

Christmas and New Year in Sweden

For the meeting in Remscheid in November 2007 the Swedish team chose to tell about how we celebrate Christmas and New Year in Sweden.

The students in FR2TU, the second grade at our tourism education, worked together in groups with the task, which was writing a brief but informative text in English, the target group being the students from the other countries in the project.

Different ways of celebrating Christmas

Everyone in Sweden doesn't celebrate Christmas by tradition. That can be for many reasons. For example if you have a religion that celebrates something else or doesn't celebrates anything this time of the year. But if you are a Jew , you can celebrate Hanukkah – a Jewish tradition. Everybody doesn't even have the luck to celebrate Christmas with the family. It can be poor , lonely or homeless people. But for those people , some organisations give them food, clothes and somewhere to live during Christmas. And some people just don't celebrate Christmas. Instead of that, you can for example go abroad or do something else instead.



Advent



Advent is the Latin word for "coming". The four Sundays of advent are often traditionally celebrated with four candles, one to be lit each Sunday. Each candle has a specific meaning, The first one always symbolizes hope, the others symbolize peace, love and joy. In Sweden we usually have white or red candles in the candleholder. There are many different kinds of special candleholders and often white moss is used as a decoration.

Santa Lucia



St. Lucia Day is a holiday that is held on December 13. St. Lucia Day is celebrated in a few countries in Europe as Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Croatia.

It is held in the honour of Saint Lucy. She lived on Sicily about 1700 years ago.

Here in Sweden we celebrate St. Lucia Day like this: Early in the morning of St. Lucia day some people dress up in white robes. One of the girls wears a crown of candles, she is "the Lucia". They walk in a procession and sing Christmas songs, they also serve saffron buns.

The Christmas-goat

The Christmas-goat is one of our oldest Christmas symbols. Until the 19th century all the teenagers went from house to house and sang a Christmas-goat song! One of them was dressed up as the goat! And if they were good they got sweets! In the 19th century the goat also got a new task – They had to deliver the Christmas presents! Now in the 21st century the goat is just a decoration and it mostly stands by the Christmas tree!

One famous goat is the Gävle-goat! The strange history of the Gävle Goat began in 1966. A man named Stig Gavlén came up with the idea of making a giant version of the traditional Swedish Christmas goat of straw. Every year they build a new one, and every year someone burns it down! It has become a tradition!



Decorating our house

At Christmas in Sweden we decorate our houses.

In the beginning of December we put our electric advent candlesticks, a candlestick with several branches, in our windows.

We also decorate our houses with Christmas-goats, porcelain figures formed like angels and goblins and oranges with cloves in.

In our windows we have red Christmas curtains and over our beds or over the fireplace we have Christmas stockings.

Over our doors we hang a mistletoe.

And Christmas garland on our front doors.

The day before Christmas Eve we take in a Christmas tree, a spruce, and we decorate it with things like coloured balls, tinsel and a tinsel-star on the top.



Christmas Eve



The Christmas Eve begins with eating the rice porridge. If you are lucky Santa Claus might have left a Christmas present in your Christmas stocking or under the Christmas tree.

Then it's a long wait, when you prepare the food and maybe make toffee and Christmas candy.

Around 2 o'clock the relatives arrive and you drink mulled wine served with raisins and almonds and eat gingerbread biscuits, and 3 o'clock you look at "Donald Duck's Christmas".

After that you and all the relatives sit down and eat the big Christmas dinner.

After you have eaten, you wait for Santa Claus, who comes with presents. Then you give presents to each other and eat candy and biscuits.

Some families dance around the Christmas tree and sing songs.

Some people go to church in the morning or in the evening. (or both.)

Christmas food

In Sweden we have a lot of different food on our table.

The most common food is meatballs, chipolatos, Jansson's temptation, Christmas porridge and Christmas ham.

Jansson's temptation is a kind of potato au gratin but with tinned sprats in it.

The day before Christmas Eve we make our Christmas ham ready and when the clock turns to midnight and the ham is warm and ready we make our first sandwich with ham and mustard.

When we wake up in the morning of Christmas Eve we eat Christmas porridge for breakfast, and don't forget to put out a plate for Santa Claus or else he will be sad.

In the afternoon we make our Christmas smorgasbord ready with meatballs, chipolatos, Jansson's temptation, Christmas ham, spareribs, herring, snaps, beetroot salad, salmon and much more.



Cakes & Bread

In Sweden we have gingerbread that is a thin crispy cookie or a softer cookie similar to the German lebkuchen. You can make the gingerbread cookies in different kind of shapes, like stars, hearts, men and women, pigs and you can also make houses like in the story Hans and Gretchen.



We also have saffron buns, that is a bun flavoured with saffron and cinnamon or nutmeg and it contains currants. This bun is very important during the Lucia holiday. You can also make this bun in different shapes, but the most usual is the one you make to an "S" and then put raisins in the middle of the two circles.

The most popular Christmas candy is "Knäck" that is made of syrup, sugar and cream with chopped almond.



New Years Eve



While Christmas in Sweden is spent in the homes with the families New Year is usually celebrated with friends and acquaintances. We celebrate it in the night between 31st December and 1st January. People are dressing up to go out and party and don't mind the cold weather. We enjoy the beautiful fireworks that lights up the sky at 12.00p.m. and toast in champagne. Earlier the evening we have eaten tasty food and we have drunk a bit. Then we make New Year resolutions that no one keeps.