



STORA SJÖFALLET/ STUOR MUORKKE NATIONAL PARK

LAPONIA WORLD HERITAGE AREA

*AGE-OLD FORESTS
AND IMPOSING
MOUNTAINS*



Printrun 2020 Photo: Carl-Johan Utsi

KERSTIN OMMA, UNNA TJERUSJ

*”WE USED TO GO OUT
THERE AND PUT OUT
NETS UNDER THE
FALLS TO GET FISH
FOR DINNER”*

”I grew up here on the shores of Stuor Julevu. When the ice broke up it was time to start fishing. We had big boats and in them there were children, packs of luggage, petrol, whole families and dogs with them. And then we had a little boat that was tied to the big one and in that there were goats, nets, salt and fish barrels. And that’s how we migrated, if the wind was strong we had to go ashore and wait.

It would sort of open up when we came migrating to Gieb-násbasska on our way west. And I remember every time the mountain world opened up, isá (father) began to yoik. He never sang otherwise. Stuor Muorkke was a meeting place. We played and greeted each other. That was where you heard the news. We had no radio. It was the summer festival of our day.

We had a peat goahte and after Midsummer we carried on westwards. I knew how to clean fish almost before I could walk. When the fishing was over in one place we moved to the next. They knew how to do it and where the fish were in the lake. Everyone had their own fishing spot.

One thing we were told as children was that if you don’t eat the fish head the calves will be born without a head. When we had eaten our fish dinner we had to carry the leftovers back out between the rocks. That simply had to be taken out there. It was very important.”

Guhkkesvágge Valley, which borders on Sarek, is a reindeer autostrada. Here the animals migrate westwards in spring and eastwards in late autumn. Year after year after year.



THE OLD-GROWTH FOREST

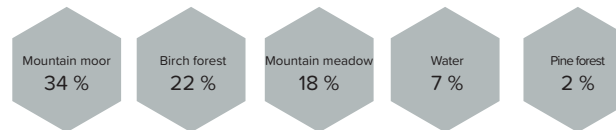
The forest is so old that you feel it in your bones when you hike here. Here and there you see long areas of stripped bark, like windows into the trunk. The inner bark has long been known as a diet supplement. The trees are passing on a greeting from those who have passed this way before. Everywhere there stand silvery dried pines and gnarled ancient trees, so toughened by the climate that they still stand in spite of many withering storms. Alongside lie large fallen pines that have nevertheless surrendered to the weather. The old-growth forest is home to large numbers of species that disappear if the forest is harvested. We are so used to forestry that we have almost forgotten what a real forest looks like, that it can be so magical.

THE LAND OF TWO SÁMI COMMUNITIES

The borders between Sámi communities often run along lakes and watercourses. On the south side of the Stuor Julevu lake system lies the Sámi community of Sirges, and north of it lies Unna Tjerusj Sámi community. Since ancient times, the valley has been a central communication route between the mountains and the winter foraging grounds. In the past, transport was over the water. In the 70s, the “Road West”, which ends in Rijtjem, was completed. To the members of the Sámi community, reindeer herding is the main occupation, but many find their livelihood in other ways too. Fishing is important in summer and autumn. In different parts of what is today a national park, these families have their cloudberry picking mires, fishing lakes and sorrel fields. Each season has its tasks. That which many call a wilderness has for generations been a carefully tended cultural landscape.

”This particular area is probably a language mix of both North- and Lule Sámi. You hear that when you listen to the language and how folk talk.”

PER-GUSTAV NUTTI, BASTE ČEARRU



STUOR MUORKKE/STORA SJÖFALLET

- AREA: 1 280 km²
- INAUGURATION YEAR: 1909
- NEAREST COMMUNITIES: Jåhkâmåhkkke/Jokkmokk, Bårjås/Porjus and Jiellevárre/Gällivare
- SÁMI COMMUNITIES: Sirges and Unna tjerusj
- COUNTY: Norrbotten

HUGE CONTRASTS

Stora Sjöfallet/ Stuor Muorkke National Park showcases all the landscapes of Laponia World Heritage Area. Here you find centuries-old pine trees, birch forest pastures, wetlands, high mountains and glaciers. For thousands of years, people and animals have passed through and lived in the lake system – the lifeblood.

The name **Stuor Muorkke** means “big isthmus”, the land between two bodies of water. To travel on, it was necessary to carry the load and the boat to the next lake. It became natural to stop over and spend time, hunting and fishing. Stone Age dwelling sites and other traces tell of how different land areas have been visited by people for thousands of years.

The **lake system**, which is the heart of the entire area, has been inundated in stages by hydropower projects. That which was previously a labyrinth of promontories, islands, waterfalls and smaller lakes is today a storage reservoir. It is a transformation of the landscape that is so extreme it has become one of the foremost characteristics of the area. Both everyday life and the land are forever changed and today the water splits the area in two.

On the south side, the ancestral Mother Áhkká greets us with her summits and glaciers. On the north side of the valley stands her more modest sister mountain, Gállaktjåhkká. They watch over an area filled with contrasts, the verdant and the barren, the alpine and the protective. Where the pines end, the high mountains begin. The road that runs through the entire area makes it an unusually accessible mountain region. Since 1996, Stora Sjöfallet/ Stuor Muorkke has been part of Laponia World Heritage Area.

VISIT LAPONIA WAYS IN

Stora Sjöfallet/Stuor Muorkke is part of the Unesco World Heritage Area of Laponia, which also includes the national parks Sarek, Padjelanta/Badjelánnda and Muttos/Muddu, together with among other areas Stubbá and Sjavnja nature reserves. Laponia was created to preserve nature and the living Sámi culture with thousand-year roots in this landscape.



Photo: Carl-Johan Utsi

VEDÁSNIJÁRGGA

On the promontory looking out towards the waterfall, the summits of Gierkav and the slopes of Nieras – there stands Naturum Laponia, the visitor centre for Laponia World Heritage Area. Here you can light a fire in a lávvu tepee, take a guided tour of the exhibition, practise birdwatching, drink coffee and get tips on where to hike. On the doorstep towers an impressive old-growth forest. The Sámi community chose the place so that Naturum does not disturb reindeer migration or the everyday life of the local population. Before construction started, the land’s permission was requested. Perhaps that is why the place is so unusually tranquil?

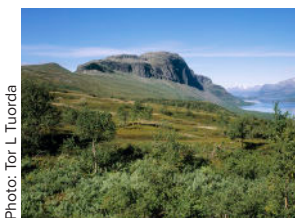


Photo: Tor L. Tuorða

SÁLTOLUOKTA

Sáltoluokta is an important settlement site for Sirges Sámi community and the King’s Trail also passes this way. Many guests stay at the STF mountain station to make day tours and to enjoy the area.

GISURIS

At Gisuris we find the tri-park point, where the national parks Sarek, Badjelánnda and Stora Sjöfallet/Stuor Muorkke meet. Here you can choose whether you want to see the summits of Sarek, the soft welcoming fells of Badjelánnda, or experience the contrasts around Áhkká.



Photo: Laponiajuottjudus

VÁKKUDAVÁRRE

At the tree line above Vákkudavárre you can enjoy a wide panorama of the snow-capped summits of the Sarek mountains. This is where The King’s Trail heads north towards Dievsajávri (Teusajaure).

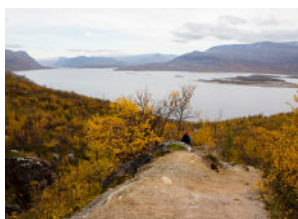


Photo: Laponiajuottjudus

RIJTJEM

Rijtjem is the main settlement for Unna Tjerusj Sámi community, and is an important crossroads for many other Sámi communities. From here you can travel on by boat or helicopter to the Badjelánnda Trail and the Arctic Trail.



Photo: Carl-Johan Utsi

ÄNONJÁLMME

Änonjálme is a settlement belonging to Sirges Sámi community. To many, the stretch from here to Gisuris is the first or last stage of a hike on the Badjelánnda Trail. It is also a starting point for hikes on into Sarek.

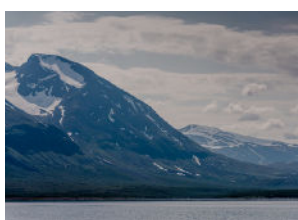


Photo: Carl-Johan Utsi

SUORVVÁ

Hikers are entitled to pass through the gate and pass the Suorvvá dams to get to the trails on the south side. There, the hike or the ski tour begins through birch forest up towards the mountain.



Photo: Laponiajuottjudus

Photo: Erland Haarberg

Illustration: Lisa Wallin

Photo: Laponiajuottjudus

ENJOY THE LAND

To visit Stora Sjöfallet/Stuor Muorkke National Park is a fantastic and easily accessible way to experience Laponia World Heritage Area. You can go on short day tours, hike the trails, or simply head off into the old-growth forest and make your own way.



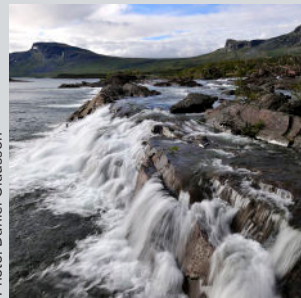
1 ÁHKKÁ

The mountain massif of Áhkká is a symbol of this area. The name Áhkká occurs all over Sápmi – the home of the Sámi – and tells you that you are encountering a place that is sacred. The Sámi goddesses bear the same name. Meet her with respect when you make your ascent to the summit.



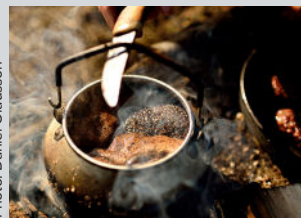
2 IPPÁTJÁHKKÅ

The trail to Ippátjáhkå takes you through different hardiness zones. It starts in the old-growth forest, rises through mountain birch forest and ends on the mountain. When you begin to climb you are given a magic view of Stuor Muorkke, Gierkav Mountain and Lake Láŋas.



3 EDNAMUORKKE-GÁRTTJE

The five waterfalls at Stuor Muorkke are no more than a remnant, but they are still well worth a visit. Once you get to the cascading water you can get some idea of how huge and powerful it was before being dammed up, when it attracted visitors from all over Europe at the end of the 19th century.



4 ALWAYS COFFEE

Stuor Muorkke is one of Laponia's best areas for day tours and is ideal for families with children. It features the culture and nature of Laponia in a nutshell. Enjoy a cup of boiled coffee and give a few drops to the ground in thanks.



PITS FOR HUNTING

There are many trapping pits in this area. The most easily accessible ones are near Vattenfall's old floodlit jogging/ skiing track where you suddenly find yourself in the middle of a system of trapping pits with eight sizeable pits. It is placed in the middle of the animals' migratory trail from the cliffs of Nieras, curving down towards the river Viedásädno, and was probably used for hunting reindeer and moose.



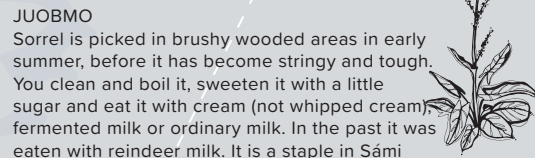
Yellow Saxifrage grows near water springs, and late snowdrifts on the banks of streams in the mountains.



According to a Sámi proverb, the darkest winter days become longer and lighter one willow grouse step at a time. The willow grouse is common here. It lives in the mountains and birch forest all year. It is often hunted in February and March, when the birds collect and



Up on the mountain moors, flying close to the ground, you can see the little Mountain Burnet. It is common every second year, since the larvae need time to finish growing in the harsh climate.



JUOBMO
Sorrel is picked in brushy wooded areas in early summer, before it has become stringy and tough. You clean and boil it, sweeten it with a little sugar and eat it with cream (not whipped cream), fermented milk or ordinary milk. In the past it was eaten with reindeer milk. It is a staple in Sámi cuisine.



THE SPECKLED ONE

You will probably not see the lynx, because this animal is a specialist in evasion. She stalks her prey, enjoys boulder-strewn, rocky terrain and prefers to hunt at night and dusk. In the daytime she does what other cats do, lies resting somewhere with a good view.



Photo: Mikael Mildén

Photo: Göran Wallin

Photo: Carl-Johan Utisi

Photo: Peter Rossén



Golden Eagle. It takes a strong pine tree to bear an eagle's nest, which can weigh around a ton.

Photo: Brittas Östling



Map and illustrations: Lisa Wallin

Photo: Carl-Johan Utisi

Photo: Daniel Olausson

Photo: Daniel Olausson



The fearless Siberian Jay is scarce in harvested forests. Here it thrives.



Gierkav means “cradle” in Lule Sámi. Is it because of its shape? Or is the mountain a cradle for the new-born calves? The name is so old we can only guess at its origin.



GOOD TO KNOW

Trails. The King's Trail passes through the area and the Swedish Tourist Association (STF) has cabins in Rijtjem, Vákkudavárre, Dievssajávri and Sáltoluokta. You can also hike a stretch of the Badjelánnda (Padjelanta) Trail from Ánonjálme southwards.

Helicopter. There are helicopter bases at both Stuor Muorkke (Stora Sjöfallet) and Rijtjem (Ritsem). In summer there are scheduled tours from Rijtjem.

Sámi communities' workplace. If you see foraging reindeer when you are hiking or skiing, avoid disturbing them. If possible, make a detour or sit down and wait until the herd has passed. In some of the settlements you the visitor can buy gáhkku bread and smoked fish. Sámi community members also provide boat transport and rent out cabins, for example in Rijtjem and Bietsávrrre.

ORDINANCES

In Stuor Muorkke you are the guest of nature. Since it is a national park, there are special regulations for visitors. You may pick berries and mushrooms. You may also make a fire using dried branches and twigs, or construct a shelter for yourself when you are hiking. You may pitch a tent and stay for a day or two on your hiking tour. But it is forbidden to:

- intentionally disturb foraging reindeer and reindeer herding
- leave litter
- damage or remove earth, stones and plants apart from berries and edible fungus
- collect eggs and catch, injure or kill animals
- hunt and fish
- bring a dog, except at certain times and in certain areas.

Reindeer husbandry rights apply here. They give reindeer herding Sámi the right to use land and water for themselves and their animals, for example for hunting, fishing and driving a snowmobile when working. It is your responsibility as a visitor to learn the complete regulations. They are available on www.laponia.nu

LANDSCAPE OF THE AGES

Laponia has been designated a World Heritage Site partly because of the geology of the area. It is like an encyclopaedia to those who want to learn more about how our landscapes have come into being. There are the durable summits, such as Áhkká, which have withstood wearing down by the inland ice cap. The road which runs straight through the national park follows the sharp edges of the rocks.

THE MOUNTAIN RIM

It is not common to see where the ancient primary rock meets the new mountain bedrock, but in Laponia this transition is distinct. At Gierkav and Nieras, the land suddenly rises. The alpine mountains take over. This mountain rim is called a clint.



Photo: Jan-Erik Nilsson

PURPLE

Around Naturum Visitor Centre Laponia there are soft purple stones, often draped with lichen in various shades of green. The stone is called sjöfallskvartsit "Sjöfall sandstone" and is unique to Suor Muorkke. You will see it here and there while moving around the area.



Photo: Anton Hirschfeldt

THE SUORVVÁ STONE

On the old road at Suorvvá towers a boulder as big as a house. It lies a few stone's throws from the new road, and makes a nice little excursion with the children to show the power of nature. The Suorvvá Stone crashed down, but many of the other boulders in the valley bear witness to how the inland ice progressed. The rocks can have been transported in the ice over huge distances



Photo: Anton Hirschfeldt

APPEARANCES DECEIVE

The rocky environment is not as barren as it seems. Rock lichen thaws in the first spring sunshine, and between boulders we find ground lichen. In rocky terrain the snow does not lie as compact, and it thaws early. Reindeer often find food there.

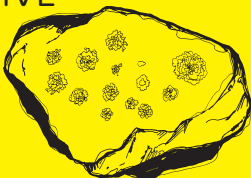
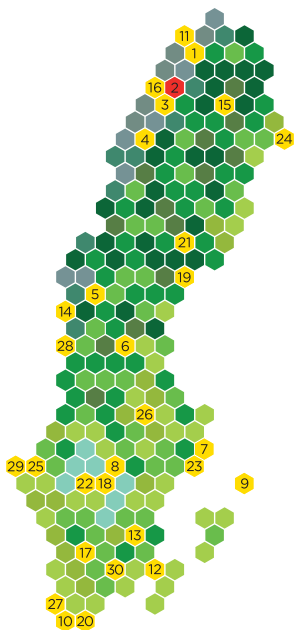


Illustration: Lisa Wallin



NATIONAL PARKS OF SWEDEN



1. **ABISKO** An easily accessible mountain valley with unusually rich flora.
2. **STORA SJÖFALLET / STUOR MUORKKE** Impressive peaks, glaciers and ancient pine woodlands.
3. **SAREK** Magnificent, demanding wilderness in a unique mountainous landscape.
4. **PIELJEKAISE** Expansive, pristine woodlands of mountain birch.
5. **SONFJÄLLET** A low mountain with natural woodland and plenty of bears.
6. **HAMRA** A rare complex of natural woodland, wetland and watercourses.
7. **ÄNGSÖ** Genuine agricultural landscape with grazing animals and haymaking.
8. **GARPHYTTAN** This old agricultural landscape is a sanctuary for many songbirds.
9. **GOTSKA SANDÖN** Unique, beautiful island with miles of sandy beaches.
10. **DALBY SÖDERSKOG** Leafy woodland on the plains of Skåne.
11. **VADVETJÄKKA** Sweden's northernmost national park is a mountain with deep caves.
12. **BLÅ JUNGFRUN** An island of legends, with smooth rocks, deciduous trees and beautiful views.
13. **NORRA KVILL** One of the few old

growth type woodlands in southern Sweden.

14. **TÖFSINGDALEN** Valley with ancient pine woodlands, rich in boulders and rushing waters.
15. **MUDDUS / MUTTOS** The land of vast wetlands and old growth woodlands.
16. **PADJELANTA / BADJELÄNNDA** Rolling mountain heaths and big lakes, far from the nearest road.
17. **STORE MOSSE** The largest wetland area in Sweden south of Lapland.
18. **TIVEDEN** A wooded landscape with a sense of wilderness.
19. **SKULESKOGEN** Coast with magnificent views and the world's highest isostatic lift.
20. **STENSHUVUD** Coastal hills, broadleaved woodlands, inviting heathlands and beaches.
21. **BJÖRNLANDET** Mountains, cliffs and woodlands with traces of old woodland fires.
22. **DJURÖ** Archipelago in western Europe's biggest inland sea.
23. **TYRESTA** Pristine woodland just south of Stockholm.
24. **HAPARANDA SKÄRGÅRD** Archipelago with sandy beaches and shallow waters.
25. **TRESTICKLAN** Roadless wilderness with expansive views from pine-covered ridges.
26. **FÄRNEBOFJÄRDEN** A mosaic of broadleaved woodlands and water in Nedre Dalälven.
27. **SÖDERÅSEN** Deciduous woodland, scree slopes, running water and a rich flora and fauna.
28. **FULUFJÄLLET** By Sweden's highest waterfall, old growth woodland meets mountainside that is white with lichen.
29. **KOSTERHAVET** Species-rich area of sea and archipelago with Sweden's only coral reef.
30. **ÅSNEN** Archipelago with hundreds of islands and old beech- and pineforests.

LAPONIA

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