Sweden's Gävle Goat turns 60 – but will it survive Christmas?

It has been burned down, vandalised and even survived birds picking apart its straw. Yet Sweden's most accident-prone Christmas icon keeps returning. On 29 November 2026, the giant Gävle Goat celebrates its 60th anniversary. And as always, the question is not just how the celebrations will go, but whether the guest of honour will make it through Christmas, with fans in 120 countries able to follow its fate via a 24-hour webcam.

It started in 1966 as an idea to attract Christmas shoppers. Local businessman Stig Gavlén proposed building a giant version of the traditional Swedish Christmas goat, or *julbock*. The result was a ten-metre-tall, seven-metre-long straw goat weighing around three tonnes.

It did not make it to the new year. On New Year's Eve, the first Gävle Goat went up in flames.

What might have been the end of a Christmas promotion instead became the beginning of one of Sweden's most unusual festive traditions. Sixty years later, the goat still returns to Gävle every Advent.



Photo: Veronica Thuresson/visitgavle.se (Download)

A Christmas tradition with an eventful past

The *julbock* has been part of Swedish Christmas folklore for centuries. Today, its smaller straw goats remain a familiar seasonal decoration in Swedish homes, but Gävle's version has acquired a reputation all of its own.

Since 1966, the giant goat has returned every Christmas despite repeated setbacks. It has been set alight, vandalised and even targeted in a reported plot to abduct it by helicopter. In 2023, it faced a rather different threat: jackdaws discovered the seeds in its straw and began eating their way through the decoration.

For the people of Gävle, the aim is nevertheless clear every year: the goat is supposed to survive.

That uncertainty has become part of its international appeal. After six decades, the goat has become the unlikely star of an annual Christmas story in which the main character rarely moves, says nothing and still manages to keep an international audience interested.

From Christmas curiosity to international attraction

Over the years, webcams have allowed people from around the world to keep an eye on Gävle's famous resident and check whether it is still standing. Around 100,000 visitors from 120 countries follow the webcam. The goat even has its own Instagram account. Some fans even make the journey themselves.

For its anniversary year, the 2026 livestream begins on 26 November, showing the construction and following the goat throughout the festive season.



Gävle's most famous resident has his own road sign. Photo: Daniel Bernstål (Download)

A 60th birthday worth travelling for

On Sunday 29 November, Gävle celebrates the goat's 60th anniversary with a day of Christmas festivities. The official inauguration takes place at 4pm, with Christmas festivities starting earlier in the day.

Along Östra Drottninggatan, the Christmas market brings together local crafts, seasonal food and Swedish Christmas treats. At the County Museum of Gävleborg, visitors can see the unveiling of an elaborate gingerbread house, created by local gingerbread artist Erik Olof Wiklund – a rather more edible example of Swedish Christmas craftsmanship.

For those planning a longer visit, Gävle also offers Christmas concerts throughout December, while traditional Christmas markets at the historic ironworks in the surrounding Gästrikland region provide another reason to explore beyond the city centre.

Gävle is around 90 minutes by direct train from Stockholm, making the anniversary celebrations an accessible addition to a winter trip to Sweden.

Livestream: Begins 26 November 2026
Anniversary celebration: 29 November 2026, Gävle, Sweden

Further Information

- The Gävle Goat – A Christmas tradition to look forward to https://www.visitgavle.se/en/gavle-goat
- https://visitsweden.com/where-to-go/northern-sweden/gastrikland/
- Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/gavlebocken/

Press images

- https://gavlekommun.mediaflowportal.com/publik/search/?G%C3%A4vlebocken
- Gävle Press Room: https://www.visitgavle.se/sv/gavlebockens-pressrum

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