

# LAPONIA

– A Living World Heritage





Photo: Peter Rosén



Photo: Carl-Johan Utsi



Photo: Laponiatjuottjudus



Laponia is one of Sweden's 15 World Heritage Sites. In all there are more than 1000 World Heritage Sites worldwide.

Photo: Carl-Johan Utsi

# It is the magnificence of nature and the living Sámi culture that make Laponia a World Heritage Site

*Laponia was designated a World Heritage Site for its considerable natural and cultural values. The area bears traces of the Earth's early history but also of mankind's.*

In Laponia World Heritage Site there are nine Sámi communities, the national parks Padjelanta/Bad-jelánnda, Sarek, Muddus/Muttos and Stora Sjöfallet/Stuor Muorkke, the nature reserves Sjávnja and Stubbá, and the protected areas Tjuoldavuobme, Ráhpaäno suorgudahka (the Látjávrrre Delta) and Sulidälbmá.

Laponia would not be a World Heritage Site without its population. For thousands of years, the indigenous Sámi people have lived and worked here, which has made them one with the landscape. The many stories and the detailed knowledge of the area that have been passed down from generation to generation have reinforced that feeling.

The landscape is varied, containing everything from on the one hand plains with large-growth coniferous forest, wetlands and lakes, and on the other hand mountain areas with high mountain massifs, deep valleys, gushing streams and over a hundred glaciers.

The plants, the bird species and the wildlife are both rare and of more common types. Peregrine falcons, swans and ducks jostle with bears, moose and lynx and on the mountain slopes and in forest glades the plants that thrive include Mountain Avens, Alpine Timothy and Globeflower.

With naturum Visitor Centre at Stuor Muorkke/Stora Sjöfallet, Laponia has a natural hub for hikers, and with the initiatives to increase accessibility, the area is becoming even more attractive to visitors from near and far.

Like the threads in the carefully woven shoe ribbon, nature, culture and people are intertwined. On your travel here, you too can become part of Laponia.

A warm welcome to Laponia.



Photo: Peter Rosén

**1972** – The World Heritage Convention is created to protect the world's most valuable cultural and natural environments.

**1996** – Laponia is designated a World Heritage Site called "The Laponian Area" by UNESCO's World Heritage Convention.

#### **Citation**

*The site is of outstanding universal value as it contains examples of how the earth has developed, above all geologically, and of how ecological and biological changes are taking place today. There are also unparalleled natural phenomena of exceptional natural beauty and significant habitats for biological diversity. The area, which since prehistoric times has been populated by the Sámi, is one of the best-preserved examples of a nomadic area in northern Scandinavia. It includes dwelling sites and foraging areas for large reindeer herds, a custom that goes back to an early stage in human economic and social development.*

**2011** – Laponiatjuottjudus is created, which is the administrator of Laponia World Heritage Site. It is a locally based organisation with its head office in Jähkämähkke/ Jokkmokk.



Photo: Tor Lundberg



The highest mountain summit  
is 2089 metres a.s.l.

Photo: Carl-Johan Utsi

# A highly varied landscape with a long history

*High mountains and deep valleys, barren mountain slopes and verdant forests, an exciting geological history and rich flora and fauna. Laponia is a magnificent and varied nature area with a living Sámi culture.*

Laponia has an exciting geological history. Parts of the bedrock are primaevial, comprising granites and gneiss 2,000 million years old. The primaevial rock is in the eastern part, in Muddus/Muttos and Stubbá, as well as beneath the mountains in the west. The mountain range itself was created more than 400 million years ago when the two continents Europe and North America collided. The seabed was crushed and pressed together into a mountain range as impressive as the Himalayas, which has gradually been eroded. The minerals you hike on today were formed in the collision and before that were on the ocean bed. 60 million years ago, the continents were split apart again, and a new sea, the Atlantic Ocean, opened up. At the parting, the bedrock was again raised and formed our own mountain range in Scandinavia, while another part ended up in America – the Appalachians.

## Many nature types

Many types of nature are represented in Laponia. In the east, Sjávnja and Muddus/Muttos form the biggest contiguous wetland in Sweden, with virgin spruce and pine forests. To the west, the mountain bedrock proper rises higher and bolder the closer you come to Sarek and Stora Sjöfallet/Stuor Muorkke. The westernmost part of the mountains, Padjelanta/Badjelánnda, is a fertile high plateau on a lime rich bedrock and is unusually rich in plant species.

## What we see today

Laponia is the homeland of the Sámi, who have lived here for thousands of years. Traces of dwelling sites with hearths and storage pits show that they lived from fishing, gathering and hunting. Later on the reindeer herding has developed into an economically significant industry.

The different cultivation regions today in Laponia contribute to many different animal species thriving in the area. Reindeer, moose, trout and grayling migrate across long distances in Laponia, and Golden Eagle, White Tailed Eagle, Gyrfalcon and Peregrine Falcon all nest here, and during the warmer six months about a hundred different species of migratory bird can be seen. In parts of the area there are large growth moose, a stable bear population, and other predators such as wolverine and lynx thrive here.



Photo: Peter Rosén

The area is rich in animal and plant species with several endangered species and considerable geological and biological values. Botanists have been interested in Laponian flora for centuries.



Photo: Helena Larsson/Natur-  
fotograferna/IBL Bildbyrå

The reindeer's foraging and trampling has formed the vegetation. Its foraging affects how high or low the treeline is, and this in combination with lime rich bedrock also contributes to the unusual and unique flora.



Photo: Carl-Johan Utsi



Photo: Carl-Johan Utsi

The reindeer herds are privately owned today,  
but in the words of the ancient Sámi saying,  
the property of the wind.



Photo: Carl-Johan Utsi



Photo: Carl-Johan Utsi

# The reindeer industry has modernised, but still it is the reindeer that govern its rhythm

*For thousands of years, the reindeer has been the most important animal to people in Lapponia. Today, reindeer herding is an important economic base for Sámi culture.*

There have been reindeer in the area since the end of the last ice age. The herds moved according to where there was forage at different times of year, and the people who inhabited the area began to follow their migrations. At strategic places, trapping pits were dug, and the animals were scared into them. The hunt gave meat and furs, and the skins were used to make clothes, shoes and other essentials.

Gradually the people tamed the reindeer. They could pull and carry whatever was needed on the constant journey. A tamed reindeer cow could be used to attract other wild reindeer.

## Modern reindeer herding

A Sámi community is both an economic association and a geographic area where members of the community carry out reindeer herding, hunting and fishing. Today's reindeer herding is carried out in 51 Sámi communities in Sweden, nine of which are in Lapponia.

A reindeer herd comprises privately owned animals, and every reindeer has a combination of cuts in its ears which show who the owner is. In July, the herds are rounded up into enclosures and the year calves are given their marks. An average herd today comprises mostly reindeer cows. Most of the bull reindeer, sarvvis, are slaughtered before they are 4 years old.

The reindeer forage in nature all the year, seeking grass and herbaceous plants in the summer and lichen in the winter. If the winter is mild, an ice crust can form on the ground, making foraging more difficult. The saying that the reindeer is the property of the wind is perhaps not completely accurate today, but the reindeer and reindeer herding are dependent on untouched ground where the reindeer can get at the ground lichen.

The fact that the reindeer herders must adapt to both reindeer and nature contributes to the unique character of the reindeer industry, making it unlike many other industries. The reindeer herders are entitled to exploit the land according to reindeer herding rights.



Photo: Carl-Johan Utzi

The reindeer industry is one of the industries that are completely in the hands of environmental factors such as weather and temperature, availability of forage and disruptive natural factors.



Photo: Carl-Johan Utzi

As a visitor, it is of particular importance to show respect to the reindeer and reindeer herding in Lapponia. The reindeer's need to be allowed to forage is of great significance to its survival and therefore to the reindeer industry.



The Sámi communities in Lapponia are Baste čearru, Unna tjerusj, Sirges, Jåhkågaska tjiellde, Tuorpon, Luokta-Mávas Mountain Sámi communities and Udtja, Slakka and Gällivare Forest Sámi communities.



Photo: Carl-Johan Utsi



# Laponia as a visitor destination

*Laponia attracts visitors from near and far. Young, old, adventurers and less experienced mountain visitors can explore the World Heritage Site on their own terms.*

Tourists have been busy visiting Laponia for a long time. The first visitors travelled by steamboat or were driven by innkeepers along the river up to the mountains. When the railway through Sweden was built in 1887, the area to the north became more accessible. The following year, the tourist association STF built the first tourist facility at Varvek, on the trail between Huhtán/Kvikkjokk and Sulidälbmá and the visitor industry has gradually developed.

Since Laponia consists of national parks and reserves that were already well-known, the visitor industry has grown over the years. It is not particularly complicated to use the trails and the system of cabins. Some parts are so easily accessible that children and people with slight disabilities can use them. Other areas however require you to have some experience and to have spent some time in the mountains, and that you have mountain safety skills. In some cases a guide may be needed.

## Consideration to animals and nature

Avoid disturbing foraging reindeer when you are hiking or skiing. If you run into a collected flock, sit down until it has passed. In spring particularly, when the cows are calving, they are extra sensitive to disturbances. Always keep dogs on a lead so that the reindeer do not feel threatened. In winter time they are extra vulnerable, since much of their energy is devoted to digging foraging pits in the snow. If they are frightened away they need to dig a new pit.

Reindeer herding rights apply in the whole of Laponia. They give reindeer herding Sámi the right to use the area for themselves and their animals. Hunting, fishing, constructing and using a motorised vehicle are otherwise forbidden there.

## See the World Heritage Site

Laponia offers opportunities for both relaxation and new experiences. Hike the summer trails, go on a tour in the winter landscape, learn more about everyday Sámi life and enjoy the Northern Lights, the stillness and the variety of nature.

Along the trails there are overnight cabins and sometimes you can buy provisions. Where the trails pass Sámi settlements, it is often possible to buy gáhkku (ember-baked bread) and fish. At some of the Sámi settlements, boat rides and accommodation can also be offered. The service is sporadic however, depending on the season, weather, winds and reindeer herding duties. The visitor centres offer exhibitions and information about Laponia. Each visitor centre is unique. They are in Bårjäs/Porjus, Jiellevárre/Gällivare, Huhtán/Kvikkjokk and Jáhkámáhkke/Jokkmokk.



Photo: Daniel Olausson

The waterfall is the most popular destination in Muddus/Muttos. The river that flows along at a snail's pace suddenly plunges down 42 metres into the narrow Gähppogårsså canyon. During the spring flood in June, it is an impressive sight.



Photo: Hans-Olof Ursti

When you are in Laponia there is nothing to hurry back to. There is plenty of accommodation in the entire World Heritage Site. It is only in Sarek and the eastern parts of Sjävnja there are no tourist cabins.



Photo: Daniel Olafsson



Photo: Peter Rosén



Photo: Carl-Johan Utsi

## Naturum and árudahka – The gateway to the World Heritage Area

People have lived in the area around naturum Visitor Centre for as long as we can remember. The big valley is like an artery for people and animals. Old hearths, dwelling sites and other traces in the landscape show that people have been on the move here ever since the most recent ice age.

Naturum Visitor Centre lies on Viedásnjárgga Headland at Stuor Muorkke in Gällivare Municipality. Unna Tjerusj Sámi community chose the site so that we can receive visitors here without affecting reindeer herding in the area. Naturum Visitor Centre is designed by Wingårdh arkitekter and Andersson Jönsson landscape architects. In May 2013, a tsieggim was held – a ceremony to mark the beginning of construction of naturum Visitor Centre Laponia. An important part of the ceremony was in accordance with Sámi tradition to ask the land for permission to build on the site. In September 2014 naturum opened for visitors. The building contains an exhibition dealing with Laponia and human relations with the landscape. You can also get hiking tips, attend a guided tour, shop local products, and enjoy a coffee in our café.

Beautifully situated on a ridge near naturum Visitor Centre lies árudahka – a Sámi settlement with two goahte buildings and a storage rack. The settlement was built by Mats-Peter Åstot and is used for activities such as storytelling. Here you can also learn more about the Sámi dwelling. A goahte contains sacred places, and your movements inside it should reflect this.

## Tours, trails and cabins

In the entire area there are trails which follow the ancient routes. Around the trails there are dwelling sites, reindeer pastures and other signs showing that you are following a route that many have travelled before you. The trail can in itself be a cultural heritage. In many cases the trail markings have been there for centuries. The marked trails are both summer trails and winter trails. The trails include the Arctic Trail, the Muttos Trail and the King's Trail. Laponia offers tours varying in difficulty and character. They pass through different growing zones, to birdwatching towers, to waterfalls, and to places offering a fantastic view.

In Laponia there are many different types of accommodation. You can choose to stay in a cabin with self-catering or at a campground in a caravan or a tent. The mountain stations also offer packages that include accommodation, food and activities. There are always good places to pitch a tent, and along the main trails there are cabins spaced out at suitable distances.

Regardless of where and how you choose to live, you always have magnificent scenery on your doorstep.

Read more about accommodation, trails and activities at [www.laponia.nu](http://www.laponia.nu)

## Entrances and stopover sites

Around Laponia there are several places that are suitable starting points for you who are planning to visit the area, as well as some pleasant stopover sites.

**Stuor Muorkke/Viedásnjárgga** – here you find naturum Visitor Centre and a mountain station with hotel, café, shop, caravan site and campground, as well as a filling station. Nearby there are fishing waters and a helicopter station.

**Skájdde** – The Skájdde entrance is the easiest way to reach Muddus/Muttos. Nearby there are several resting places and nice day hikes. This is also the entrance to the national park with a parking lot, toilets and information.

**Huhtán/Kvikkjokk** – Has a long tradition as a mountain visitor destination. There is accommodation and a caravan and campground. In summer there is an air connection with Stálluokta and there is a year-round bus connection with Jokkmokk.

**Vägen Västerut** (The Road West) – At the crossing on road 825 there is a small site with information boards where cars and buses can stop.

**Gäbnásj – Sáltoluoktaentrén** – an important entrance for visitors to Sáltoluokta mountain station and the Sámi settlement. The starting point for southbound hikes on the King's Trail.

**Rijtjem** – Entrance with hiking trails towards the northern Badjelánnda Trail. Accommodation, caravan sites and parking. In summer there is an air connection with Stálluokta. In winter the area is a starting point for snowmobiling recreation outside Laponia.

**Allávárre** – Entrance to Sjávnja, about 60 km north-west of Jiellevárre/Gällivare. An old cycle path leads over the wetlands and pine moors where for many years people have travelled to their houses and cabins.

**Oarjemus Stubbá** – On Road 45 between Jiellevárre/Gällivare and Bårjås/Porjus, you will see the mountain summit Oarjemus Stubbá, a small mountain with an unbeatable view. On a clear day you can see distant Sarek.



Photo: Carl-Johan Utzi

Tjuottjodit is the Lule Sámi verb "to take care of something, administrate". Laponiatjuottjudus is the management of Laponia World Heritage Site. It is a locally based organisation with its head office in Jåhkâmâhkke/Jokkmokk. Laponiatjuottjudus is developing new methods to manage the World Heritage Site together with the people living in and around the area. The parties in the committee are the Sámi communities in Laponia, Jåhkâmâhkke/Jokkmokk and Jiellevárre/Gällivare municipalities, the County Administrative Board In Norrbotten County and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency. The Sámi delegates are in the majority on the committee, but all decisions are to be made with the consent of all parties.

# LAPONIA

WORLD HERITAGE IN SWEDISH LAPLAND



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



Laponia  
Uppstogs på  
världsarvslistan 1996