepares for its Grand, Two-Day Pilgrimage to a New Home

In a truly world-unique event, the iconic Kiruna Church is set to embark on a momentous journey to its new location as part of the ongoing city transformation. The move, an LKAB project, will unfold over two days, from 19-20 August 2025, promising a spectacular and unforgettable experience for residents and visitors alike.

This extraordinary relocation of Kiruna Church is like watching a beloved, ancient ship, steeped in history and community spirit, slowly yet gracefully sail to a new harbour, ready to continue its journey and welcome new generations.

Kiruna's ongoing urban transformation involves the extraordinary relocation of significant parts of the city, leading to its description as 'a city in motion'. This comprehensive transformation, which began planning over two decades ago and has garnered worldwide attention, includes the moving of Kiruna Church as the largest building in the process. The city is repositioning its valuable structures and community life to a new location, ensuring its continued vitality and preserving its rich history.

Recognised as Sweden's most beautiful building and possessing immense cultural-historical value, Kiruna Church, consecrated in 1912, is truly a landmark. Its distinctive architecture harmonises Norwegian stave churches with the Sámi tent shape and National Romantic style. This particular relocation marks the largest building ever to be moved in Kiruna's extensive city transformation, a process planned for over two decades that has garnered global attention. To date, 23 cultural buildings have already been relocated.

The Church on the Move: A Feat of Engineering and Precision

The decision was made to transport the church **as a whole, complete building**, rather than dismantling it, to preserve its cultural value and integrity. This includes its bell tower, altar piece, organ, and supporting structure. Weighing approximately **600 tonnes** (with the bell tower adding another 100 tonnes), the church will be loaded onto a specialised trailer and moved hydraulically.

The move will cover a distance of approximately **5 kilometres** along a purpose-built route, **24 metres wide**, for which preparatory work has been ongoing for a year. The church is estimated to travel at a stately pace of around **0.5 to 1 kilometre per hour**. Veidekke has been entrusted with this monumental task, including the preparation of the route and the new foundation. Every step of the move is being meticulously documented to gather valuable experience for future projects.

A New Home with a Nod to the Past

The church's new home has been carefully chosen in close dialogue with the Kiruna Parish, the municipality, and the county administrative board. It will be situated between the cemetery and the new Kiruna city centre, which is being constructed approximately three kilometres east of the current one. Interestingly, the church's placement at the new site will see its chancel rotated 180 degrees to face west, drawing inspiration from the traditional folk church design where the entrance faces the community. Hjalmar Lundbohm's grave, the founder of Kiruna, will also be moved to the church's new site.

A Festival of Farewell and Future

The move will be a truly public spectacle, livestreamed for global viewing. The event, dubbed "The Great Church Walk" (Den Stora Kyrkvandringen), invites everyone to witness this historic moment. A comprehensive program of activities is planned over three days, commencing on 17 August, offering a mix of entertainment, insights, and community engagement.

Highlights include:

- **The Church Race (Kyrkloppet)** on Sunday, 17 August, offering participants the unique chance to run the same route the church will take.
- An **exhibition of artworks** and a collective photo book at the City Hall from Monday, 18 August, capturing memories of the church.
- A **blessing of the church and its travel path** by Lena Tjärnberg, vicar of Kiruna Parish, and Åsa Nyström, Bishop of Luleå Diocese, just before the move commences on 19 August.
- Live interviews with experts, reflections on the church's history, and musical performances on a large stage at Stadshustorget (City Hall Square) throughout both moving days.
- Musical performances by **Sámi choir, Kiruna Kickers, Vox Arctica, Fredrik Hangasjärvi + Emma Kiviniemi, and a Gospel choir**.
- And, with a definite twinkle in their eye, the Swedish Eurovision act **KAJ will perform** on the evening of 19 August, after

the church stops for the day. Stefan Holmblad Johansson, Project Manager for the church move at LKAB, warmly notes, "What could be better than KAJ bringing their 'sauna' (warmth, joy, and community) to Kiruna?".

- The celebrations will culminate with a performance by **Carola** on the evening of 20 August, once the church has reached its new destination.

All activities are **free of charge**, and no pre-booking is required. LKAB will also be offering complimentary coffee and breakfast rolls, lunch wraps, and ice cream at various points. A special "Kyrkkaffe" (church coffee) event, aiming to set a new world record for church coffee, will take place, where a new limited edition church mug will be distributed.

"The church has been a crucial gathering place for generations, holding a special place in many hearts," said Stefan Holmblad Johansson, Project Manager for The Church Move at LKAB, in a press release. "We want the move to be a beautiful memory and create new opportunities for people to come together". KAJ echoes this sentiment, stating, "To come to Kiruna when the church is moved is fantastic, an event that will be in the history books. To be part of this is a memory for life".

Lena Tjärnberg, Vicar of Kiruna Parish, expressed her anticipation: "It feels wonderful that the church will move to its new place and come home. We look forward to opening the church again and having a vibrant parish life in the new location". Kiruna Municipal Councillor Mats Taaveniku added, "Moving Kiruna Church, a building of such dignity, is a historic event both in Kiruna and across the country. It has always been a safe place and a beautiful building we are all proud of".

Visitors are strongly encouraged to use public transport due to expected road closures and high attendance. Designated viewing areas with large screens will be available, and bringing a blanket or chair is recommended to enjoy the "monumental meander" in comfort.

More Information:

- [On the Church move](#)
- [On Kiruna](#)

Press Images:

- lkab.com/press
- ['Kaj' Press Images](#)
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