

The History of Santa Lucia (source [The legend of Santa Lucia: History of St. Lucy & modern celebrations \(theworkingmomstravels.com\)](https://theworkingmomstravels.com))

Santa Lucia (Saint Lucy) is a Catholic saint who was born in Syracuse, Sicily, in 283 AD and was martyred at the age of 20. Though she lived a considerably short life, she is still celebrated in different parts of the world almost two thousand years later.

Few facts are known about Lucia's life and death, though several stories and legends have evolved over the centuries. Just about all of the stories start the same way: Lucia was born into a wealthy Sicilian family. At a time of Christian persecution, Lucia vowed at a young age to live her life in the service of Christ. Lucia's mother attempted an arranged marriage for her daughter to a pagan man. When Lucia refused, the angry suitor reported her to Roman authorities, and Lucia subsequently was sentenced to life in a brothel and forced into prostitution. Staunchly loyal to her faith, Lucia benefitted from divine intervention: when it came time for her to be placed in the brothel by Roman guards, she became immovable; it was as if she had turned to stone and the guards could not move her. The soldiers then built piles of wood around her in an effort to burn her alive. Lucia was untouched by the flames and survived the inferno. Lucia ultimately met her death, however, when she was stabbed through the neck with a sword.



News of Lucia's defense of Christianity quickly spread and she became one of the earliest Christian saints to achieve popularity. It makes sense that Lucia would be venerated in Sicily, Rome, and throughout the rest of Italy. But how and why did she become so celebrated in other countries, namely, Sweden?

LUCIA IN SWEDEN

Just as with the story of Lucia's life and death, no one is absolutely certain how the legend of Santa Lucia made it to Sweden. But since the late 1800s, December 13 – the feast day of Santa Lucia – is widely celebrated throughout the country. There is speculation that stories of Lucia's bravery were brought to Sweden by traders and even by Vikings after their journeys to Southern Europe. Another explanation has to do with the name Lucia, which is derived from the Latin word "lux", meaning light. It is believed that Lucia and her feast day were adopted as a way to let in some light at the beginning of the dark, cold Swedish winter.