

*Decorated Farmhouses  
of Hälsingland World Heritage*

# KRISTOFERS







**Copyright:** Gävleborg County Administrative Board

**Design:** Matador Kommunikation

**Author:** Lenita Jansson Herlitz

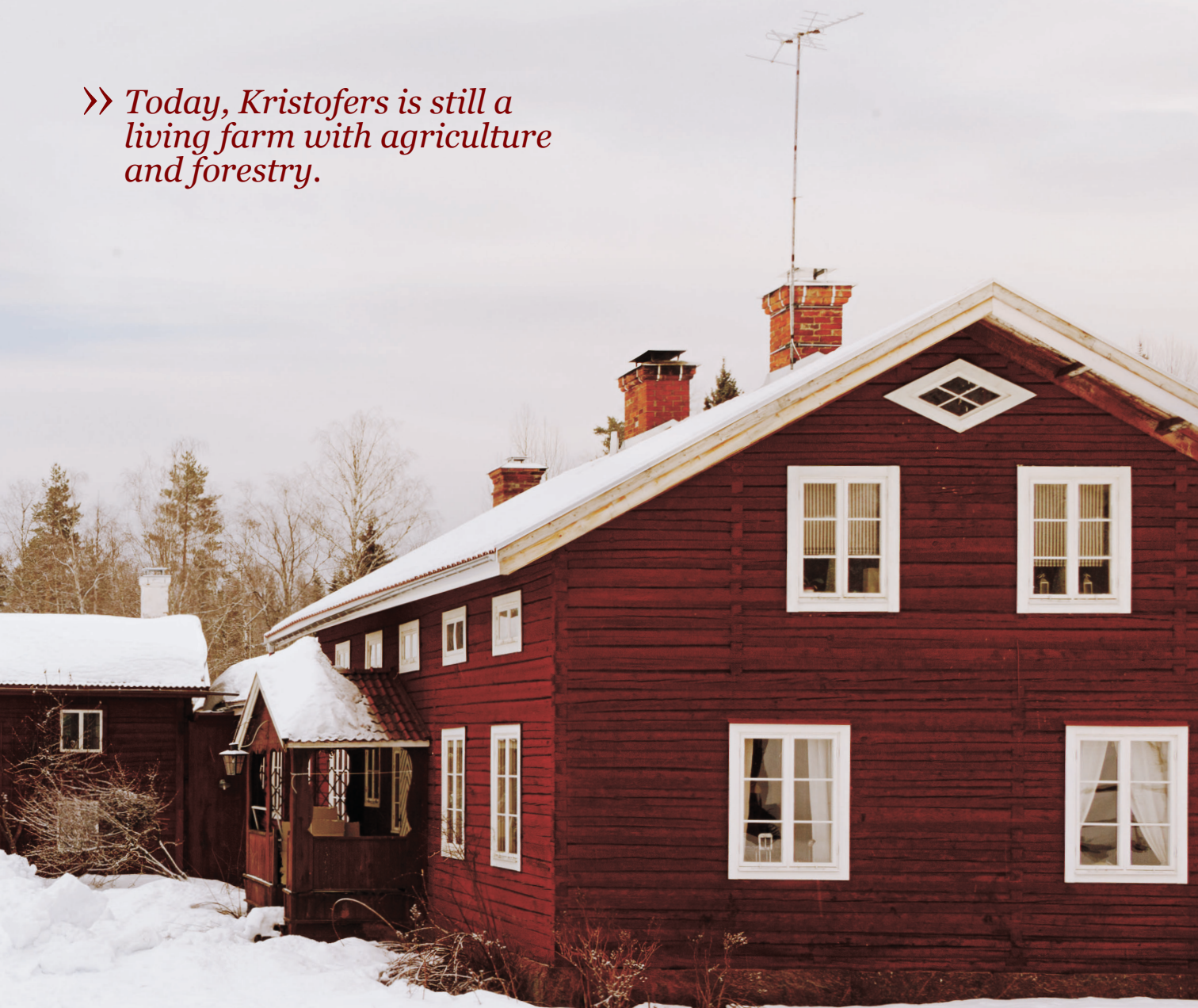
**Source material:** Ingela Broström

**Photography:** Jakob Dahlström, Hälsingebilder,  
Hälsinglands museum, Nordiska museet

**Translation:** Semantix Språkcentrum



»» *Today, Kristofers is still a living farm with agriculture and forestry.*



**THE GUEST HOUSE** at Kristofers in Järvsö is unique, with its many well-preserved rooms on two floors. The building therefore provides particularly good insights into how individual rooms and entire houses were originally used for festivities. The farm, with its well-preserved guest house, is set a little apart on the outskirts of the village, and offers a good view over the fields and meadows of the river valley. It has occupied the same site since

the early 1800s. Previously it had been located in the centre of the village since at least the Middle Ages. The farm has been in the same family for at least fourteen generations, and is still active in agriculture and forestry today. The renowned folk art painter Anders Ädel decorated the interior with imaginative freehand floral paintings. Tours are only available by advance booking.





*The ground-floor festivities room*



# GUEST HOUSE IS A SPACIOUS AND DECORATIVE TWO-STOREY

**THE GUEST HOUSE** at Kristofers is today the oldest two-storey house on a Hälsingland farm. Built in 1807, it is almost completely unchanged externally. The design of the decorative porch is typical of the Järvsö district, as is the low, panelled front door with its wrought iron handle.

## ANDERS ÄDEL CREATED THE WHOLE

The guest house has a long, narrow floor plan, which was common in Hälsingland during this time. The house acquired its current interior in the 1850s, when the rooms were decorated by the renowned folk art painter Anders Ädel. The interiors of the house together make a whole. Different colours, techniques and patterns were used in each room, determined by its function and location in the house. To give visitors a clear sense of approaching the centre of the festivities, in the vestibule they first encountered less elaborate stencils in muted colours, replaced farther into the house with richer and more imaginative painting.

» The house acquired its current interior in the 1850s, when the rooms were decorated by the renowned folk art painter Anders Ädel.



## GOD'S ALL-SEEING EYE WATCHED OVER THE BRIDAL COUPLE

*To left. The doors and windows in the festivities room have half-moon shaped lintel panels surrounded by floral arrangements. In the middle of the end wall is a motif, in the form of a cross with a wreath of flowers, crowned by an eye. In Christian art, it was a common symbol of God's all-seeing eye, and marks the place of honour for people such as the bridal couple. However, it is thought the Christian symbol has no connection with religion here, but is used only decoratively. It is thought to be modelled on a former retable in the nearby parish church.*

## GUEST HOUSE FESTIVITIES ROOM IS THE MOST SPLENDID

The very grandest room, the "herrstuga" festivities room, is on the first floor of the guest house. The most important meals were taken here during festivities, particularly at weddings, when there would also be dancing. The room therefore also has the most elaborate wall painting in the house, in the form of landscapes. The painter has divided the walls of the festivities room into panels, each framed by columns wreathed in red and blue drapery. Inspired by baroque church art, the motif was characteristic of painting in the upper valley of the Ljusnan river during the first half of the 1800s.

## THE HISTORY OF THE FARMHOUSES OF HÄLSINGLAND

### MANY ROOMS FOR FESTIVITIES

A Hälsingland farmhouse could have up to fifteen decorated rooms, but only a couple of them were in day-to-day use. The others were used only for really important occasions, such as weddings. These festivities rooms are often richly decorated, and the painting technique indicates the room's use and status.



### LINEN, THE FOREST AND TRADE

The farmers' healthy finances were based on agriculture and animal husbandry. Many Hälsingland farmers were also able to supplement their income with activities such as linen production, trade and the sale of forest land and timber rights.







### ANDERS ÄDEL

Anders Ädel, from Ljusdal, was one of the last in a long line of folk art painters working in the light, bright floral decorative style typical of northwest Hälsingland, one that has come to bear his name. It borrowed style elements mainly from the interiors of parish churches and from printed wallpaper, and then transformed them into decorative painted interiors. Anders Ädel never signed his work. Born in 1809 in

Söderhamn, he grew up in poverty.

After a time as a farmhand, he enlisted as a soldier in the Järvsö Company of the Hälsingland Regiment. He died in Ljusdal in 1888.

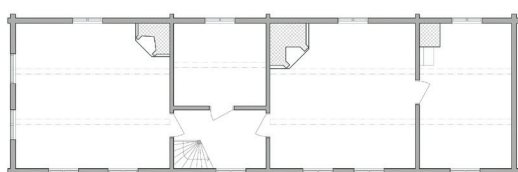
### A NEW DWELLING HOUSE OPPOSITE THE GUEST HOUSE

The old dwelling house was demolished and replaced with a new one in the 1880s. It is still a home to this day, and is opposite the guest house.

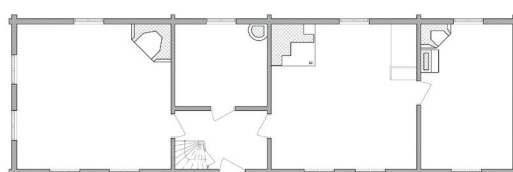
### A ROOM FOR CLOTHES AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The room west of the first-floor landing has rods in the ceiling to hang clothes on. Most Hälsingland farms had a similar room. However, this one also has an open fireplace, indicating that the room could be used for multiple purposes, such as for young people staying overnight.

### PLAN OF KRISTOFERS GUEST HOUSE



First floor



Ground floor





»» *The open fireplace enabled food to be kept warm even where the slightly less important guests, such as the younger ones, were likely to be put.*



**ALSO A MORE MODEST DINING ROOM**

To the right of the ground-floor vestibule is another large room that was also intended for meals, though the interior is more modest than that of the main festivities room. The open fireplace enabled food to be kept warm. This was where the slightly less important guests, such as the younger ones, sat.



## 1500S HERITAGE THAT WAS MOVED FOLLOWING A FIRE

The farm probably has its origins as early as the Middle Ages, and is documented in archive records from 1542. The name comes from the farmer Christoffer Persson, who owned the property in the late 1600s. Kristofers was originally situated in the middle of the village of Stene, but was moved to its present, more secluded, location in the first decade of 1800. The reason was presumably the fire in 1804 that devastated a neighbouring farm and destroyed a couple of the outbuildings at Kristofers. In all probability, that is what prompted the then owner Olof Persson to move the farm away from his neighbours. The newly built farm consisted then of four attached building ranges around a grassed farmyard. A gatehouse formed the entrance, a narrow passage through one of the buildings that served as a stables and mangling shed. There are some more basic living quarters for the farm's maids and farmhands in the attic.

» *Kristofers was originally situated in the middle of the village of Stene, but was moved to its present, more secluded, location in the first decade of 1800.*



## OUTBUILDINGS OLD AND NEW

Over the centuries, new buildings have been added and others have disappeared in response to each period's needs and technological developments. A new and larger cowshed was built as recently as 1994.

## ACTIVE AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY IN THE SAME FAMILY

The farm has been in the same family for at least fourteen generations, and is still active in agriculture and forestry today. The family who live here accept small groups (advance booking required) during the summer, and overnight accommodation is also available.





## FLOWERS AND TILED STOVE IN THE BRIDAL CHAMBER

The middle chamber on the ground floor is where the bride could change her clothes and rest during the festivities. There is a glaze-painted tiled stove whose colour scheme coordinates with the yellow ground of the stencilled walls. They in turn comprise colourful floral bouquets, modelled on French wallpaper in naturalistic colours.



## A LITTLE ABOUT WORLD HERITAGE SITES

A World Heritage site is an environment considered globally unique and therefore important to all of humanity. The criteria that must be met to warrant designation as a World Heritage Site are governed by a 1972 convention adopted by the UN agency UNESCO. Once something is entered on the World Heritage List, the country where it is located is obliged to ensure that it is preserved for posterity.

## THE DECORATED FARMHOUSES OF HÄLSINGLAND ARE ON THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST

There are over 1 000 sites on the World Heritage List, with about thirty being added each year. Italy accounts for most, while Sweden has fifteen. Since summer 2012, seven farmhouses in Hälsingland have become a World Heritage site, Kristofers being one of them.

The Hälsingland farmhouses were inscribed on the World Heritage List under the name “Decorated Farmhouses of Hälsingland”. The focus is on what is truly unique about the farmhouses, the vernacular architecture and the interiors. It is unusual for ordinary farmers to have built such large houses with so many large rooms exclusively for festivities. There are also more decorated domestic interiors preserved in Hälsingland than anywhere else in the world. Most of these farmhouses were built in the 1800s when construction reached its peak.



Gästgivars



Jon-Lars



Pallars



Bortom Åa



Bommars



Erik-Anders



Kristofers guest house  
in the late 1800s.  
(unknown photographer)

» A World Heritage site is an environment considered globally unique and therefore important to all of humanity. The criteria that must be met to warrant designation as a World Heritage Site are governed by a 1972 convention adopted by the UN agency UNESCO.



## THE SEVEN WORLD HERITAGE DECORATED FARMHOUSES

**Gästgivars** in Vallsta, Arbrå

**Kristofers** in Stene, Järvsö

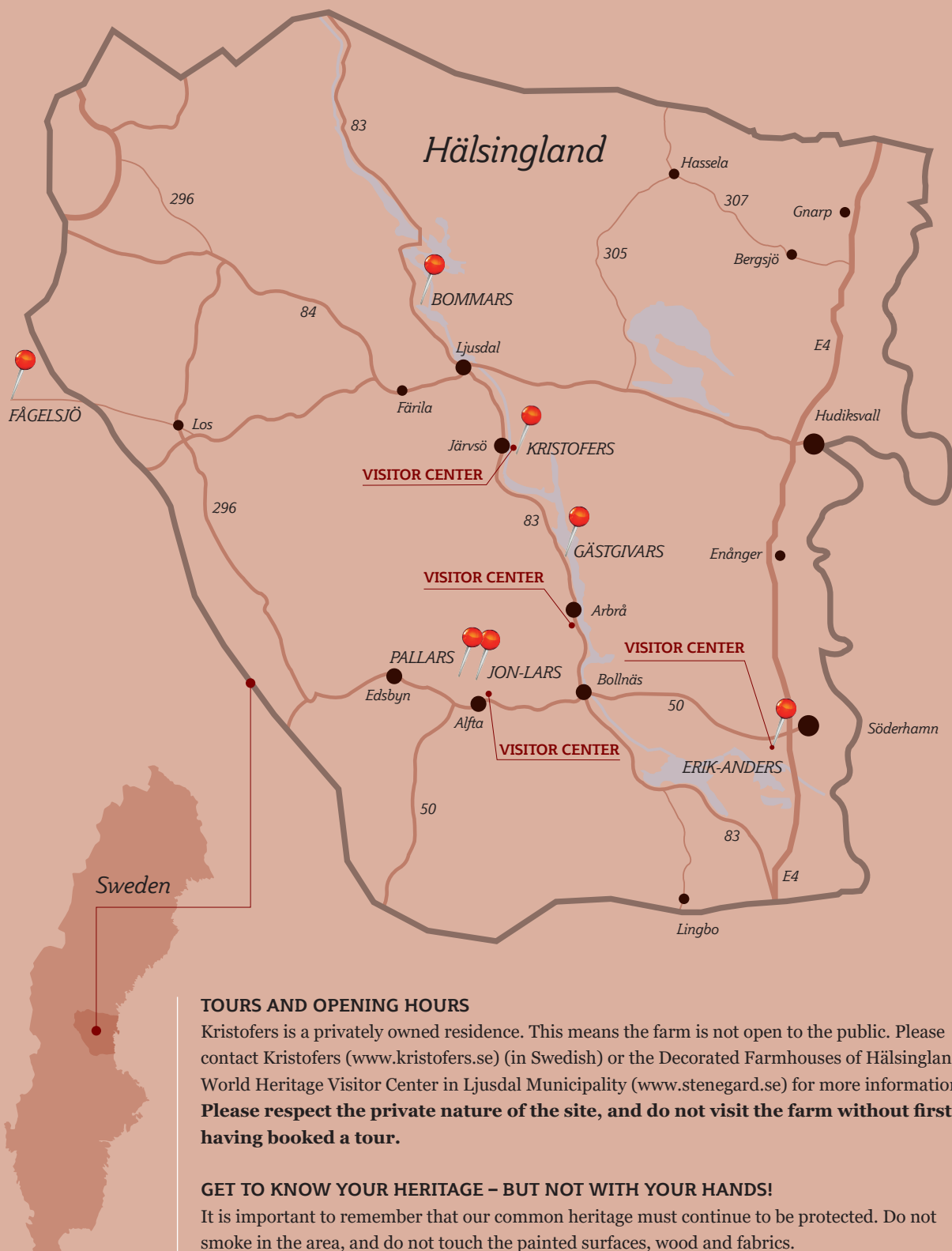
**Jon-Lars** in Långhed, Alfta

**Bortom Åa** in Fågelsjö, Loos

**Bommars** in Letsbo, Ljusdal

**Erik-Anders** in Asta, Söderala

**Pallars** in Långhed, Alfta



### TOURS AND OPENING HOURS

Kristofers is a privately owned residence. This means the farm is not open to the public. Please contact Kristofers ([www.kristofers.se](http://www.kristofers.se)) (in Swedish) or the Decorated Farmhouses of Hälsingland World Heritage Visitor Center in Ljusdal Municipality ([www.stenegard.se](http://www.stenegard.se)) for more information. **Please respect the private nature of the site, and do not visit the farm without first having booked a tour.**

### GET TO KNOW YOUR HERITAGE – BUT NOT WITH YOUR HANDS!

It is important to remember that our common heritage must continue to be protected. Do not smoke in the area, and do not touch the painted surfaces, wood and fabrics.



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

The farm's own website

[www.kristofers.se](http://www.kristofers.se) (in Swedish)

[www.varldsarvethalsingegardar.se](http://www.varldsarvethalsingegardar.se)

Gävleborg County Administrative Board

[www.lansstyrelsen.se/gavleborg](http://www.lansstyrelsen.se/gavleborg)

*We reserve the right to make changes.*

## VISITOR CENTER

Stene Gård, Järvsö

[www.stenegard.com](http://www.stenegard.com)

Gästgivars, Vallsta

[www.varldsarvetgastgivars.se](http://www.varldsarvetgastgivars.se)

Hälsingegård Ol Anders, Alfta

[www.ol-anders.se](http://www.ol-anders.se)

Erik-Anders, Asta

[www.erik-anders.se](http://www.erik-anders.se)

Please respect the private nature of the site,  
and do not visit when it is closed to visitors.



Länsstyrelsen  
Gävleborg



Region  
Gävleborg

