



# GLITTERING GOTHENBURG

Nicknamed 'Christmas City', Gothenburg becomes a truly magical place over the festive period

There was a collective gasp as millions of tiny lights lit up Liseberg Amusement Park. At the flick of a switch, trees and buildings sparkled to the delight of those who'd braved freezing temperatures to enjoy the opening night of Gothenburg's – and Sweden's – largest Christmas market.

Instead of ordering presents on the Internet or trudging around soulless shopping centres, we decided to rekindle our festive spirit by bringing our children to Sweden's second city, less than two hours' flying time from the UK. We were also hoping to pick up a few unusual gifts for folks back home.

The aroma of toasted almonds, mulled wine and ginger biscuits filled the frosty night air as we roamed the park. While skilled craftsmen were busy making everything from silverware to hand-rolled

cigars, children were skating on the floodlit ice rink and being frightened out of their wits on the roller coaster.

From wooden cabins, traders sold their wares, including intricately made Swedish gnomes, jewellery, candles and hand-crafted dolls. We'd been planning to update our tree



“ SWEDEN'S SECOND CITY BOASTS BROAD AVENUES, ELEGANT SQUARES, SPLENDID ARCHITECTURE, ACRES OF PARKLAND AND A RELAXED, FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE ”

decorations for years, so we treated ourselves to some packs of brightly painted baubles.

There was so much to see and enjoy, the hours flew by. But underneath the starlit sky, the temperature was plummeting and we returned to our hotel to thaw out.

Across the road from Liseberg, the 23-storey Gothia Towers Hotel dwarfs others in the city. Its central location is perfect for exploring not just the park, but the city centre.

Next morning, we took instructions from the hotel receptionist (everyone speaks fluent English) and jumped on a city centre-bound tram. Organised and reliable, trams are ideal for getting around – and fares are free if you buy a Gothenburg City Pass.

A compact city, Gothenburg boasts broad avenues, elegant squares, splendid architecture, acres of parkland and a relaxed, friendly atmosphere.

Most attractions are reachable on foot or just a short ride away, including the Maritime Museum, offering an exciting insight into 400 years of maritime history. Billed as the ►



Liseberg is the place for festive shows

world's largest ship museum, it's home to a host of vessels, such as a 1930s fire-fighting boat.

Being Scandinavia's largest seaport, a ferry trip to one of the many islands in the archipelago is a must. We took a 30-minute tram ride to the port of Saltholmen and headed out by ferry to Styrso, a car-free islet which was truly delightful.

On our return to the city, we decided to indulge our passion for cafés (Gothenburg is full of them) at Café Vanilj. It's hard to resist treats such as raspberry pie and cinnamon rolls.

Before we knew it, our last day had arrived. We packed a lot into those final hours, including a visit to the enormous Nordstan shopping centre and Haga, a Christmas market with 19th-century cobblestone streets crammed with stalls.

And we paid one last visit to Liseberg Park where we listened to carol singers before stopping at a candle stall.

Although the heavily scented candles would make smashing Christmas presents, there was an ulterior motive for buying a few: an old custom states that if you count your pennies in the light of the candle, the money will grow. If it worked, I promised the family we'd return again to Christmas City.

#### WAY TO GO

British Airways Holidays (0844 493 0758 or [www.ba.com/gothenburg](http://www.ba.com/gothenburg)) offers three nights B&B (based on two sharing) at the Gothia Towers hotel from £259pp departing December 2010, including return flights from London Heathrow.

## Ten things you must do in Gothenburg

**1** Buy a Gothenburg City Pass and enjoy unlimited free travel on trams and buses, free admission to many attractions and discounts in cafés.

**2** Visit Liseberg Park and become enchanted by millions of lights, the atmospheric Christmas market, fun rides and much more.

**3** Stroll along the city's Lane of Light, winding from the Wheel of Gothenburg at the central harbour, down to Liseberg.

**4** Make time to visit the city's other Christmas markets selling local handicrafts and enjoy a glass of mulled wine as you go.

**5** Board the many boats exhibited at the Maritime Museum, leaving enough time to visit the aquarium to learn about the marine life.

**6** Take a trip around the southern archipelago and stop off at Styrso, a tranquil island.

**7** Stroll around Slottsskogen, the city's biggest park, and the botanical gardens, the largest in Sweden.

**8** The people of Gothenburg love coffee and cake so much, they even have a word for it – fika. Check out the city's cafés.

**9** Visit Konstmuseum (the City Art Museum) and see the Nordic art.

**10** Visit the Universeum science museum where more than two miles of walkways guide you through.

