

# Stockholm museum celebrates beloved Pippi

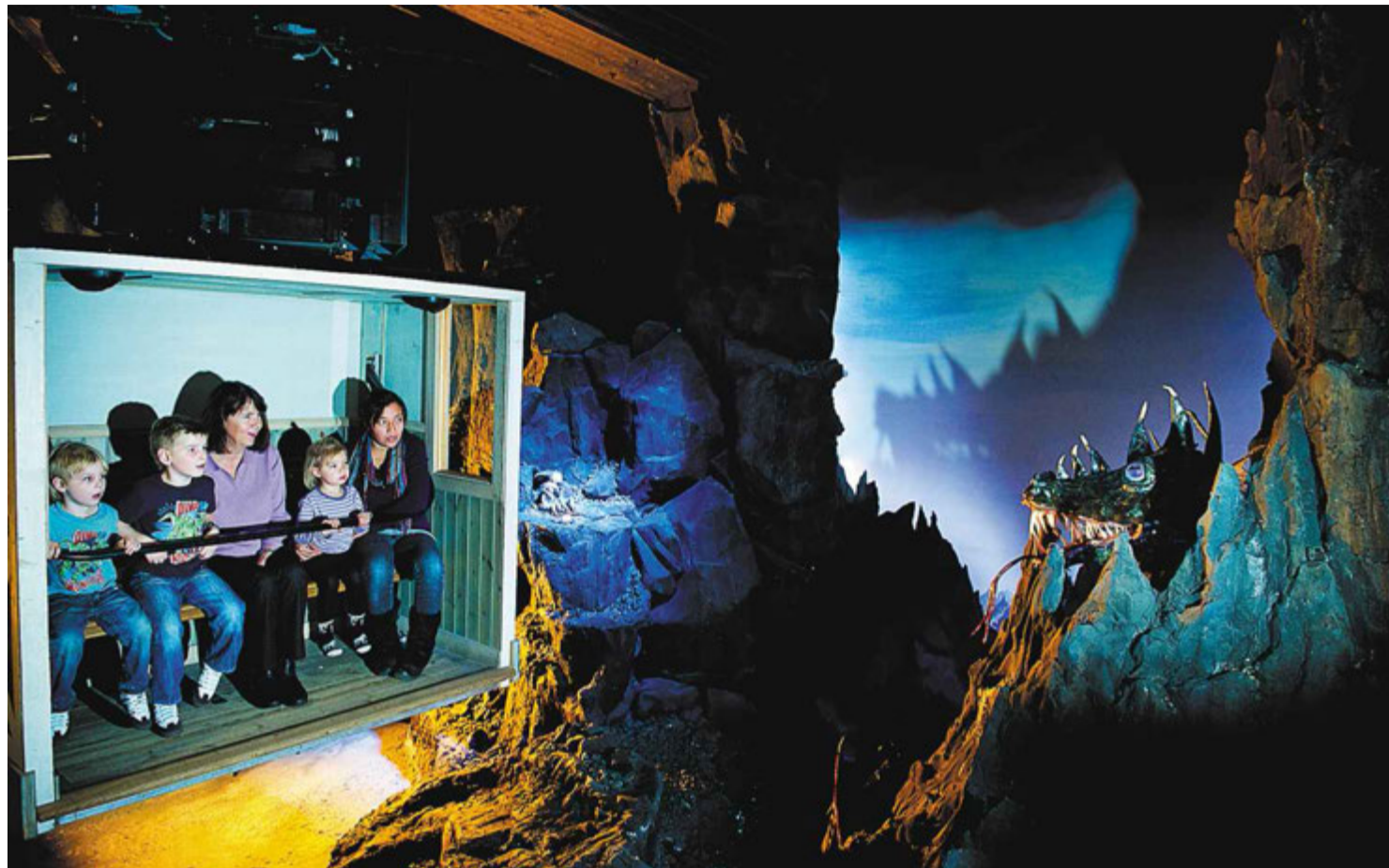
By Alexis Marie Adams  
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STOCKHOLM, Sweden — As an American child living in Greece in the 1970s, on a far-flung island where household TV had yet to arrive, my imagination was fed largely by books, particularly those of the Swedish author Astrid Lindgren, the creator of Pippi Longstocking. At the English-language bookstore we frequented during visits to Athens, I was drawn to titles by Lindgren that I had never seen back in the States, such as “The Brothers Lionheart,” “The Children of Noisy Village,” and “Ronja the Robber’s Daughter” — fantastic tales of adventure, joy, and anarchy, even loneliness, isolation, and heartbreak, all fueled by the soaring imagination for which the author was known.

Naturally, when my own children were born, I shared my favorite Lindgren books with them. So when my children, ages 8 and 11, and I visited relatives outside of Stockholm recently, it made perfect sense to take a day’s break from the bucolic setting of their home on the Stockholm Archipelago, where we swam, sailed, and ran barefoot through the grass, to visit Stockholm’s Junibacken, the museum devoted to Scandinavian children’s literature, and particularly to Lindgren.

It was mid-August, the city’s high season for tourists, and the queue to enter the museum snaked outside the building. But this being tidy and efficient Stockholm, we waited only a quarter of an hour before gaining access. While we waited, the children played happily in the park-like setting that surrounds the museum.

Conceived by the actor, director, and producer Staffan Götestam, whose interpretations of Lindgren’s work have defined much of his career, Junibacken is no less than a literary playground. Götestam designed it to be a place where children could become characters in the dreamy fictional world conjured up by Lindgren and other Scandinavian children’s authors, and his



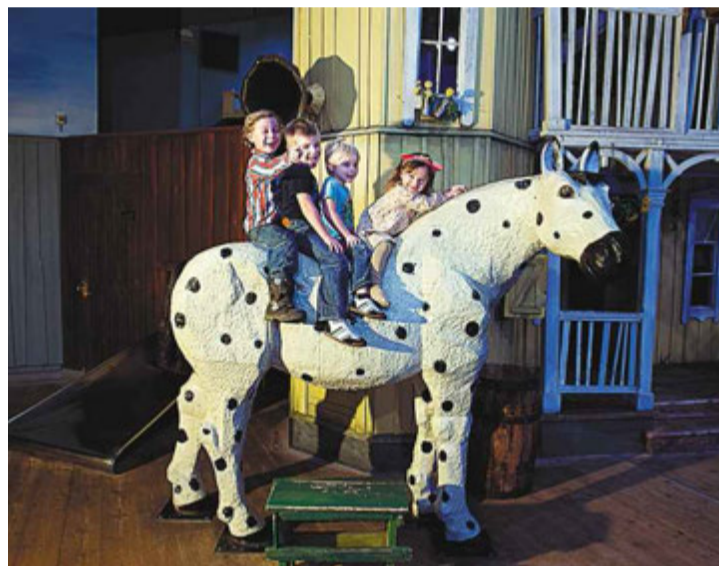
PHOTOS COURTESY OF JUNIBACKEN

The Storybook Train visits scenes from Astrid Lindgren’s books. Below, children ride Pippi Longstocking’s horse, Alfonso.

concept works well.

In the museum’s first stop, Storybook Square, my shy, 8-year-old daughter and I watched dozens of children at play in child-sized, interactive exhibits that beautifully and painstakingly evoke scenes from children’s classics. They cooked supper in Moominmamma’s kitchen, clambered up Alfie Atkins’s tower, and straddled Mulle Meck’s motorbike. Deciding the room was a bit too crowded, we climbed a winding stairwell, entering Pippi Longstocking’s ramshackle Villa Villekulla at the top. Again, there were children everywhere, but this time, my daughter cast her shyness aside, leaping forward to explore the home of her favorite Lindgren character.

There is a room devoted to Elsa Beskow’s beautifully illustrated fairy tales, a children’s theater — Sweden’s largest — and a sunlit cafe that serves classic Swed-



ish dishes, coffee, pastries, and ice cream as well as an extraordinary view of Stockholm’s gorgeous harbor. The museum’s shop is well stocked with Scandinavian children’s books translat-

ed into at least a half a dozen languages, as well as games, posters, postcards, and costumes all inspired by the stories that inspired the museum. The shop is nearly as inviting as the exhibits, with

cozy places to curl up with a book (or take a nap, as I saw one exhausted father doing).

Officially opened by the Swedish Royal Family in 1996, Junibacken is located on the beautiful island of Djurgården in central Stockholm. Junibacken sits next door to the also fabulous Vasa Museum, built around the 17th-century warship Vasa, which was pulled from the mud of Stockholm harbor. It is easy walking distance to the island’s other museums, galleries, and gardens, all sheltered within the lush greenery of Djurgården Royal Park. Drawing over 400,000 visitors a year, Junibacken is Stockholm’s fifth most-visited attraction. It is also a short way from The Royal Palace, Central Station, and public bus, metro, and streetcar routes.

After our tour of Junibacken, we strolled along the Djurgården canal, with its open-air bars and

cafes serving everything from hot dogs to herring. Crossing the Djurgården Bridge, we left the island, walking along the elegant Strandvägen boulevard on the canal’s opposite side. There we found a lovely floating cafe and fortified ourselves on gravlax (cured salmon) and other traditional Swedish fare. Appetites sated, we wandered the shop-lined streets of the prestigious neighborhood of Östermalm, eventually returning to Junibacken to take a ride on the Storybook Train.

Before we hopped aboard, we viewed an exhibit about Lindgren’s life. There we learned that she was not only a beloved cultural figure in her native country, she was also a powerful political force, lobbying for such issues as animal welfare and children’s rights. She penned more than 70 books for young people. And she was modest. When Götestam brought the idea of Junibacken to Lindgren, she insisted that the museum also include the work of other Scandinavian children’s authors and illustrators.

Then, my daughter and I boarded the Storybook Train, which offers narration in 12 languages and takes exception to Lindgren’s condition, focusing solely on her work. Riding through a tunnel, we passed a series of gorgeous tableaux drawn from her most popular books. As we rode through the storybook worlds of Ronja the Robber’s Daughter, Karlsson-on-the-Roof, Emil of Lönneberga, The Brothers Lionheart, and others, my daughter squeezed my hand. I could sense she was very nearly as excited as I was.

Even for an adult with little knowledge of Lindgren’s power of imagination, a visit to Junibacken would be good fun. For the rest of us, it is nothing short of thrilling.

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“We feel a connection to these people and their stories from 100 years ago.”

Garry Shutlak, Senior Archivist, Nova Scotia Archives



Titanic Exhibit, Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, Halifax

## Garry’s Nova Scotia



It’s an amazing story that just happens to be true: a brand new ship, the leading technology of her day, that hit an iceberg and sank to the bottom of the North Atlantic. I think we’re all fascinated by the stories we’ve heard over the years. Exhibits like the one at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic in Halifax, where we get to see the finest collection of wooden Titanic artifacts in the world, keep that fascination alive.



## Our seafaring history

You can experience Nova Scotia’s proud seafaring history from one end of the province to the other. From 17th, 18th and 19th Century military fortresses overlooking protected harbours, to demonstrations of wooden boat-building techniques, our museums, historic sites and attractions will transport you to days gone by.

## History must-do list

- Explore Halifax Citadel National Historic Site and learn about the pivotal role this fortress played as a principal naval station in the British Empire.
- Join us for the relaunch of Bluenose II and celebrate the restoration of Nova Scotia’s sailing ambassador.
- Spend a day wandering around historic Old Town Lunenburg, UNESCO World Heritage Site, exploring its many shops, studios, galleries and museums.



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