

Sweden-Norway: about 5 weeks beginning 22 August 2013

Minor Update: 19 April 2013

This trip was inspired by our 2012 trip where the major walk was in Sarek & Padjelanta National Parks. On that trip I discovered the Swedish and Norwegian mountain 'huts'. The two photos at left show one of the huts we passed in Padjelanta from the outside and inside. Other huts were similar.



In 2012, we went at the height of summer when it never got completely dark. We carried tents and camped out. Occasionally we had to pitch tents or pack up in the rain – rather chilly north of the arctic circle.

By starting five weeks later and doing walks where we stay in huts, we should be able to enjoy some of the spectacular scenery without having to carry as much weight as we did in 2012. We should get to enjoy the autumn vegetation as green turns into a rainbow of colours. And, if we are lucky and are awake at the appropriate hour, we may see the northern lights.



In 2012, we began with a night train from Göteborg (Gothenburg in English). We paid a bit extra and had sleeping compartments. This allowed us to get good views of the Swedish landscape, and also get a feel for the distances. Kiruna, where we will get off the train is as far from Göteborg as Göteborg is from Paris. The bed and transport cost us less than A\$200 in 2012. I thought it was good value. We plan to catch the train on 23 August. If you don't want to start in Gothenburg, you can catch the same train in Stockholm.

From Kiruna we catch a bus to Nikkaluokta where we begin the walk to Kebnekajse hut/village. From there we will do one or two day trips before continuing the through walk. One walk takes us to the top of Kebnekajse, Sweden's highest peak (2106 m). Another good day walk takes us up to a high valley, Tarfala, with lots of glaciers and a magnificent view towards Kebnekajse.

For more information on Kebnekajse, see the Wikipedia page, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kebnekajse>

From Kebnekajse we work our way north to Abisko via Singi, Sälka, Alesjaure and Abiskojaure with a detour from Sälka to Nallo, via Vistas back to the main track in Alesjaure. There are huts all the way. Most, if not all of the walk is in Stora Sjöfallet National Park, the third largest in Sweden. You can find out more on the Wikipedia page, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stora_Sjöfallet_National_Park

As we haven't been to this park before, we don't have any photos. However, if you do a Google search for Stora Sjöfallet National Park, you will get a link to various images which will give you an idea of what to expect.

At this point, I should note that most or all of the huts we will be using on this section of the trip belong to Svenska Turist Foreningen, the Swedish Touring/Trekking Association. As members get discounts on hut accommodation, it is almost certain that you will want to join. You can read more about the association and their huts on their English language website. If you are thinking about joining this trip, it's well worth a long visit. You should be able to find information about all of the huts listed above. If it's not obvious, search for the name. <http://www.svenskaturistforeningen.se/en/>

For those who are really keen, the 1:100,000 Kebnekaisefjällen map covers the entire area. It is printed on special water resistant paper and can be ordered on line. See <http://www.calazo.se/kartor/fjallkartor/kebnekaisefjallen>

We will spend at least two days in the Abisko area, doing day and/or overnight hikes. North of the station is one of Sweden's biggest lakes, with a mountain range behind. There is beautiful nature with a canyon etc. Abisko is said to be the best place to see the northern lights because of its stable, good weather. My Swedish friend says, "I am not sure about the possibilities to see the light at that time of the year, and generally the chances are not so big, but if you are lucky!" Not just lucky, the best chance will be staying up quite late, getting up quite early or getting up in the middle of the night. This trip has been timed so we do get night but we still get autumn foliage and a good chance of decent weather.

We **should** be able to send some things to Abisko before we begin. That would mean that you didn't need to carry all your spare clothes etc. for the full walk. A future draft of these notes will confirm whether or not this is possible. If not, you will need to carry everything for the full trip.

From Abisko, we hop on a train and head to Narvik in Norway. The trip is something like 3 hours. We'll probably spend at least a day or two in the area. I've only just started looking at the possibilities so more in a later draft of these notes.

The Visit Norway website Narvik page has some ideas.

<http://www.visitnorway.com/en/Where-to-go/North/Narvik/>

The Wikipedia Narvik page has more general information. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narvik>

The Norwegian Trekking Association (DNT) has a page in English with brief descriptions of some of the walking possibilities. http://english.turistforeningen.no/location.php?lo_id=NO_narvi

I believe that the Swedish and Norwegian Trekking Associations have reciprocal rights so you should only need to join one. As we'll be spending more time in Sweden, it's probably best to join the Swedish Association.

The Lofoten archipelago. In 2012, we made a brief visit to the spectacular Lofoten Islands. It was nice enough so I'd like to return and explore a bit more. At this point, the ideal would seem to be hiring one or more vehicles in Narvik, drive a bit northwest to Andöya, and then south to Lofoten. If we are lucky, we'll be able to arrange to drop the vehicle(s) somewhere in Lofoten. If not, we'll have to pay extra and put it/them on a ferry with us to Bodö.



Panorama looking south from the village of Å

Sheer mountains dropping into the sea. The two photos here give you a suggestion as to what Lofoten is like.

In 2012, although we passed through Bodö twice on our way to and from Lofoten, we didn't have enough time to have a look around. It may well be worth a day or two in the area. The Wikipedia Bodö page makes a good place to start looking at possibilities.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bod%C3%B8>



Lofoten town of Reine.

From Bodö we can take an overnight sleeper train or flight to Trondheim. In 2012, we changed trains and continued on our way. This time, we might stop and have a look. Have a look at the Visit Norway Trondheim page, <http://www.visitnorway.com/en/Where-to-go/Central/Trondheim/>

The Wikipedia Trondheim page has a lot more information. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trondheim>

Jotunheimen.

From Trondheim we take a train and bus to get us into the Jotunheimen region and Jotunheimen National Park, one of Norway's top hiking destinations. The Jotunheimen mountains are the highest in Scandinavia. In 2012 we did an overnight out and back walk and got a taste of what the region has to offer. The photos below were taken on our 2012 trip.



Sleeping compartment, Bodö-Trondheim train.



Jotunheimen pass



Looking down the valley, Jotunheimen



Skogadalsboen hut, Jotunheimen

The Wikipedia Jotunheimen National Park page is a good place to begin learning a bit more about the area. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jotunheimen_National_Park

Before finalising our walk in Jotunheimen, we'll need to think about whether we can carry all our gear, including town gear. If not, we'll have to work out a loop itinerary or how to send extra gear to meet us somewhere at the end of the walk.

The entire park is covered by a 1:100,000 topographic map <http://www.nettbutikken.dntoslo.no/main.aspx?page=article&artno=42215>

Alternatively, there are two 1:50,000 maps covering the east and west sections of the park.

After the walk, we take a bus and/or train to Oslo where the trip finishes. In 2012, most of the group spent three nights in Oslo. Whether or not I stay that long, if you have never been there, you might want to spend a few days. If you are going to do so, the Visit Oslo Pass offers great value for money. <http://www.visitoslo.com/en/activities-and-attractions/oslo-pass/> If you are a senior (which, in Norway, is over 67), you get a great discount.

Sea Kayaking the Archipelago – a pre-trip extra

In 2012, we finished with a four day, three night kayak trip through the southwest Swedish archipelago. They believe that it is too late to do it in comfort after the trip so we might do something there before. You would need a tent for at least one or two nights but it may be possible to hire or borrow one. The two photos here were taken on our 2012 trip.



What do you need to bring?

By going toward the end of August, there should be fewer mosquitos. Fewer mossies doesn't mean no mossies, so repellent is a good idea.

You will certainly need a torch.

We will cook our own meals in most of the Swedish huts but may have to buy them in Jotunheimen. That will depend on exactly where we stay.

The temperature can be between -10°C and 25°C. Normally it is 8°-18° C. It can rain a lot, but my friends have very seldom had long periods of rain. (Past experience is no guarantee.) You need good raincoats/goretex clothes. My friends have experienced very strong winds on 2-3 occasions. You need to be prepared.

Footwear. The ground is varied. Some is hard but there are also relatively long parts with wet grasslands. Some people walk with high, impregnated leather boots, but others normally walk with gum-boots. Many walk with leather-boots with goretex membranes. You have to count on getting wet, so carry some extra socks. We recommend light runners to have on in the evening. Some people bring something to wear when wading in cold water, to protect the feet from stones etc. If my friends don't make it with their gum-boots, they sometimes have to use their runners. Some of the wades are relatively short, on sandy bottoms where barefoot will do.

I followed the example of my Swedish friends and did the long walk in gumboots (hiking version which I purchased in Göteborg). I was thankful that I did. The few stream crossings that were too deep for the boots were painfully cold.

Is it for you?

This trip is not for the average tourist. You need to be prepared to accept whatever the weather may throw at us. As with all our trips, you need to be more self-reliant than on most other tours. My Swedish friends who have put together this itinerary are bushwalkers, not professional guides. They are coming along on parts of the trip because they enjoy it. They are happy to share their experience, but don't expect them to be tour guides.

The Walkabouts guide (Russell Willis unless he breaks a leg) has not done all of the trip but did the 2012 one. He has also led walks in similar climates in Patagonia and the Canadian arctic.

If you can't be flexible enough to accept whatever changes we may have to make, this trip is not for you. If you can accept that, it should be a wonderful experience you'll remember for the rest of your life.

Cost

Cost. \$1895 per person.

If you can't do the full trip, it should be possible to leave part way along the journey. At this point, we can't offer a discount for that.

Our fee covers **only** the services of the Walkabouts guide, evening meals on walks where we can't purchase them, and all the pre-trip organisation. It does not include other meals, accommodation or transport. The Walkabouts guide will share these expenses with the rest of the group on an equal basis.

Sweden isn't cheap. Norway is even more expensive. We will have a better idea of exactly what things will cost closer to departure – we cannot possibly say what exchange rates will look like by then. My Swedish friends have offered to book trains and some of the other transport for us. As some of the relevant websites are only in Swedish, this proved invaluable in 2012. We will need to pay in advance. If they join us for the first part as they are planning to do, I think we should pay their transport cost. This will add an extra \$100-200 to your expenses.

Conditions

- 1 A deposit of \$200 is payable on booking. This will be refunded in full if we are forced to cancel. The trip needs at least four, preferably five to run.
- 2 Payment in full is due as soon as the trip is confirmed or when you book, whichever is later. Cancellation fees are \$900 before 15 June and the full \$1895 after that.
- 3 All participants are responsible for obtaining the necessary passport and visas and must have some form of travel insurance.

Questions?

Try as I might, I've almost certainly forgotten some useful piece of information. The more and the sooner you ask your questions, the more likely it is that we can give you the best possible trip.

Rough Draft day by day itinerary

If you read the above carefully, you'll see that we'll need a bit longer from Narvik on. If people want to do a kayak trip similar to the one we did in 2012, it will have to be before the walks listed below.

20 Aug approx arrive Göteborg or Stockholm (pax can choose. I'll go to Göteborg.)

23 August overnight train to Kiruna.

24 August Bus to Nikkaluokta. Begin walk. Overnight in hut. (My map shows a hut part way.)

25 August Continue to Kebnekajse.

26 Aug - 3 Sep From Kebnekajse we have the chance of ascending Sweden's highest top – a good days walk – and can also do a day tour up to a high valley, Tarfala, with lots of glaciers and a magnificent view towards Kebnekajse.

Kebnekajse to Abisko via Singi, Sälka, Alesjaure and Abiskojaure with a detour from Sälka to Nallo, via Vistas back to the main track in Alesjaure. There are huts all the way.

4-5 Sep Day and/or overnight walks in the Abisko area. North of the station is one of Sweden's biggest lakes, with a mountain range behind. There is beautiful nature with a canyon etc.

Abisko is said to be the best place to see the northern lights because of its stable, good weather. My Swedish friend says, "I am not sure about the possibilities to see the light at that time of the year, and generally the chances are not so big, but if you are lucky!" Not just lucky, the best chance will be staying up quite late, getting up quite early or getting up in the middle of the night. This trip has been timed so we do get night but we still get autumn foliage and a good chance of decent weather.

6 Sep Train to Narvik from Abisko. Once we've done more research, we may want to add an extra day before here. Train is probably about 3 hours.

7-8 Sep Sightseeing in & around Narvik. I've only just started looking at the possibilities.

9-12 Sep Lofoten.

13 Sep Overnight train (sleeper) to Trondheim or flight to Trondheim While like the train, I suspect flying would be cheaper.

14 Sep On train and/or sightseeing in & around Trondheim.

15-21 Sep South to Oslo, overnight or preferably a multi-night walk in Jotunheimen along the way. We'll stay in the mountain huts. This will be an A to B walk so we'll need to carry everything with us.

22 Sep Trip ends in Oslo.