

PORTUGAL AZULEJOS



The word *azulejo* does not mean blue; it comes from the Arabic word *al-zulayj*, meaning "polished stone".

Tiles could be placed on a home's exterior to help protect the structures from the weather. When used on interiors, azulejos provided wondrous decoration.

Painters found that cobalt blue on a white background allowed for incredible depth, realistic shading, and detailed storytelling.

The **oldest known azulejos in Portugal** are located inside the Sintra National Palace (*Palácio Nacional de Sintra*), located just outside of Lisbon.



SWEDEN

DALARNA HORSES

Origins of Dala Horses

Dalarna is a county in mid-southern Sweden

A Dalarna horse, or Dala horse, is a hand-carved and brightly painted wooden statuette of a horse that represents the traditional folk art, strength, and cultural heritage of Sweden.

Horses came to Sweden over 4000 years ago!



- **Forest Craftsmanship:** During long, dark winter evenings, loggers and woodworkers in villages carved small wooden toys out of pine scraps by the fire.
- **The Prized Animal:** Carvers chose horses because the animal was a vital, respected member of rural farm life—essential for heavy farm labor, logging, and transportation.
- **The Paint and Color:** Painting became common in the 18th and 19th centuries. The iconic bright reddish-orange shade comes from Falu Red, a local copper-mine byproduct paint also used on traditional Swedish cottages.
- **Kurbits Decoration:** The swirling floral patterns painted on the horses are known as kurbits, a traditional folk-painting style inspired by fantasy plants and biblical stories.
- **Global Fame:** The Dala horse became a worldwide icon of Swedish culture after a giant wooden version was featured at the 1939 New York World's Fair.

DALARNA HORSES CONT.

Traditional Decorations

No matter the base color, classic Dala horses are hand-painted with kurbits—a signature style of Swedish folk art featuring stylized floral patterns, saddles, and bridles. Artisans traditionally use a signature two-color-on-one-brush technique in shades of white, green, yellow, and blue.

Meaning and Symbolism

- **Strength and Dignity:** Traditionally, the horse represents strength, courage, loyalty, wisdom, and dignity.
- **Good Luck:** Over time, the figurine evolved from a simple toy into a cherished national symbol of Swedish identity and a token of good luck and hospitality.

