



Souvenirs

STICKER ELVES, FRANCE

Trust the French to get artistically designed wall stickers for kids absolutely right. The Paris-based company Djeco (visit their fun website at Djeco.com) produce all kinds of beautiful and educational toys, such as origami games, stitching and lacing cards, cubes, stencils and discovery puzzles. One of Djeco's most eye-catching products is a set of 82 stickers called "Elves", each of which can be arranged in any position, instantly transforming any white or lightly coloured walls of a child's room. The cutely rotund and multi-coloured elves, who fly, swing on flowers and puffballs and perch on lily pads, can be stuck, and unstuck without any damage to paint or wallpaper, and stuck again. There are also funky giraffe, knight and princess height charts and other sets of stickers to cover up kiddies' wall space in the most delightful way possible. Toddlers and pre-teens will



DALA HORSES, SWEDEN

Asked to name the most Swedish thing they can think of, most people living on the planet would probably blurt out the names 'ABBA' or 'Ikea'. They might identify a well-known brand of vodka or even, heaven forbid, start doing impressions of a certain Muppet. Those who actually visit Sweden, however, are likely to notice the prevalence of little, red, wooden horses. This is the Dala horse or Dalecarlian horse (Dalahäst in Swedish), a traditional, painted toy that traces its origins to the Dalarna province in the central-western part of the country. Though records of carved wooden horses being sold in Sweden go back to the early 1600s, the Dala horse came into being in the 19th century when Dalarna locals took leftover blocks of wood from the clock factory and began carving them into toys as a way to pass the cold, winter nights. The horses are painted a distinctive style known as Kurbits, which was popular in the country from around 1780 to 1870, especially in Dalarna and nearby areas. Most are red, but they also appear in bright blue, yellow and grey. Through the years, the Dala horses have become a symbol of Sweden as a whole, rather than just Dalarna. Nowadays these creatures

can be found everywhere, especially in places where tourists congregate. In fact, an uninformed traveller wouldn't be blamed for thinking that Sweden is positively infested with them. Drop into any souvenir shop and you'll find a wide selection of Dala horses ranging in size from tiny keychain ornaments to those big enough to frighten your cat. Some visitors end up starting collections of Dala horses, picking up a new one on each trip. Be warned though – if you go down this road, there's no telling how far it'll take you. You may even have to toss out your ABBA collection to make room.



DIESEL WATCHES, ITALY

Whether it be electronics or vinyl records, every man has a toy fetish. One of the most common is a passion for watches. Although there are many watchmakers, in the past two decades one company seems to have risen above the competition in making affordable time pieces that are luxurious and eye catching. Diesel S.p.A's flagship store is located in Milan. The company was founded in 1978 and hired its chief designer directly out of fashion school in 1988. Since that time the Diesel brand has opened stores in most major cities. Diesel watches are an elegant blend of crystal, leather and chrome. Their men's watches are known for oversized faces, odd shapes and dramatic colors. A diesel watch on your wrist is a slice of Milan for under 220 EUR.

PROUD TO BE FINNISH, FINLAND

Finland is rightly renowned for its outstanding vodka, and one of its best brands is Koskenkorva. First introduced in 1953, the drink was named after the small village of Koskenkorva in Ostrobothnia, a region which traditionally excels in the art of producing high-quality spirits. Since then, the drink has gone on to become a feature of national life - as quintessentially Finnish as black rye bread or saunas. The award-winning plain vodka is distilled using glacial water and select barleys. Other flavours come in blueberry, loganberry, apple, Nordic-berry and vanilla. [bo](#)



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