

# A CHILD'S TOY – THAT'S HOW IT ALL BEGAN

There are toy horses and pictures of horses the world over, but few have become so loved and so widespread as the Dala Horse.

It was in the forest huts during the long winter evenings in front of warm fires that the prototype Dala horses were created. With simple tools, often only a knife, various toys were carved for children. That one of them became a horse was natural. The horse was invaluable. A faithful work comrade who in the winter drew heavy loads of timber and in the summer performed agricultural tasks.

## 400 YEARS OF HISTORY

Wooden horses have been sold in markets for over 400 years. Today's Dala horse got its unique gaudy decoration first in the 19th century with inspiration from the 18th century painting style known as "Kurbits." This painting technique started in Leksand and Rättvik but was also carried on in Mora. The most typical "Kurbits" motifs are plants that look like a firework exploding in both form and colour. Wooden horses have been made throughout Sweden, but in Mora simple series production started early. Craftsmen from the area and adjoining villages happily bought a few dozen wooden horses before setting off on their business journeys, often to barter them for their food and lodging on the way. This is one of the ways how the wooden horses came to be so widespread over our country.

## WORLD CELEBRITY

But it was at the 1939 world exhibition in New York that the Dala horse became a world celebrity. The Swedish exhibition architect had struck upon the brilliant idea of placing a very large Dala horse outside the Swedish pavilion. Success was a fact.

## EACH HORSE IS UNIQUE

After each blank is cut out by band-saw, the production of each horse is pure handwork from start to finish. A large part of the manufacturing is carried out as a cottage industry. In the villages around Mora about 50 clever carvers work with knives as their only tool. The carvers leave their horses at one of the two Dala horse workshops in Nusnäs. When the horses have been hand-ground and covered with a primer paint, the skilful female painters take over and apply the colourful finish and decoration. Because this is done by hand you can be sure that your horse is unique.

## AN ABSOLUTE "MUST-SEE" ATTRACTION BY LAKE SILJAN!

Every year many people visit one of the Dala horse manufacturers, Nils Olsson Hemslojd, who run their flourishing workshop today in the village of Nusnäs near Mora. Visitors come the whole year round to see how the Dala horse is made. Here you will find both an exhibition and a large shop with a wide choice of beautiful handicrafts and souvenirs. **For details, please visit: [www.nohemslojd.se](http://www.nohemslojd.se)**

