

Northern Lights and Wildlife in Swedish Lapland

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Fly Luleå via Stockholm and overnight
Days 2/3/4	Day time excursions and night-time Northern Lights watching from Jokkmokk
Day 5/6	Glamping
Day 7	Morning in wilderness; overnight Luleå
Day 8	Fly London via Stockholm

Departs

December to February

Focus

Winter scenery, Northern Lights, Sámi culture and wildlife

Grading

A/B (see grading section)

Dates & Prices

See www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code SWE16)

Highlights

- Two nights of 'glamping' in a tented Sámi camp deep in the wilderness
- Good chances of witnessing the Northern Lights
- Photograph Eurasian Elk (Moose) and Reindeer in a snowy landscape
- Siberian Jay and Siberian, Crested and Willow Tits all possible
- Enjoy dog-sledding across frozen lakes and through snowy forests



Images from top: Sapmi Nature Camp, Lapland Scenery (both by Wild Sweden), Moose (Ronald Smolenaers).



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Introduction

The ground is covered with a thick blanket of pristine snow, and the trees bend under its weight to create an other-worldly landscape. We stand on a frozen lake, sipping hot chocolate and watching the Northern Lights dance overhead ... this is Swedish Lapland in the depths of winter, home to the Sámi people, a small selection of special wildlife and stunning winter scenery.



Northern Lights (Jamen Percy)

We begin our holiday with a flight via Stockholm to the small coastal city of Luleå in northern Sweden and here we spend our first night. The following day we will drive for about 2 hours north to the outpost town of Jokkmokk, just inside the Arctic Circle, where we will stay in a comfortable hotel for three nights. Here the subarctic climate is very cold – the lowest temperature on record here is -46°C ! – though around -10 to -15°C is more typical in January. Importantly, the weather here is fairly stable, resulting in great conditions for Northern Lights watching.

On our first morning in Lapland we will explore the frozen countryside by the most practical means available ... a husky safari! Then, in the afternoon, we will meet up with a Sámi reindeer herder. Joining her for an evening meal in her lávvu (traditional tent), we will learn more about Sámi culture and life as a reindeer herder, and try some traditional Sámi dishes prepared over a campfire.



The nearby valley is home to some of Europe's largest Eurasian Elk (Moose), and large herds of Reindeer. We will visit the valley the following day and, if the weather is fine, stop for an al fresco lunch on the shore of Lake Saggat. We will also visit one of the best bird feeding stations in Lapland, where we are likely to see Siberian Jay, Siberian Tit, Crested Tit and Willow Tit, and perhaps Red Squirrel too.

After three nights we leave Jokkmokk behind and travel further north still, spending two nights 'glamping' in a tented camp deep in the forest. Borrowing wooden Nordic skis and snowshoes, we will explore the surrounding forests and frozen lake, and after dark we'll again watch for the Northern Lights, which we hope to see 'dancing' and flickering in the sky above the camp. The illuminated tents provide an ideal foreground for night sky photography and, on clear nights, the number of stars that we will see is spellbinding.

We end our time in Swedish Lapland back in Luleå for a final night, before we must take our flight home.

Itinerary

Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Day 1

Fly Luleå, stay Luleå

We depart London Heathrow early this morning on a Scandinavian Airlines flight to Stockholm, and onto the northern coastal town of Luleå. On arrival in Luleå, we will be met in the arrivals hall and transferred to a hotel in the town. There will be time now to relax and have some free time in the city to explore and go for a walk before dinner at the hotel or at a restaurant nearby if you prefer.

Day 2

Luleå to Jokkmokk

Today our guide will pick us up from reception and we will drive the two hours north to the small outpost town of Jokkmokk. Our drive takes us across the Arctic Circle and into the heart of Swedish Lapland, and from our base we will be surrounded by incredible landscapes ranging from mountains and frozen lakes to ancient boreal forests and rivers. Jokkmokk is also home to a large Sámi community and we will enjoy learning more about Sámi culture during our stay. For the next three nights we stay in a comfortable hotel in Jokkmokk where all rooms are en-suite.

This evening, after dinner, we will check outside to see if the skies are clear. If so, we will fill our thermos flasks and venture out into the cold night air to watch for the Northern Lights. Each evening during our stay in Lapland, provided the skies are clear, we will head out after dark to watch for the Northern Lights. We are likely to have a few (optional, of course) late nights during our stay in Lapland, but as it doesn't get light until around 9 am there is no need to be up early the following morning!

Day 3

Jokkmokk

This morning we will explore our frozen surroundings using the most practical means of transport available in this snowy, frozen landscape... a husky safari! We begin by meeting Matti and Stina, who live in a small cabin by a lake with more than 50 huskies in their snowy garden. We will greet the dogs and help to get them ready before taking off across the frozen countryside. We expect to be out exploring for around three hours in total, stopping for lunch over a camp fire – giving us the chance to warm up and the



Moose (Simon Green)

dogs the chance to cool down! - before we set off back to Jokkmokk.

This afternoon, we will meet up with another friend, Anna, who lives just outside Jokkmokk. Anna and her family are Sámi reindeer herders, and she will invite us for an evening meal in her lávvu (traditional tent). This is our opportunity to learn more about the Sámi culture and the life as a reindeer herder first hand, as well as try some traditional Sámi dishes prepared over the campfire.

Day 4

The nearby valley is known to host some of Europe's largest Eurasian Elk (Moose), and large herds of Reindeer. Today we will drive through the valley for the day and, if the weather is fine, stop for an outdoor lunch somewhere along the shore of Lake Saggat. We should have some great opportunities to see and photograph the Moose, and Reindeer are plentiful and always fun to watch. The forests can be quiet in the winter, but we do have a fair chance of seeing bright Northern Bullfinch, Dipper, Willow Ptarmigan, Black Grouse, Capercaillie and Raven during our daily excursions.

Today will be quite a long day by the time we return to our base in Jokkmokk, but there will once again be the opportunity to go out and look for Northern Lights if the skies are clear.



Jokkmokk

Day 5 and 6

After breakfast this morning, we will take a short walk through beautiful old-growth forest on the edge of Jokkmokk, in order to visit one of the best bird feeding stations in Lapland. Here we are likely to see Siberian Jay, Siberian Tit, Crested Tit and Willow Tit, and perhaps Red Squirrel too.

Then, after checking out of our hotel, we leave Jokkmokk behind to travel further north still, where we will spend two nights 'glamping' surrounded by forest in a tented camp.

Over the next two days, we shall explore the forests and frozen lake surrounding the camp, either on wooden Nordic skis or using snowshoes. We can search for animal tracks and experience the different types of snow, listening out for birds in the forest and enjoying the stunning landscapes. Anyone who prefers to simply stay and enjoy the camp is very welcome to do so! In the evenings we will enjoy



Glamping

dinner by the fireplace in a small wooden cabin, or outdoors if the weather permits, and then take it in turns to watch for the Northern Lights which we hope to see dancing in the sky above the camp. The illuminated tents provide an ideal foreground for night sky photography, and on clear nights the number of stars that we see is astonishing.

Here at the camp there are just five tents, each with proper beds and a heater. There are also heated toilet booths just outside near the tents, and we are sure to be very comfortable for our stay here. Please note, however, that single occupancy is NOT available at the camp.

Day 7

Morning in wilderness; transfer Luleå

After a long breakfast in the cabin, we will have some time to enjoy our surroundings during the best of the daylight hours – perhaps taking a walk through the forest, across the lake, or relaxing around the camp. Then, sadly, we must say our goodbyes and wind our way back towards civilisation. After dropping our winter clothes back in Jokkmokk, we will arrive in Luleå later this afternoon, where our wonderful guide will bid us farewell. This evening will be at leisure, and dinner at your own expense. The hotel has a good restaurant, and there are numerous options around Luleå itself, allowing you to choose whatever you fancy this evening. It's definitely worth taking a short walk to the south harbour, to enjoy the sight of the frozen sea!



Day 8

Fly London

Depending on our flight time today, there may be a little free time to explore Luleå in the daylight this morning, and perhaps to borrow a kick sled at the harbour to go out onto the sea ice! We will then transfer back to the airport in good time for our flight to Stockholm, and on to London.

Focus

Winter scenery and exploration, the limited wildlife in Lapland in the middle of winter, Sámi culture and the Northern Lights. We intend to go out every night after dinner to look for the Northern Lights, though please note that we will not do this if it is cloudy or snowing, as we require clear skies to see the Aurora!

Grading

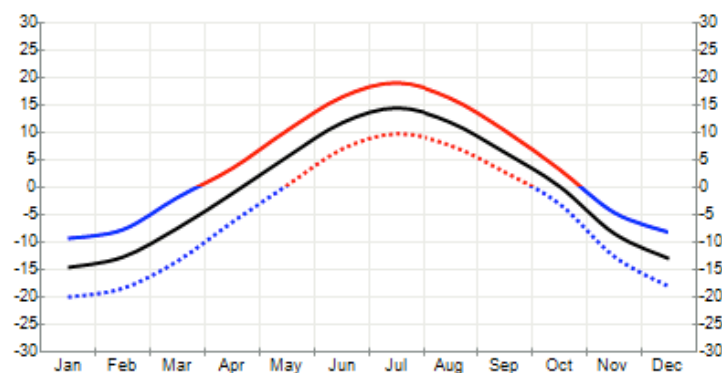
Grade A/B. You will be warm and comfortable in your accommodation, but outside you will need to be prepared and extremely well-equipped for the very cold weather! There is no great physical activity during this tour, though there will be some short walks of up to around half an hour on

packed snow or snowmobile tracks. The terrain can be uneven, but is generally flat. All walks on Nordic skis/snowshoes are optional.

Weather

Winters are long and cold in Swedish Lapland with lots of snow. The landscape is usually snow covered between November and May, though the first snowfall can be as early as August. During the darkest part of the winter in December and January daylight is limited to just a few hours, though the light reflecting off the snow can make the days seem brighter. In late January, sunrise will be around 9.30am, and sunset at around 2pm! The short daylight hours also create ideal conditions for viewing the Northern Lights, which can often be seen on clear nights between September and March. The temperatures in the inland areas and mountains of Swedish Lapland can vary quite a bit, and although we are hoping for temperatures of between -10 to -20°C, you should be prepared for it to drop down to around -35°C and come properly equipped for this.

Average temperatures by month in Jokkmokk (in Celsius):



How to dress for winter in Lapland

You will need to be very well equipped with appropriate clothing in order to feel comfortable and enjoy your stay in Swedish Lapland, and we have provided suggestions on what will be required below. If you haven't travelled to the Arctic before, and would prefer not to invest in new cold weather clothing (which can be expensive), the essentials are all available to rent from a local outfitter in Jokkmokk for 300 SEK (around £25) per day, i.e. 1800 SEK for the whole tour, payable locally. Please let us know in advance if you would like to rent winter clothing, so that we can ensure the correct size is available for you. For those who want to rent the winter clothing please let us know your sizes (XS, S, M, L, XL) and shoe size (EU-format).

The package includes the best Fjällräven equipment including winter boots, insulated outer layers, an insulated hat and insulated mittens. Unless you have previously travelled to the Arctic, or have access to similar equipment that you know will work down to -35°C, we would strongly recommend renting your winter equipment in Jokkmokk.



The following clothing suggestions apply to everyone, with bold/underlined items included in the rental package. Note that even if you rent clothing locally, you will still need to bring inner and middle layers. As weather conditions in Lapland can change quickly and often, and depending on what kind of activity you are undertaking, the best advice is to bring several layers of warm, comfortable inner wear such as long johns, long sleeved shirts, jumpers and trousers.

Feet:

- Two layers of socks: Thin liner socks and thick socks, wool or synthetic, not cotton. Plus an extra set of socks in case you get damp feet.
- **Winter boots**: Comfortable and warm boots. Choose one or two sizes larger than your normal shoes so that you can wear two layers of thick socks and still have plenty of space to allow air to circulate, preferably with removable insoles to allow them to dry faster. Winter boots are included when you rent winter clothing, though since these boots are large and heavy you may still want to bring a pair of normal boots to wear in the car or when it is not freezing.

Lower body:

- Base layer: long johns, wool or synthetic
- Middle layer: wool or fleece trousers
- **Outer layer**: insulated trekking or skiing trousers
- Optional: Snow gaiters, if you use a combo of boots and trousers where there is a risk of snow coming in. Not needed with rental clothing.

Upper body:

- Base layer: long sleeved top or thermal base layer, wool or synthetic
- Middle layer: wool or fleece jacket
- **Outer layer**: insulated jacket that protects you from wind
- Optional: Extra packable down jacket for when we are standing still

Head & hands:

- **Winter hat**: Insulated hat that covers your ears
- Inner gloves: Five-finger wool glove liner as inner layer to wear inside your mittens
- **Insulated mittens**
- Balaclava or buff (neck gaiter)
- Optional: Thin hat to use when not freezing

Food & accommodation included in the price

All food and accommodation is included in the price of this holiday, except for dinner on the first evening and final evening. We would suggest budgeting around £35 per person for this. We will be staying in a comfortable hotel in Jokkmokk for three nights of the holiday, where all rooms are en-suite and single occupancy is available. We then spend two nights 'glamping'. Each tent accommodates two people and solo travellers will be asked to share with a member of the same sex for these nights, as no single occupancy is available here. Heated toilet booths are situated just outside the tents, and the tents themselves have proper beds and heaters. Food is good quality, and there will be plenty of opportunity to try some local specialities such as Arctic Char, Gáhkku and Souvas. Our final night is spent back in a comfortable hotel in Luleå.

Regional flights

The standard flights for this holiday are with Scandinavian Airlines from London Heathrow. It is also possible to fly from Manchester to Stockholm and onto Luleå, though as the flight from Manchester doesn't depart early enough to make the connection in Stockholm on the way out you would need to set off a day early and have an additional night in Luleå (or Stockholm) ahead of the main group arriving. Arrangements from Birmingham are similar, though there is also an additional stop in Copenhagen on the return leg. Please note that flight schedules can change so please contact the Naturetrek office for further information and prices.

Your safety and security

You have chosen to travel to Sweden. Risks to your safety and security are an unavoidable aspect of all travel and the best current advice on such risks is provided for you by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In order to assess and protect against any risks in your chosen destination, it is essential that you refer to the Foreign Office website – <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/Sweden> regularly prior to travel.

How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests or connecting/regional flights, at the time of booking.