

Northern Sweden & Lappland



It's almost criminal that so few visitors to Sweden make it up to Norrland. Remote wilderness, impenetrable forests and the opportunity for long quiet hikes – the northern part of Sweden is a completely separate experience from the rest of the country. This is the home of the Sami people, northern Scandinavia's indigenous population, whose traditional culture revolves around their herds of domesticated reindeer. You won't have to wait long for a glimpse of the creatures either – on any long stretch of road in the north, you're likely to meet five times as many reindeer as cars.

In Northern Sweden you'll also find Lapponia, one of the last great wilderness expanses in Western Europe and a World Heritage-listed site. Its swooping peaks and broad, roadless plains make it heaven for geologists, photographers, hikers and anyone else who loves the idea of standing atop one mountain range to gaze at another across a mighty bog.

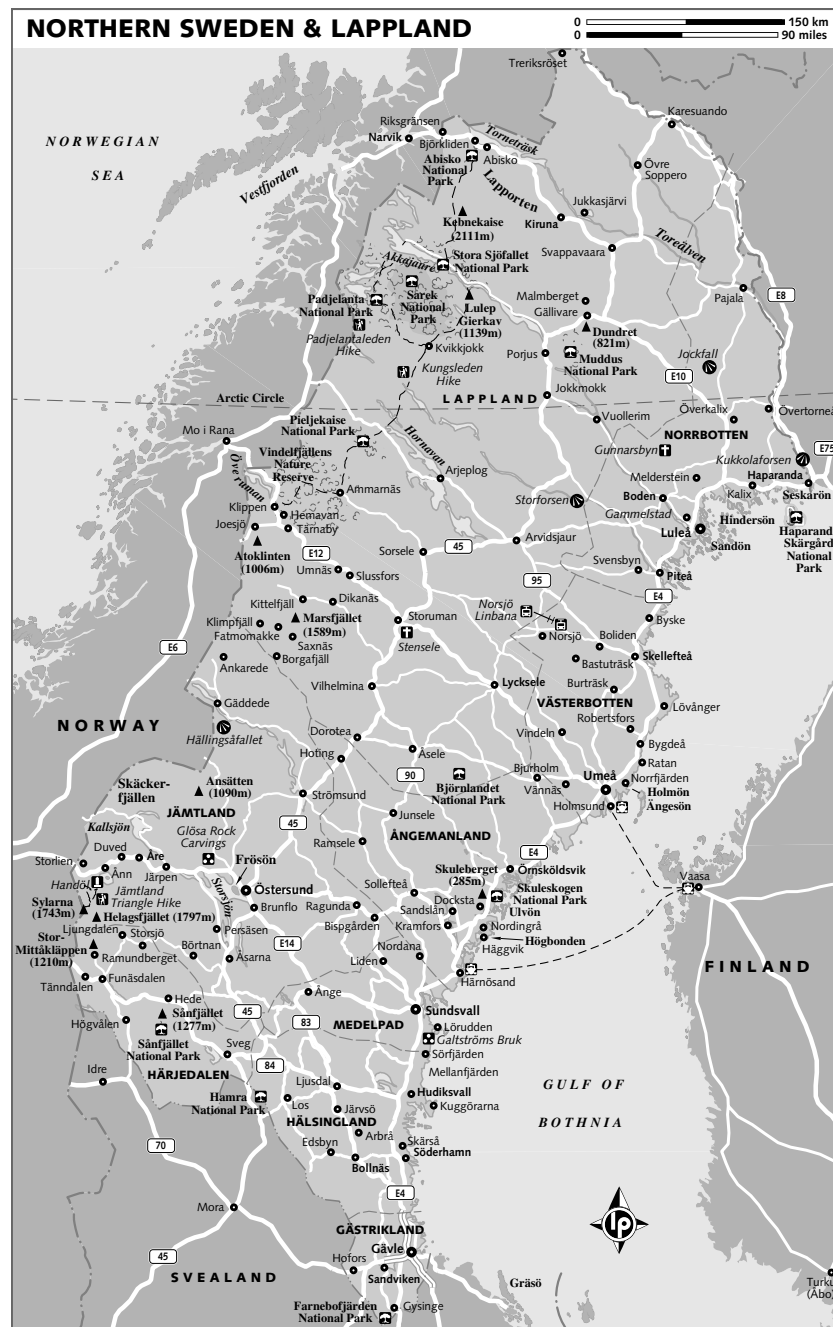
All this untamed wilderness makes Norrland and Lappland the places to find Sweden's best outdoor sporting adventures, from dogsledding and nearly year-round skiing, to hiking, camping and canoeing. But the north is most famous as an enormous stage on which the northern lights and midnight sun perform their brilliant tricks. It's also, for the most part, blissfully empty of tourist hordes. It might be a trek to get up here, but it's well worth the effort.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Follow in the footsteps of royalty on the accessible **Kungsleden hiking trail** (p301)
- Go wild in the remote and rugged **Sarek National Park** (p305)
- Get cosy in the astounding **Ice Hotel** (p301) at Jukkasjärvi
- See the north from the window of a train on the great **Inlandsbanan railway** (p273)
- Climb or drive to dizzying heights above the Gulf of Bothnia, along the **Höga Kusten** (p282)
- Learn about Sami culture and traditions at the **Åjtte museum** (p304) in Jokkmokk



■ AREA: 242,732 SQ KM ■ HIGHEST POINT: KEBNEKAISE (2111M) ■ POPULATION: 1,045,200



Orientation

There are six regions (*landskaps*) along the Bothnian coast, and three along the Norwegian border. In northern areas, the region and county (*län*) boundaries don't always correspond.

From the north to south, the regions of Gästrikland and Hälsingland make up Gävleborgs län, and Medelpad with most of Ångermanland form Västernorrlands län. Västerbotten and the southern third of Lappland create Västerbottens län, and Norrbotten combines with the rest of Lappland to make Norrbottens län. In the southwest, Härjedalen and Jämtland form Jämtlands län.

Almost all of the population lives in the major towns and cities on the Bothnian coast, with another concentration in central Jämtland as well, around the Storsjön lake. The scenery here is dominated by coniferous forest, but the western mountains rise well above the tree line and there are many small glaciers, especially north of the Arctic Circle. Large tracts of Lappland are protected with either nature reserve or national park status. The rivers tend to be large and slow-moving, with long narrow lakes a common feature away from the coast. Coastal islands tend to be small, though they are often located in substantial archipelagos. In summer, sandy beaches, long hours of sunshine and reasonably high water temperatures attract crowds of tourists. The far north has the legendary midnight sun during summer, and the extraordinary northern lights (*aurora borealis*) in winter.

Information

Visitors can contact the following agencies for more detailed information on the area: **Gästrikland Turism** (☎ 026-14 74 37; www.gastrikland.com; Box 1175, SE-80135 Gävle) This is one of two regional tourist offices in Gävleborgs län.

Hälsingetur (☎ 0270-766 60; www.halsingland.com; Box 130, SE-82623 Söderhamn) This is the second office within Gävleborgs län.

Jämtland Härjedalen Turism (☎ 063-14 40 22; www.jamtland.info; Rådhusgatan 44, SE-83182 Östersund) This office covers Jämtlands län.

Mitt Sverige Turism (☎ 0611-55 77 50; www.mittsverigeturism.se; Norra Kyrkogatan 15, SE-87132 Härnösand) This office covers Västernorrlands län.

Turism i Norrbotten/Lappland (☎ 0920-29 35 00; http://turism.norrbotten.se)

VästerbottensTurism (☎ 090-785 71 76; www.vasterbotten.net; Köksvägen 11, SE-90189 Umeå)

Getting Around

BUS

You'll probably find yourself relying more on buses than trains if you're spending any length of time in Norrland. The following companies provide regional transport links, and if you're planning to spend much time in any of these counties, it's worth inquiring about monthly passes or a *sommarkort*, offering discount travel in the peak summer period (from midsummer to mid-August). Check also the respective websites for routes, schedules, fares and passes; these sites don't always have information in English, but if you call the telephone numbers listed you'll usually reach someone who can help you in English.

Länstrafiken i Jämtlands Län (☎ 063-16 84 00; www.lanstrafiken-z.se in Swedish)

Länstrafiken i Norrbotten (☎ 020-47 00 47; www.ltnbd.se in Swedish)

Länstrafiken i Västerbotten (☎ 020-91 00 19, 0950-103 57; www.lanstrafikeni.se)

Länstrafiken i Västernorrland (☎ 020-51 15 13; www.dintur.se in Swedish) Also commonly known as Din Tur.

X-Trafik i Gävleborgs Län (☎ 020-91 01 09; www.x-trafik.se in Swedish)

Ybuss (☎ 0771-33 44 44; www.ybuss.se in Swedish) Runs express buses daily between Stockholm and Sundsvall, Östersund and Umeå.

Other handy regional services include Länstrafiken i Västerbotten bus 100, which runs several times daily between Sundsvall and Luleå via the major towns along the E4; bus 45, which runs daily between Östersund and Gällivare; and bus 31, which connects Umeå and Mo i Rana (Norway) once daily via Storuman and Tärnaby.

Länstrafiken i Jämtlands län bus 45 runs twice daily between Mora (Dalarna) and Östersund.

Länstrafiken i Norrbotten runs two daily buses connecting Luleå and Kiruna – its bus network covers 100,000 sq km (one-quarter of Sweden), and it will carry bikes for Skr50 extra.

TRAIN

A historic railway, **Inlandsbanan** (☎ 063-1044 09; www.inlandsbanan.se) runs for 1067km through

INLANDSBANAN

Until the early 20th century, Norrland's rich natural resources had been left largely unexploited. The Inlandsbanan (Inland Railway) was intended to change this, by opening up the northern forests and mountains for colonisation and development.

Digging ditches, excavating gravel, blasting mountains and laying sleepers and rails in an area where there were no roads was no mean feat. For over 30 years, the sleepers continued their inexorable progress northwards, from Kristinehamn in the south to Gällivare in the north – a distance of over 1300km. The Inlandsbanan was the last major undertaking of the Swedish navvies; construction began in 1907 and the project was completed in 1937.

However, by the time the Inlandsbanan was inaugurated, a serious competitor to the train, the car, was already making an impact on Sweden, and soon railway lines were closed in many parts of the country. When it was proposed that even larger stretches of the Inlandsbanan should be closed down, strong protests were heard not only from the regions directly affected, but from all over Sweden. The Inlandsbanan north of Mora is still operating today largely as a result of the wide popular support it received in the face of closure.

If you'd like to know more about the history of the Inlandsbanan and the people who made it happen, visit the Inlandsbanan Museum in Sorsele. A new railway museum with links to the Inland Railway has also been inaugurated in Jamtli in Östersund.

Sweden's interior from Mora to Gällivare via Östersund, Storuman, Arvidsjaur and Jokkmokk (see above). Today it can be covered in either direction by a combination of *rälsbuss* (railcar) and – with some planning – steam train. The journey is popular with tourists and can be done only from late June (just after midsummer) to early August. Travel on the line is slow (the average speed is 50km/h) – it takes seven hours from Mora to Östersund (Skr347) and 15 hours from Östersund to Gällivare (Skr697) – but you can break your journey in any of the small towns en route. Prices are based on a rate of Skr1.08 per km. You can buy tickets for certain legs of the journey, or a special card that will allow you two weeks' unlimited travel on the route (Skr1195); ScanRail cardholders get a 25% discount on this ticket, but not on individual tickets. Interrail pass-holders under 26 can ride on the Inlandsbanan for free. Children over the age of 15 pay half the adult fare; up to two children age 15 and under can ride free with a paying adult.

SJ (☎ 0771-75 75 75; www.sj.se) trains also run as far north as Härnösand; beyond there, you'll need to use trains operated by a different company, **Tågkompaniet** (☎ 020-44 41 11; www.tagkompaniet.se in Swedish).

The Skr13.2 billion, 190km **Botnia Banan** (www.botniaban.se), a single-track railway being laid from the bridge over Ångermanälven north of Kramfors, via Örnsköldsvik, Husum

and Nordmaling to Umeå, will speed travellers along at up to 250km/h and is due to be completed in 2010.

GÄSTRIKLAND

GÄVLE

☎ 026 / pop 92,000

One of Norrland's nicest cities simply to wander around in, Gävle is known as the gateway to the region. It has a distinctly youthful feel, with several parks and plazas thronged with relaxing locals.

There's an old town, with well-preserved wooden buildings and a slightly funkier feel than the centre. To get an idea of the city's character, be sure to stop on the bridge that links the two sections, and look for a signboard telling the tragicomic story of the Gävle Christmas Goat (in English).

Information

The helpful **tourist office** (☎ 14 74 30; turistbyran@gavletourism.se; www.gavle.se/turism; Drottninggatan 9; ☒ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat, noon-4pm Sun) is not far from the train station.

There are banks and other services all along Drottninggatan and on, or around, the large Stortorget. The public **library** (Slottstorget 1), near the castle, offers free Internet access. For English-language newspapers and magazines go to **Internationell Press** (Södra Kungsgatan 11).

Sights & Activities

The wooden old town of **Gamla Gefle**, south of the city centre, shows what Gävle was like before it was almost completely destroyed by fire in 1869. One of the houses, **Joe Hill-gården** (☎ 61 34 25; Nedre Bergsgatan 28; admission free; ☞ 11am-3pm Tue-Sat Jun-Aug), was the birthplace of the US union organiser who was executed for a murder he didn't commit in Utah, 1915. Some of his poetry forms part of the memorial here.

Berggrenska gården (Kyrkogatan) is the only remaining early-19th-century commercial courtyard in Gävle, and it was lucky to survive the 1869 fire. The nearby **rådhus** (town hall) wasn't so lucky – its present appearance is post-1869, but a town hall has stood on the site since 1628.

The regional **Länsmuseum** (☎ 65 56 00; Södra Strandgatan 20; adult/child Skr40/free; ☞ noon-4pm Tue-Sun) has an excellent art collection from the 17th century to today, plus displays of local silver and glassware, and historical exhibitions.

You'll find a practical demonstration of forestry and conservation techniques

around the parks of **Stadsträdgården** and **Boulognerskogen** (used for open-air music and summer theatre), near the Gävle University campus on Kungsbacksvägen.

The oldest of the churches in Gävle is the **Heliga Trefaldighets kyrka** at the western end of Drottninggatan; it has an 11th-century **rune stone** inside. The buildings of the **castle** on the southern bank of Gävleån are now in administrative use, but there are temporary **art exhibitions** here and a small **prison museum** (tours ☞ noon-2pm Sun).

From June to August daily **boat tours** (Skr35 each way) run from Södra Skeppsbron to the island of **Limön**, part of the surrounding archipelago. The island has a **nature trail**, a **mass grave** and a **memorial** to the sailors of a ship that was here lost in the early 1800s.

Bönan, 13km northeast of town, is a pretty waterside settlement that's also worth a look; attractions include a fish smokehouse and restaurant. Bus 95 runs out here.

Railway buffs will enjoy the preserved steam locomotives and carriages of the **Järnvägs museet** (☎ 14 46 15; Rålsgratan; adult/child Skr40/free; ☞ 10am-4pm Jun-Aug, Tue-Sun rest of yr), the

national rail museum, 2km south of the town centre, off Österbågen.

The leisure park and zoo named **Furuvik** (☎ 17 73 00; www.furuvik.se; adult/child Skr120/90, rides Skr10-40, armband Skr150; ☞ mid-May-Aug), about 12km southeast of Gävle, aims to provide a little of everything; you can behave like a monkey on the amusement rides and then see the real thing at the ape enclosure. From the train station, take frequent bus 838.

A slightly more adult-friendly attraction is the distillery of **Mackmyra Svensk Whisky** (☎ 13 29 79; Bruksgratan 4, Valbo, tours Skr130, whisky tasting from Skr120), established in 1999 as the first Scandinavian malt whisky distillery. It's about 10km west of Gävle and offers regular tours of the distillery (only once a week outside the peak time of late June-August). Inquire at the tourist office for details.

Sleeping

STF Vandrarhem Gamla Gefle (☎ 62 17 45; stf.vandrarhem@telia.com; Södra Rådmansgatan 1; dm from Skr135, s/d Skr260/330) This central place is clean and quiet and set in a homely building around a pleasant courtyard in the old part of town. Bike hire is available, as is breakfast, and there's a good kitchen.

STF Vandrarhem Engeltofta (☎ 961 60; engeltofta@swipnet.se; Bönavägen 118; dm Skr150, s/d from Skr250/385; ☞ Jun-Aug; bus 95) This STF hostel is in a lovely park setting by the sea, about 6km northeast of the city. Golf and fishing facilities are nearby.

Nya Järnvägshotellet (☎ 12 09 90; s/d from Skr395/525) Just across a public square from the train station, this historic building is also the cheapest hotel in town. The reception and a pub are on the ground floor.

Hotell Boulogne (☎ 12 63 52; Byggmästargatan 1; s/d from Skr395/545) The small and friendly Boulogne is another decent midrange option, although it doesn't look like much from the outside. Some rooms have shared bathroom facilities.

Engesbergs Camping (☎ 990 25; info@engesbergs.camping.se; low/high season sites Skr75/100, cabins from Skr350; ☞ May-Sep; bus 95) This camping ground has clean cabins and characteristically high-quality facilities in a pretty setting by the sea, about 11km northeast of town.

Eating

Brända Bocken (☎ 12 45 45; Stortorget; meals Skr64-149) This fashionable place is right in the

heart of the action on the main square. Its outdoor area is a good spot to enjoy a drink with a light meal and do a spot of people-watching.

Helt Enkelt Bar & Kök (☎ 12 06 04; Norra Kungsgatan 3; snacks Skr30-65, meals Skr65-150; ☞ 4pm-midnight Mon-Thu, 4pm-1am Fri, noon-1pm Sat, 5-11pm Sun) This is a favourite with the locals for its good atmosphere, friendly service and well-priced, unpretentious fare. It has sleek décor but not the prices to match – all but one dish on the menu is under Skr100

Church Street Saloon (☎ 12 62 11; Kyrkogatan 11; meals from Skr70; ☞ closed Sun) This restaurant-saloon bar has a Wild West theme; it's furnished with antique saddles, Confederate flags and barrels of hooch. The huge menu includes lots of Tex-Mex items.

Söders Deli (Södra Kungsgatan 11; lunches Skr40-75) This tiny but excellent spot, near Internationell Press, serves good coffee and authentic Italian *ciabatta* and pasta.

Wårdshuset Söderhjelmka Gården (☎ 61 33 93; Södra Kungsgatan 2B) This nearby place offers fine food in a great setting – a wooden house dating from 1773 with lots of outdoor seating; *dagens lunch* is Skr75, à la carte meals range from snacks to traditional Swedish dishes and cost from Skr38 to Skr160.

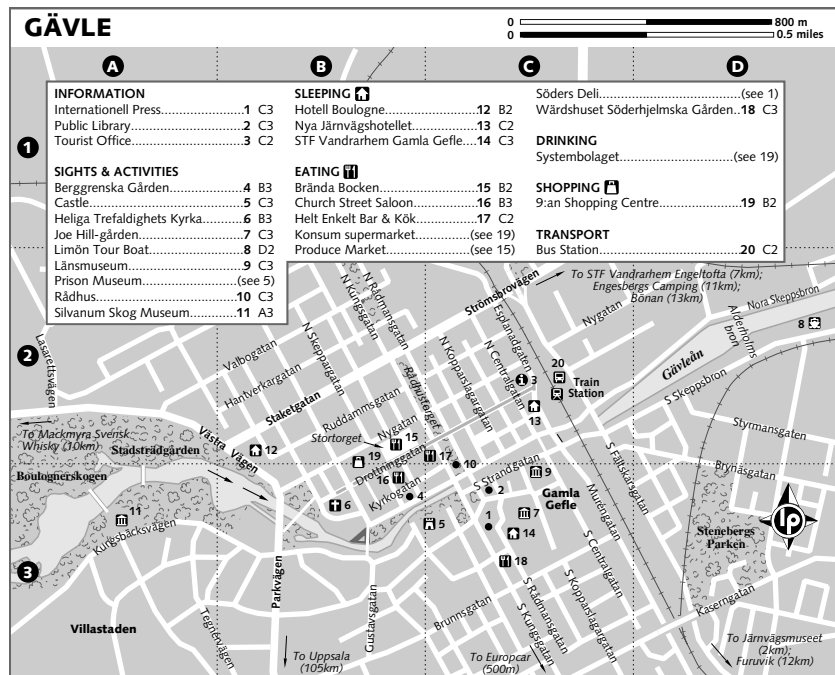
There's a daily **produce market** (Stortorget) and you'll find a **Konsum supermarket** (9:am shopping centre). There's a **Systembolaget** (9:am shopping centre) as well.

Getting There & Away

Numerous long-distance bus services leave from behind the train station (connected by underpass). **Ybuss** (☎ 0200-33 44 44) runs daily to Sundsvall, Umeå and Östersund. **SGS Bussen** (☎ 13 30 30) has two to four daily services to Stockholm. **Swebus Express** (☎ 0200-21 82 18; www.swebusexpress.se) runs to both Uppsala and Stockholm once or twice daily.

SJ trains (☎ 0771-75 75 75) run to Stockholm via Uppsala, and northwards to Sundsvall and beyond; there are up to six X2000 services and several slower trains daily. Other useful direct trains include Gävle to Falun and Örebro.

Local buses leave mainly from around Rådhusgränd. **Europcar** (Södra Kungsgatan 62) has car rental. Ask the tourist office about bicycle hire.



GYSINGE

☎ 0291 / pop 36,843

Gysinge, 55km south of Gävle and on the border with Uppland, is known for the fine **Gysinge Bruk** ironworks that operated from 1668 to the early 20th century, and it's a pleasant place for a wander.

There's a small **tourist office** (☎ 210 00; tourist.gysinge@sandviken.se; Granövägen 6; ☹ 10am-5pm May-Sep, 10am-5pm Mon-Fri Oct-Apr) where you can rent boats and canoes.

Try your hand at forging at **Krokiga Smedjan** (Crooked Forge; admission free; ☹ 10am-6pm Jun-Aug; noon-5pm Tue-Sun rest of yr), which began operations in 1764; there's also a good **handicraft exhibition**. The traditional **Bagarstugan** still bakes unleavened bread, and is a good place for a coffee and a sandwich. In **Smedsbostaden** (Smith's Cottage; admission free; ☹ noon-5pm May-Sep) you can experience what local living conditions were like in the late 19th century. **Dalälvarnas Flottningsmuseum** (Museum of River Driving; adult/child Skr20/10; ☹ noon-5pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug) covers the once crucial, but now defunct, occupation of guiding logs downstream to the sawmills.

Gysinge Wårdshus (☎ 212 00; ysinge@swipnet.se; s/d from Skr950/1250), in the middle of the iron-works area at Gysinge, has very comfortable accommodation plus an excellent restaurant (meals from Skr75).

Bus 49 runs four to six times daily from Gävle to Gysinge.

FÄRNEBOFJÄRDEN NATIONAL PARK

A bird-watcher's favourite national park, Färnebofjärden occupies 260 sq kilometres south of Gysinge, bisected by the river Dalälven. Half-land, half-water, the park has excellent fishing and enough sandy beaches to please those nature-lovers who prefer the type of wildlife typically seen on Swedish beaches in the summer. But primarily the park is known as a bird-watcher's paradise, with ospreys, sea eagles, seven types of woodpecker, Ural owls and capercaillie.

Östa Stugby (☎ 0292-430 04; osta@stugby.com; 6-bed chalet from Skr675 per night; ☹ yr-round) is in beautiful wilderness near the national park some 30km south of Gysinge. It offers luxurious self-contained six-bed chalets with private beach access, and also hires canoes and boats. There's a signposted 'free beach' near the Stugby – be prepared, however, because what it's free of is clothing.

It's difficult to get here without your own wheels, as there's no public transport to the park. Västmanlands Lokaltrafik bus 71 runs one to six times daily from Heby (connections from Sala) to Tärnsjö (8km from Östa).

HÄLSINGLAND

SÖDERHAMN & AROUND

☎ 0270 / pop 26,731

A small town with a couple of streets of shops and restaurants, and some worthwhile attractions, Söderhamn is known as the town of parks. It was founded in 1620 by Gustav II Adolf.

The **tourist office** (☎ 753 53; info@turism.soderhamn.se; ☹ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun) is at the train station, just off the E4 motorway and 1.5km west of the town centre. The town centre has all the main facilities, including banks and supermarkets, mostly along Köpmangatan.

Sights

The history of the town is covered by **Söderhamns Museum** (☎ 157 91; Oxtorgsgatan 5; adult/child Skr25/free; ☹ noon-5pm Tue-Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug). Östra Berget hill lies south of the towncentre, with the odd 23m-high tower **Oscarsborg** (admission free; ☹ 11am-5pm Jun-Aug), with a café on top. Reach it by climbing the stairs behind the railroad tracks. Keep a close eye on the clock, too – a sign on the door says anyone left inside when the tower is closed will be locked in!

Ulrika Eleonora Kyrka (☹ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri), just north of the town hall, was designed by Nicodemus Tessin the Younger, and was completed in 1693. **Söderhamns F15 Flygmuseum** (☎ 142 84; adult/child Skr40/20; bus 59; ☹ 10am-5pm Jun-Aug, 11am-3pm Sun Sep-May), located by the airfield, 5km southeast of town, has a collection of old military aircraft.

About 15km northwest of town, **Trönö Gamla Kyrka** (☹ May-Sep) is a small, well-preserved church of cool grey stone with a wooden belltower that dates from the 12th century. Take bus 67 (two to 11 daily).

Bergviks Industrimuseum (☎ 42 32 80; admission free; ☹ Tue-Sun), around 16km west of Söderhamn, is a pretty spot with an outdoor café as well as displays about the history of the world's first sulphate factory, opened in

1874. Bus 64 runs to Bergvik every two hours or so.

Skärså, an ideal cycling destination 12km north of Söderhamn, is one of the most beautiful fishing villages in the area. The picturesque red-painted buildings include old boat sheds, houses, summer houses, a restaurant, **museum** (☹ 10am-9pm daily in summer) and a good café (Albertina, see below). There's also a fish shop. Take bus 65 (weekdays only).

Sleeping & Eating

First Hotel Statt (☎ 735 70; Oxtorgsgatan 17; s/d from Skr1400) Room 104 at this elegant hotel is supposedly haunted by an old 1800s barman named Karl-Emil; it was the only room left alone during the hotel's otherwise thorough renovation in the late-'90s.

Scandic Hotel Söderhamn (☎ 26 52 00; soderhamn@scandic-hotels.com; Montörbacken 4; s/d from Skr1200/1500) This is only 300m from the train station and offers good discounted rates, as well as its usual high standard of accommodation.

Mohed Natura Camping (☎ 42 52 33; mohedscamping@globalnet.net; Mohedsvägen 59; camping per person from Skr100, dm Skr130, cabins from Skr250) This very busy lakeside spot, 11km west of Söderhamn, is a well-equipped camping ground that cohabits with the spotless **STF Vandrarhem** (☹ Jun-Aug) in what looks like an antique school building. You can rent bikes and boats here. Bus 63 and 100 run to Mohed from Söderhamn.

Albertina (☎ 320 10; mains Skr70-150; ☹ lunch & dinner until 10pm) Perched above the water in Skärså, with harbour views, this is the nicest place to eat in the area. The menu includes lots of herring and salmon, plus meals for nonfish-lovers too. Adding to the theme, servers are dressed in sailor suits.

Mousquet (☎ 198 97; Köpmangatan 2; dagens lunch Skr60, meals from Skr90; ☹ lunch & dinner) This place serves something for everyone, with cheap pub snacks, lots of pizza choices, and seafood, meat and chicken meals.

Kalles Gatukök, opposite Mousquet, is a fast-food outlet that is handy for a quick refuel.

Getting There & Away

Skyways flies from the airfield to Stockholm once or twice on weekdays.

All buses and trains leave from the Resecentrum, at the train station. Ybuss runs

daily to Östersund (Skr180, four hours, once or twice daily), Stockholm (Skr180, three to four hours, three daily), Umeå (Skr260, five hours, twice daily) and Uppsala (Skr180, two to 3½ hours, three daily). SJ trains run daily to Hudiksvall, Sundsvall, Härnösand, Gävle and Stockholm.

JÄRVSÖ & AROUND

☎ 0651 / pop 1907

Järvsö is best known for the **Hälsinge Hambon** (www.halsingehambon.x.se), an annual folk dancing contest (with up to 1000 competitors), the final event of which takes place here in early July; look for the statue of dancers by the train station. The sleepy village in the hilly interior of Hälsingland sits at the northern end of a string of lakes that extends from the Bothnian coast at Ljusne, just south of Söderhamn.

There's a **tourist office** (☎ 403 06; Turistvägen 29; ☹ mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hr rest of yr) on the main road through town, as well as banks and supermarkets.

Sights

Järvzoo (☎ 411 25; high season adult/child Skr145/90) is a well-stocked, nicely arranged zoo that lets you follow 3km of easy wooden walkways through the forest to observe bears, lynxes, honey buzzards, snowy owls and aggressive wolverines – all in fairly natural surroundings. Its opening hours are complex, but it's generally open from 10am or 11am until 4pm or 5pm June to August, 11am until 2pm or 3pm the rest of the year.

Completed in 1838, **Järvsö Kyrka** (☹ 9am-4pm or 5pm) is one of the largest rural churches in Sweden and it has an impressive location on an island in the river. Most of the island is a wooded nature reserve.

The hill, **Öjeberget**, just west of the village, has great views – there's a restaurant on top and you can ski down in winter. Just across the bridge from the church (on the eastern bank of the river), **Stenegård** (☎ 7673 00; ☹ May-Sep, Sat & Sun rest of yr) is an old manor and farm with good handicraft stalls, a café, restaurant and a theatre in an old barn.

Sleeping & Eating

Järvsöbaden (☎ 404 00; info@jarvsobaden.se; s/d from Skr600/800) This friendly hotel, founded as a health farm in 1905, is the best place to stay in town. It's a charming old spread, set in

pretty grounds that include a nine-hole golf course, and it has a variety of rooms (some with shared facilities). The restaurant here has a superb lunch smörgåsbord that has to be seen to be believed.

Gästgivars (☎ 416 90; Jon Persvägen 7; dm/s Skr165/215) This small and homely place is near the bridge (follow the signs) and offers very inviting hostel accommodation, plus breakfast for an additional Skr35.

Järvsö Camping (☎ 403 39; sites Skr80, cabins from Skr220) This place is on the main road through the town and offers good facilities.

Järvsö Café & Konditori (☎ 411 11) This is a basic little café down by the train station.

Getting There & Away

Bus 51 runs regularly between Bollnäs and Ljusdal, via Arbrå and Järvsö. Trains run north from Järvsö to Östersund, and south to Gävle and Stockholm.

HUDIKSVAL & AROUND

☎ 0650 / pop 37,048

Hudiksvall is rather adorably nicknamed 'Happy Hudik.' With a well-preserved but small core of old wooden houses (Möljen), and located picturesquely between a lake and a fjord, it's a charming little place to spend a few hours.

The **tourist office** (☎ 191 00; turist@hudiksvall.se, www.hudiksvall.se; ☹ mid-Jun–mid-Aug, Mon–Sat rest of yr) is at Möljen, by the harbour. In town, you'll find banks and other services on Storgatan and Drottninggatan. For Internet access, there's a **library** (Storgatan); the **museum** (Storgatan 31; per 30min Skr15) also has computers.

Sights & Activities

The **Hälsinglands Museum** (☎ 196 00; Storgatan 31; admission free; ☹ mid-Jun–mid-Aug, Mon–Sat rest of yr) covers local history, culture and art, including the **Malsta Stone** with unusual runic inscriptions. Just southwest of the centre, **Jakobs kyrka** dates from 1672. Parts of **Hälsingtuna Church**, 4km north, were built around 1150, but more extraordinary is the 15th-century **Bergöns Kapell**, 18km due northeast, the oldest fishermen's church in the district.

Attractive **Kuggörama** is about 30km east of Hudiksvall and is an excellent example of a fishing village (take bus 37, twice daily). The coast shows **raised beaches** caused by post-glacial uplift (still underway) and the forests are growing in boulder-fields. **Mellanfjärden**,

30km north of Hudiksvall, isn't the most photogenic village, but there is a gallery there with displays of local crafts, a summer theatre, a good restaurant and several nature reserves. **Sörfjärden**, 10km north of Mellanfjärden, has an unusual harbour in the river Gnarpån, and a good sandy beach nearby.

There is a lovely driving route through the fields and farmsteads between lakes **Norr dellen** and **Sördellen**, just west of Hudiksvall. Around the neoclassical **Norrbö Kyrka** there are nine Iron Age graves, church stables from the 1920s and also a mid-18th-century bell tower. **Avholmberget**, just north of Friggensund, is the best viewpoint – you can drive or cycle up it.

Sleeping & Eating

First Hotell Statt (☎ 150 60; Storgatan 36; s/d from Skr1200/1500; ☹) This is the pick of the town's hotels, with central, upmarket lodgings and facilities.

Hotell Temperance (☎ 311 07; Hästgatan 16; dm from Skr150, s/d from Skr550/700) This small, family-run place is between the train station and Jakobs Kyrka and offers simple, comfortable accommodation at reasonable prices.

Malnbadens Camping & STF Hudiksvall (☎ 132 60; info@malnbadenscamping.com; sites Skr115, dm Skr135, cabins Skr400) Four kilometres east of the centre of Hudiksvall, this is a large wooded camping ground that's also home to the pleasant STF hostel, open year-round. Bus 5 runs out here in summer.

Stadt Nöje (lunches Skr59) attached to the First Hotell Statt, this is a stylish and popular restaurant-bar, with good-value lunches plus many appealing à la carte offerings.

Dackås Konditori (☎ 123 29; Storgatan 34, sandwiches from Skr35) This bakery hasn't changed since the 1950s. It has an upstairs café serving sandwiches, plus cakes and pastries to satisfy sugar cravings.

Gretas Krog (☎ 966 00; lunch Skr59, meals Skr130–200) Down on the water behind the tourist office this offers good Swedish dishes, a broad seafood selection and a large, bustling outdoor deck.

Getting There & Away

The bus station is next to the central train station, by the harbour. Ybuss travels daily Gävle (Skr170, 2½ hours, twice daily), Östersund (Skr170, 3½ hours, twice daily), Stockholm (Skr210, five hours, twice daily) and

Umeå (Skr240, five hours, twice daily). SJ trains run to Sundsvall, Gävle, Söderhamn and Stockholm.

MEDELPAD

SUNDSVALL

☎ 060 / pop 93,307

Notable for having managed to rebuild itself in fine style after a devastating fire in 1888, Sundsvall is a confection in pink and tan, with several remarkably pretty buildings of neo-Gothic, neo-Renaissance and neo-baroque architecture. It's a pleasant place to spend a day or two, particularly for those interested in fine dining, as the culinary scene here has a good reputation.

In the first week of July, Sundsvall hosts one of Sweden's largest street festivals (attended by up to 100,000 people), which includes a large musical concert in the centre of town. If you plan to be here then, definitely book accommodation well ahead, and don't count on parking anywhere near the city centre.

Information

Storgatan is the main street, with banks, supermarkets and most facilities.

Forex (Köpmangatan 1) Money exchange.

Public library (Kulturmagasinet, Sjögatan; ☹ 10am–7pm Mon–Thu, 10am–6pm Fri, 11am–4pm Sat, closed Sun) Free Internet access.

Tourist office (☎ 61 04 50; www.sundsvallturism.com; Stora Torget; ☹ 10am–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–2pm Sat yr-round) Staff have information on activities in the area, plus summer boat tours, and can supply maps detailing galleries in town, or a self-guided pub crawl.

Sights

Kulturmagasinet, on Sjögatan down near the harbour, is a magnificent restoration of some old warehouses. The buildings now contain the town library and **Sundsvall Museum** (☎ 19 18 03; adult/child Skr20/free; ☹ 11am–7pm Mon–Thu, 10am–6pm Fri, 11am–4pm Sat & Sun), which has exhibits of local and natural history, local Iron Age archaeology and geology.

The central church, **Gustav Adolfs kyrka**, is worth a look. There's music here every Wednesday evening in summer.

Up on the hill **Norra Stadsberget** (150m), there is a **viewing tower** as well as a typical **friluftsmuseum** (outdoor museum; admission free), with

a collection of local houses. The southern hill, **Södra Stadsberget** (250m), has an extensive plateau that is good for hiking, with trails up to 12km long. There's also free fishing on the **Sidsjön** and several **downhill ski runs** (nordic skiing is also popular). Buses run to either hill once every two hours in summer.

The large island just east of Sundsvall, **Alnö**, has the magnificent **Alnö Gamla Kyrka** (admission free; ☹ noon–7pm mid-Jun–mid-Aug), 2km north of the bridge (at Vi). The old church, below the road, is a mixture of 12th- and 15th-century styles. The lower parts of the wall paintings were badly damaged by whitewashing in the 18th century, but the upper wall and ceiling paintings are in perfect condition (apart from removal of certain faces by Protestant vandals) and show various biblical scenes. The painting was probably done by one of Albertus Pictor's pupils. Even better is the late 11th-century carved wooden **font** in the new church across the road; the upper part combines Christian and Viking symbolism, while the lower part shows beasts, the embodiment of evil. Take bus 1 to Vi (two or three hourly), then take a Plus bus to the churches (every one or two hours).

For a pleasant excursion, head to **Lörud**, a picturesque fishing village about 30km southeast of town, with a tiny café and fish smokehouse. There's a beach of flat rocks here, which is perfect for warming up in the sun after a dive into the sea. Take bus 20 south to Njurundabommen, then change to bus 126.

Liden, by the ribbon lake on Indalsälven, is about 46km northwest of Sundsvall on road No 86. **Liden Gamla Kyrka**, completed in 1510, has a lovely location and contains excellent medieval **sculptures** from the 13th, 15th and 16th centuries. There are rather faded wall paintings from 1561, and also a 13th-century crucifix. The view from the **Vättberget**, reached by a 3km unsurfaced road from Liden, is one of the finest in Sweden, and shows the ribbon lake to its best advantage. To reach Liden, take bus 30.

Sleeping

STF Vandrarhem Sundsvall (☎ 61 21 19; stf.vandrarhem.sundsvall@telia.com; Gafelbyvägen; s/d from Skr250/300, dm Skr150–205) The very good STF **vandrarhem** is above the town on Norra Stadsberget, and has both older rooms and more expensive modern rooms with private bath.

The 20-minute walk to the hostel from the city centre is pleasant, but not much fun with heavy bags – a bus runs up here in summer from both the train and the bus stations.

Baltic Hotel (☎ 14 04 40; info.baltic@swedenhotels.se; Sjöгатan 5; s/d from Skr1100/1250) Toward the upper end of the accommodation scale is the attractive Baltic, near Kulturmagasinet. It has excellent discounted rates for its bright, modern rooms.

Scandic Hotel Sundsvall City (☎ 785 62 00; sundsvallcity@scandic-hotels.com; Esplanaden 29; s/d from Skr1200/1525) The large and upmarket Sundsvall City has very comfortable rooms, plus lots of facilities on the premises, including a cinema, restaurant and popular pub.

Fläsians Camping (☎ 55 44 75; Norrstigen 15; sites Skr95, cabins from Skr250) This place is near the E4, 4km south of Sundsvall. It's a large, well-equipped and pleasant campground, despite all the industry between it and the city centre. Take bus 2 or 52.

Eating & Drinking

Il Barone (☎ 17 66 04; Kyrkogatan 14; mains Skr180-230, pastas Skr120-150; ☎ dinner) Exclusive and sophisticated, Il Barone is a highly regarded restaurant serving authentic Italian cuisine, with risotto and pasta dishes at the lower end of the price scale, plus well-prepared meat and fish meals.

Kajplats 1 (☎ 15 60 06; Hamnplan 1; meals Skr89-225) This place has a hotchpotch of interior

styles (nautical meets opulent Oriental) but it all comes together in a great harbour restaurant-bar, where the emphasis is on fresh fish. Soups and salads are offered for under Skr100, plus there's a selection of tapas plates (around Skr50).

Saigon Palace (☎ 17 30 91; Trädgårdsgatan 5; lunch from Skr65, dishes Skr70-125; ☎ lunch & dinner) Just slightly off the beaten path, the Saigon Palace has an extensive menu of Chinese, Vietnamese and even Japanese dishes, plus a cheap lunch buffet.

Café Tinells (☎ 561 49; Sjöгатan 7; meals Skr40-65) Slick café fare in modern surroundings is offered by Café Tinells, a funky and colourful place with excellent food, including *ciabatta*, salads, baked potatoes, quiche and tempting sugary treats.

Pizzeria La Spezia (☎ 61 12 23; Sjöгатan 6) This pizzeria offers very cheap pizza and kebab deals for around Skr45.

There are lots of relatively anonymous, but nevertheless popular, pubs around town, including **Harrys** (☎ 17 55 33; Storgatan 33) and **O'Learys** (☎ 12 41 44; Storgatan 40) opposite each other on Storgatan. Both attract a mixed crowd and offer a range of pub food and drinks.

There's a central **ICA supermarket** (Esplanaden 5) and a **Systembolaget** (1891 shopping centre, Storgatan).

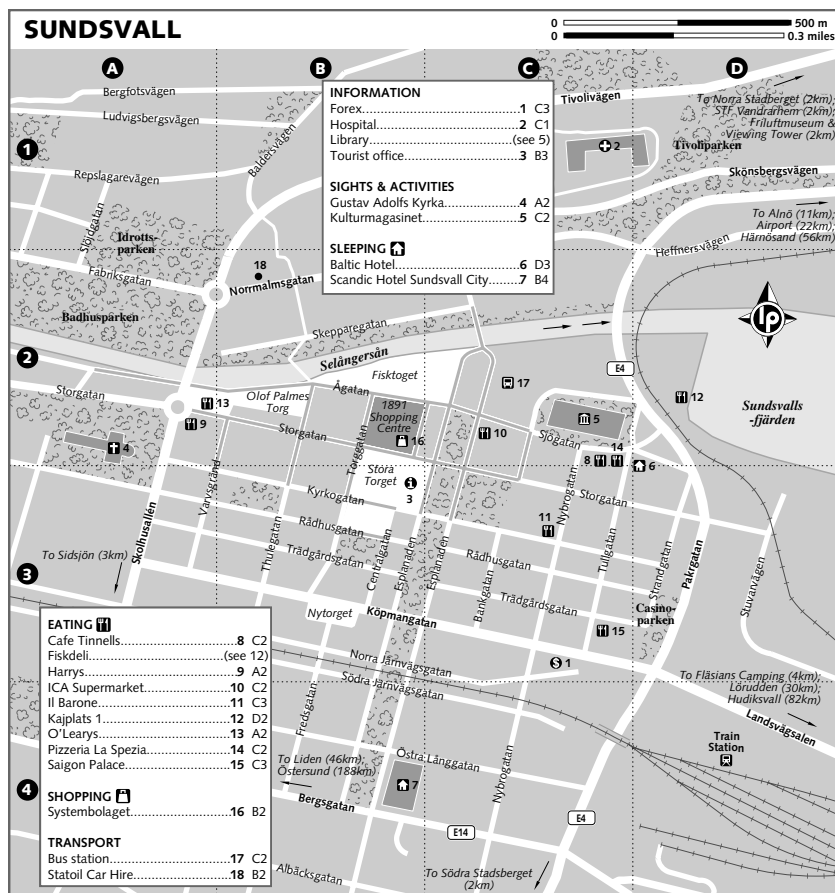
Getting There & Away

The **airport** (☎ 197600) is 22km north of Sundsvall; buses run from the Scandic Hotel and the bus station three to nine times daily (Skr65) to connect with SAS and Skyways flights to Göteborg, Luleå and Stockholm.

All buses depart from the Sundsvall bus station, known as Navet, in the northern part of town near Kulturmagasinet. Ybuss runs daily to Östersund (Skr140, 2½ hours, twice daily), Gävle (Skr190, 3½ hours, twice daily) and Stockholm (Skr220, six hours, three to four daily). Länstrafiken Västerbotten bus 100 runs several times daily to Umeå (3¾ hours), Luleå (eight hours) and most other coastal towns. Prices are set by distance at Skr18 per 7km.

Trains run west to Östersund and south to Söderhamn, Gävle and Stockholm. The station is just east of the town centre, on Köpmangatan.

Statoil (☎ 15 20 70; Normalmngatan 1) offers inexpensive car hire. **Taxi Sundsvall** (☎ 19 90 00) can help you get around.



The family-run **Mykonos** (☎ 51 18 44; Storgatan; mains from Skr160; ☎ 2-11pm Tue-Sat) bills itself as a Greek taverna. It looks the part, with fishing nets and maritime knick-knacks everywhere, but the cooking is all gourmet French bistro, and downright spectacular.

The classy restaurant-bar **Apotequet** (☎ 51 17 17; Nybrogatan 3) has its bar area in an old pharmacy, and boasts an attractive patio which is open in summer. It's one of several bars on this street, all of which offer rare bargains on happy-hour drinks.

For souvenirs, pick up some authentic Swedish handicraft at the classy **Svensk Slöjd** (Storgatan 25; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat), across from Hemköp supermarket.

Länstrafiken Västerbotten bus 100 runs several times daily to Sundsvall, Luleå and points in between. Ybuss runs daily to Gävle (Skr200, 4½ hours, twice daily) and Stockholm (Skr250, six to seven hours, several times daily). Local buses service Sundsvall for train connections to Gävle and Stockholm.

HÖGA KUSTEN

☎ 0613

Some of the most dramatic scenery on the entire Swedish coastline is found here, on the Höga Kusten (meaning the 'High Coast'). The secret to its spectacular beauty is elevation; nowhere else on the coast do you find such a mountainous landscape, with sheer rocky cliffs plunging straight down to the sea, as well as lakes, fjords and islands. The region was recently recognised as a unique area and listed as a Unesco World Heritage site. It has largely been shaped by the combined processes of glaciation, glacial retreat and the emergence of new land from the sea (which continues today at a rate of 0.9m per century). This is a wonderful place for scenic drives, but the narrow twisty roads can make it difficult for whoever's stuck behind the wheel.

Höga Kusten stretches from north of Härnösand to Örnköldsvik, and either place makes a handy base for exploration. Tourist offices in both towns can help you with information on exploring the region by bus, car or on an organised tour. There is also a regional **tourist office** (☎ 504 80; www.hogakusten.com) serving the area; it's located inside Hotell Höga Kusten, just north of the spectacular E4 suspension bridge over Storfjärden. Here you can pick up information

on attractions and accommodation options in the tiny villages along the coast. The information area is crowded with brochures and open all year, and the desk is staffed from 10am to 6pm June to August. There's also useful information on the Internet at www.turistinfo.kramfors.se.

Unfortunately, there's little public transport in the area. Buses cruise along the E4 Hwy, but don't make it into the villages, and as a result this area is virtually impossible to explore thoroughly without your own set of wheels. That's unless, of course, you wish to walk the **Höga Kustenleden**, a 127km hiking trail stretching from Veda in the south, through Kramfors, and finishing near Örnköldsvik, with shelters and cabins situated along its length. Ask the tourist office for the map and guide book (Skr80). It's also very easy to walk smaller sections of the trail as day or half-day trips.

In addition to the striking landscapes, the other major attractions of the region are the many well-preserved **fishing villages** – the pick of them being Barsta, Bönhamn and Norrfällsviken – and the lovely offshore **islands**, especially Högbonden and Ulvön; for transport information see opposite.

Ulvön is worth a visit for the view from the hill, **Lotsberget** (100m), though the charming main village can be spoiled by the large tour groups who line up to see the tiny, 17th-century **chapel**. Also worth checking out are **Hembygdsgården**, a 19th-century house with furnishings, and **Sandviken**, a 17th-century village at the northern end of the island.

Norrfällsviken is a picture-perfect half-circle of red-and-white fishing huts, lining a narrow inlet. There's a hilltop chapel from 1649 (the key is kept next to the door), and the friendly **Fisk Restaurang** (☎ 0613-211 42; fish plates Skr70-120; ☎ 10am-10pm) sells smoked fish to take away, as well as more substantial meals in its cosy wood-panelled restaurant-pub. At 9pm it turns into a karaoke bar!

Back on the mainland, you'll find the bizarre **Mannaminne** (☎ 202 90; admission Skr40; ☎ Jun-Sep; Sat & Sun Oct-Nov & Apr-May), near Häggvik. Built around a broken, rusting piece of farm equipment, this is an eccentric collection of just about everything, from subjects as diverse as farming, emigration and technology. It also offers accommodation (see below), and the attached café is famous for its rendition of fried herring and potatoes;

customers get a discount on museum admission. Walk up the steep hill behind the museum for the best view in the area (35 minutes return).

Friendly **Skuleberget Naturum** (☎ 401 71; admission free; ☎ Jun-Aug, shorter hr rest of yr), by the E4 north of Docksta, has exhibitions and lots of information on the area. The steep mountain, **Skuleberget** (285m), soars above the Naturum, where you can ask about hiking routes, the chairlift (Skr60/40) on the other side, and rock-climbing routes (grades II to III).

Skuleskogen National Park, a few kilometres northeast, contains varied and magnificent scenery, including **Slätterdalskrevan**, a 200m-deep canyon. The park is signposted from the E4, and the Höga Kustenleden walking trail passes through it.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotell Höga Kusten (☎ 72 22 70; s/d Skr845/1095, discounted to Skr500/750) You'll wake up on top of the world if you stay at this place, the large hotel just off the E4 next to the bridge. There's also a café here serving coffee as well as snacks, and a restaurant with basic meals from Skr85.

Vandrarhem Högbonden (☎ 230 05, 420 49; dm from Skr195; ☎ May-Oct) This is a relaxing getaway on the island of Högbonden, reached by boat from Bönhamn and Barsta. There's a kitchen here, and a café open in summer. You'll need to book well in advance.

STF Vandrarhem Docksta (☎ 130 64; kustlada@telia.com; sites Skr100, dm/cabins from Skr120/300; ☎ yr-round; 🚶) This attractive and busy hostel is actually 3km south of Docksta at Skoved, right along the Höga Kustenleden (High Coast Trail). It has a party atmosphere and good facilities, including a restaurant and an outdoor stage for summer concerts.

Mannaminne (☎ 202 90; info@männaminne.se; s/d from Skr350/550) The aforementioned eccentric open-air museum, near tiny Häggvik, also offers B&B accommodation and cottages.

Kustgårdens Vandrarhem (☎ 212 55; dm Skr130), in Norrfällsviken, is operated by the nearby **Brittas Restaurang** (☎ 212 55; low/high season cabins from Skr800/950; 🚶), a popular summer complex consisting of a restaurant and pub, plus self-contained cabins.

Delightful Norrfällsviken has a very good **camping ground** (☎ 213 82; sites Skr120, cabins from Skr350). The area surrounding the Naturum at Skuleberget is well set up for outdoor

enthusiasts, with a **camping ground** (☎ 130 64; sites Skr90, cabins from Skr295, rooms from Skr200), a restaurant, and shops selling outdoor gear.

There are supermarkets in Ullanger, Nordingrån, Docksta and Mjällom.

Getting There & Around

Bus 217 runs one to six times daily between Nordingrån, the bridge and Kramfors. Other than that, you'll need to walk, cycle or drive yourself around the area. Länstrafiken Västerbotten bus 100 runs along the E4.

Ferries to Högbonden (☎ 0706-81 82 84; adult/child return Skr80/40) go from Barsta (every two hours 9.30am–5.30pm, returning 45 minutes later, mid-June–mid-August) and from Bönhamn (every two hours 9.45am–5.45pm mid-June–mid-August). **Ferries to Ulvön** (☎ 0613-105 50, 13000; adult/child return Skr150/50; ☎ Jun-Aug) leave from Ullånger (9.30am), Docksta (10.15am) and Mjällomlandet (10.45am), arriving at 11.30am and returning at 3pm from Ulvöhamn.

ÖRNKÖLDSVIK

☎ 0660 / pop 54,945

Most famous within Sweden for being the town that produced the handsome ice hockey star Peter 'Foppa' Forsberg, Örnköldsvik is the largest town in Ängermanland. It's a fine base for exploring the High Coast, but otherwise doesn't demand a lengthy stay.

There's a helpful **tourist office** (☎ 88100; www.ornskoldsvik.se; inside Paradisbadet; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun Jun-Aug). There are banks around Statorget, and the **library** (Lasarettsgatan 5) offers Internet access.

Walk up **Varvsberget** (80m) for a good view of the town; it's south of the centre – some 275 steps lead up from Modovägen.

Örnköldsviks Museum (☎ 886 01; Låroverksgratan 1; adult/child Skr20/free; ☎ noon-4pm mid-Jun–mid-Aug, Tue-Sun rest of yr) covers 9000 years of local history and includes a section on the Sami. The impressive-looking **Rådhuset Konsthall** (☎ 886 08; Rådhusgratan 1; adult/child Skr20/free; ☎ noon-4pm Tue-Sun) features local art exhibitions.

Gene Fornby (☎ 53710; adult/child Skr60/30; ☎ noon-5pm Jul–mid-Aug). About 5km south of the centre is an interesting reconstruction of an Iron Age farm, complete with actors and a wide range of activities, from baking to iron working. Guided tours run at

12.30pm, 2pm and 3.30pm. Take bus 21 to Geneäsavägen, then walk to the farm, or ask at the tourist office about the regular direct bus service from town.

Sleeping & Eating

STF Vandrarhem (☎ 702 44; Högsnäsgränd, Högsnäs 99; dm/cabins from Skr130/230; ☹ yr-round) This place is in a lovely setting 9km west of town, just off the E4. Take bus 40 or 412.

Strand City Hotell (☎ 106 10; Nygatan 2; s/d from Skr595/850, discounted to Skr450/550) In the town centre, this place offers decent midrange accommodation.

First Hotel Statt (☎ 26 55 90; Lasarettsgatan 2; s/d from Skr1520/1402, discounted to Skr702/852) The First Hotel Statt is a more upmarket option, with facilities typical of a high-end chain hotel.

Café Galleri M (☎ 168 60; Storgatan 8; lunch Skr59; ☹ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, lunch Sat, closed Sun) This is a pleasant little café and a good spot for lunch, with a small adjacent art gallery.

Mamma Mia (☎ 147 00; Storgatan 6; meals Skr60-200) Nearby Mamma Mia has an extensive menu of Italian food, including pizza and pasta dishes under Skr100.

Restaurang Varvberget (☎ 844 80; lunch Skr65) On top of Varvberget, this place does typically Swedish food and a good weekday lunch special, which you can enjoy along with great views.

Down by the harbour you'll find some good dining options, including the excellent **Fina Fisken** (☎ 150 05; meals Skr85-170), serving local fish dishes in a fine atmosphere.

Getting There & Away

Länstrafiken Västerbotten runs bus 100 along the E4 several times daily – south to Sundsvall (2½ hours), north to Umeå (three hours) and Luleå (six hours).

VÄSTERBOTTEN

UMEÅ

☎ 090 / pop 106,000

With the vibrant feel of a college town (it has some 22,000 students), Umeå can be a welcome return to urbanity after a stay in the barren north. It's one of the fastest-growing towns in Sweden and an agreeable place to hang out, wind down or stock up for an outdoor adventure.

Information

Forex (Renmarksstorget) Near the tourist office.

Library (Rådhusplanaden 6A) Internet access.

Naturkompaniet (Rådhusplanaden 7) Outdoor gear is sold here.

Press Stop (Victoria Gallerian shopping centre)

International magazines sold.

Tourist office (☎ 16 16 16; umetourist@umea.se, www.umea.se/tourism; Renmarksstorget 15; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat, noon-4pm Sun mid-Jun–mid-Aug; Mon-Fri rest of yr) A central place that can help you with visitor inquiries.

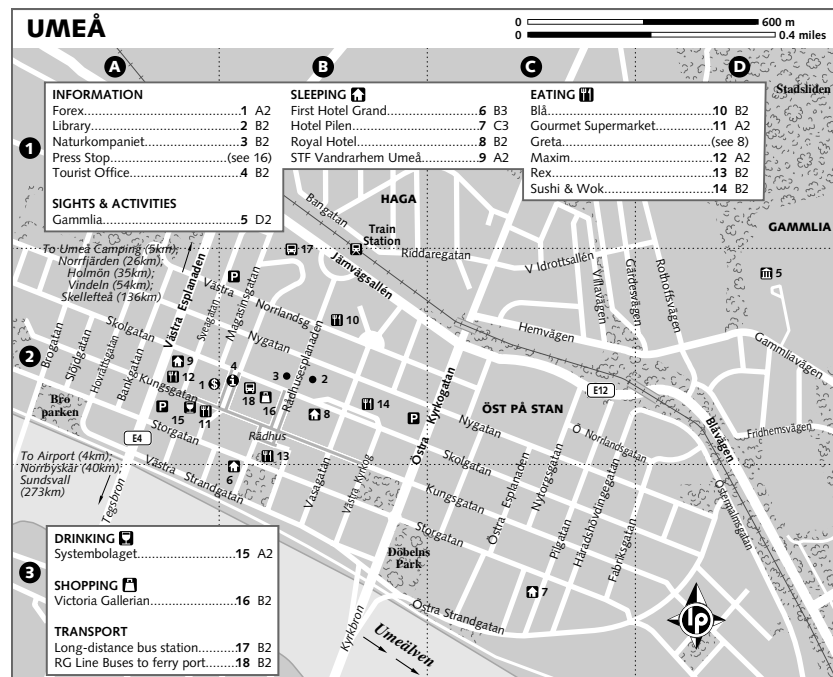
Sights & Activities

Gamllia, 1km east of the town centre, has several museums and shouldn't be missed. Attractions include the cultural/historical exhibits and Sami collections of the regional **Västerbottens Museum** (☎ 17 18 00; admission free), the modern art museum, **Bildmuseet**, and the **Maritime Museum**. The surrounding **Friluftsmuseet**, featuring old houses and staff wearing period clothes, is also worth a look. The museums are open daily June to August (closed Monday for the rest of the year).

Holmön, which calls itself the sunniest place in Sweden, is a 15km-long offshore island with a **boat museum** (adult/child Skr20/free; ☹ Jun-Aug) and a collection of traditional craft, plus a good quayside restaurant and swimming beaches. In July there's a rowboat race to Finland, which is only 36km away. Free ferries depart two to three times daily from Norrfjärden, 26km northeast of Umeå (bus 118 or 119, Skr32).

The island of **Norrbysskär**, 40km south of Umeå, is another worthwhile destination. It has an interesting history – a sawmill community was built up here from nothing in less than 10 years, only to disappear just as suddenly 10 years later. There is a museum as well as other attractions; buses run to and from Umeå to Norrbyn, to connect with ferries – inquire at the tourist office for times.

There are a number of activities in the surrounding area, many of them based at **Vindeln**, 54km northwest of Umeå. Adventures on offer include fishing, white-water rafting, jet-boating and canoeing on the local rivers, plus horse riding and a variety of walking trails (from two hours to three days). The tourist office can help you to organise these. Bus 16 connects Vindeln and Umeå.



Sleeping

STF Vandrarhem Umeå (☎ 77 16 50; info@vandrarhemmet.se; Västra Esplanaden 10; dm from Skr130) This busy and efficient (if rather Dickensian) youth hostel is one of the few in the region that's actually occupied by youths. It's in a great location, a residential neighbourhood mere steps from the town centre.

First Hotel Grand (☎ 77 88 70; umea.grand@firsthotels.se; Storgatan 46; s/d from Skr900/1100) This is the oldest hotel in Umeå, and it has good service and friendly staff.

Hotel Pilen (☎ 14 14 60; Pilgatan 5; s/d Skr550/750) This is a comfortable, family-run place in a quiet area some 600m from the town centre.

Royal Hotel (☎ 10 07 30; hotelroyal@telia.com; Skolgatan 62; s/d from Skr850/1200) The Royal Hotel offers good accommodation in the heart of town and has an excellent restaurant.

Umeå Camping (☎ 70 26 00; umea.camping@umea.se; sites Skr125, basic huts from Skr200, cabins & chalets from Skr265) This well-equipped camping ground is 5km northeast of the town centre and just off the E4; take bus 2, 6 or 9 (Skr16).

Eating & Drinking

Greta (☎ 10 07 35; Skolgatan 62; mains Skr130-250) Upmarket, stylish Greta at the Royal Hotel offers well-prepared Swedish and international dishes, with especially good fish and seafood.

Rex (☎ 12 60 50; Rådhusstorget; mains Skr100-200) This place, at the back of the town hall, offers an excellent cocktail list and a menu of favourites served up in bright and breezy surrounds.

Sushi & Wok (☎ 14 19 00; Vasaplan; lunch Skr65, meals Skr90-150) This is a sleek restaurant and bar serving good Asian dishes, including sushi.

Lottas Krog (☎ 12 95 51; Nygatan 22; mains Skr85-225) This is a friendly pub-restaurant with an extensive menu featuring something for everyone – from fish and chips or a veggie burger to chicken tandoori or even a fillet of wild boar.

Blå (☎ 13 23 00; Rådhusplanaden 14; meals Skr75-130) This is a large, shiny, trendy place, with a nightly all-you-can-eat Thai buffet in winter and a regular menu of fashionable fare like risotto, gnocchi and baked salmon.

Unsurprisingly, Blå turns into a nightclub as the evening progresses.

Maxim (☎ 13 82 83; Kungsgatan 47; meals Skr35-65) is a budget-friendly café serving simple kebabs, burgers and the like. It's handily located near the STF hostel.

You'll also find plenty of kiosks selling burgers, pizzas and kebabs on busy Rådhusorget.

Self-caterers should go to the **Gourmet supermarket** (Renmarkstorget 5A) and you can buy alcohol from **Systembolaget** (Kungsgatan 50A).

Getting There & Away

AIR

The **airport** (☎ 71 61 00) is 4km south of the city centre. SAS and Malmö Aviation each fly to Stockholm up to seven times daily; there are also direct flights to Luleå, Kiruna and Östersund.

BOAT

There are two companies operating ferries between Umeå and Vaasa (Finland); RG Line is more passenger-oriented than Botnia Link, which is used primarily by freight trucks. A bus to the port leaves from near the tourist office an hour before RG Line's departures; see p328 for contact information.

BUS

The long-distance bus station is directly opposite the train station. Ybuss runs services south daily to Gävle and Stockholm, via the coastal towns of Sundsvall, Örnsköldsvik, Härnösand, Hudiksvall and Söderhamn.

Umeå is the main centre for **Länstrafiken i Västerbotten** (☎ 020-91 00 19; www.ltnbd.se), the regional bus network that covers over 55,000 sq km. Direct buses to Mo i Rana (Norway) run once daily, but buses going as far as Tärnaby run up to four times a day. Other daily destinations include Östersund, Skellefteå and Luleå.

TRAIN

Tågkompaniet trains leave daily from Umeå, to connect at Vännäs with the north-south trains between Stockholm and Boden and Luleå; from Boden there are connections to Kiruna and Narvik (Norway).

Getting Around

Local buses leave from Vasaplan on Skolgatan. The No 80 **Flybuss** (☎ 14 11 90) departs reg-

ularly from Vasaplan, or call **Umeå Taxi** (☎ 77 00 00) – it's about Skr125 to the airport.

SKELLEFTEÅ & AROUND

☎ 0910 / pop 73,000

Skellefteå is a very pretty town that lends itself perfectly to getting an ice-cream treat and sauntering along the riverfront park, where open-air museums make it easy to feel as if you're engaged in an educational activity instead of just relaxing. There are also a few worthy attractions in the surrounding area.

The **tourist office** (☎ 73 60 20; http://turistinfo.skelleftea.se; Trädgårdsgatan 7; ☹ mid-Jun–mid-Aug, Mon-Fri rest of yr) is in the town centre, just off Torget, the main square. Banks are along Nygatan, and there's Internet access at the **library** (Viktoriaplatsen), in the eastern part of the town centre (follow Kanalgalatan east).

Sights & Activities

All the town attractions are in the parks along the river, west of the town centre. A pleasant walk takes you to the **Nordanå park**, which plays home to the cultural and historical collections of the **Skellefteå Museum** (☎ 73 55 10; admission free) and several old houses, some of which contain handicraft shops.

West of Nordanå is **Bonnstan**, a unique housing precinct with 392 preserved 17th-century wooden houses – many of them still inhabited in summer. Further west, there is the small island of Kyrkholmen (which has an excellent café) and an early-16th-century **church**. You'll find a 13th-century wooden **Madonna** inside, as well as an adjacent storehouse for tithes (dating from 1674). Cross the river on **Lejonströmsbron**, Sweden's longest wooden bridge, built during the year 1737. Jumping off the bridge in hot weather is not strictly endorsed, but it's certainly not unheard of.

The recommended gold-mine museum, **Bergrum Boliden** (☎ 58 00 60; adult/child Skr20/10; ☹ 10am–5pm Jun-Aug; bus 204 or 205), 35km west of Skellefteå, has interesting multimedia displays covering geology and mining.

The tiny settlement of Örträsk, around 80km west of Skellefteå (north of Norsjö), has **Norsjö Linbana** (☎ 0918-210 25; adult/child Skr250/100; ☹ tours at 1pm midsummer–mid-Aug, by appointment rest of yr), the world's longest cable-car ride (13km). Previously used for iron-ore transport, you can now board it to glide silently over the woods and marshes. Call ahead to check departure times.

Lövånger, 50km south of the town by the E4, has a pretty medieval **church** with separate bell tower, and a well-preserved **church village**. Some houses have doors big enough to admit a horse and carriage, as well as the church-goers. Buses run roughly hourly from Skellefteå. Part of the church village is an STF hostel (see below).

Sleeping

Stiftsgården (☎ 72 57 00; stiftsgarden.skelleftea@svenskakyrkan.se; dm Skr200, s from Skr490, guesthouse s/d from Skr650/1000) Just behind the old church on Brännvägen, this idyllic, church-run place is home to the **STF hostel** and a guesthouse, both of which offer bright, comfortable rooms inside the tastefully restored, but not over-modernised, church cottages. Most rooms have a fireplace, TV and private bathroom.

Hotel & Café Viktoria (☎ 174 70; Trädgårdsgatan 8; s/d Skr660/850) Near the tourist office, this place offers simple but more than adequate rooms in a small hotel above a café.

First Hotel Statt (☎ 141 40; Statonsgatan 8; s/d from Skr1000/1200) Around the corner, and a step up in standard, is the First Hotel Statt, with good service and upmarket amenities.

Skellefteå Camping & Stugby (☎ 188 55; low/high season sites Skr90/130, d Skr245/270, cabins from Skr300) This is a large camping ground with excellent, family-friendly facilities off the E4 1km just north of town.

Eating & Drinking

Kriti (☎ 77 95 35; Kanalgalatan 51; lunch Skr75, meals Skr80-210) This is a fun, friendly restaurant serving hearty, authentic Greek dishes – lots of meat and fish, plus pasta, pizza and moussaka. It has a nice bar section and outdoor seating in summer.

Monaco (☎ 177 10; Nygatan 31; meals Skr65-150) offers good pizza and pasta dishes, and the pretty, nearby **Café Lilla Mari** (☎ 391 92; Nygatan 33) offers sandwiches from Skr35, hot lunches from Skr60 and an array of sweet temptations served in a small, leafy courtyard.

You can get all the usual fast food on the main square in town. **Mr Greek** is a comfortable, dark-wood-and-brass pub next door to Kriti, with a casual setting and bar food on offer.

There's an outlet of the 'Irish' pub chain **O'Learys** (☎ 73 93 08; Kanalgalatan 31) in practically every town in Norrland, but this is one of the better representatives, with a rooftop

beer garden and a slightly upscale restaurant on the ground floor.

Getting There & Away

Bus 100 leaves every two hours on the Sundsvall–Umeå–Skellefteå–Luleå route (some buses continue as far north as Haparanda). Skellefteå's nearest train station is Bastuträsk and bus 27 connects there three times daily.

NORRBOTTEN

PITEÅ

☎ 0911 / pop 22,500

Northern Sweden's main beach town, Piteå, gives the impression that it would really like to be more like the equally pastel but somehow less crass French resort town Nice. Depending on your tastes, it may be the perfect holiday hangout. Piteå's warm coastal waters draw thousands of Norwegian sun soakers in summer.

Piteå has all the usual services and a **tourist office** (☎ 933 90; www.pitea.se; Bryggargatan 14; ☹ 9am–7pm Mon-Fri, 10am–4pm Sat & Sun summer, 8am–5pm Mon-Fri winter) in a pretty yellow building next to a hopping beer garden, right by the busy bus station. You can rent bikes here for Skr30 per day.

In nearby Öjebyn, 5km north of town, there is an interesting early 15th-century **church**, a **church village** with many houses perched on rocks, and a **museum** (admission free; ☹ Jun-Aug). The 16th-century **church**, off Sundsgatan in central Piteå, is one of the oldest wooden churches in Norrland. It escaped being burned by the Russians in 1721 because they were using it as their headquarters. There are several interesting wooden buildings on Storgatan, including a **rådhuset** (town hall), which now houses the **Piteå Museum** (☎ 126 15; admission free; ☹ Mon-Sat in summer).

The beachside **Pite Havsbadet** (☎ 327 00; info@pite-havsbad.se) area, about 8km south of Piteå itself and connected by frequent bus 1, is the summer destination of choice for many holidaymakers. It's huge and has an expensive **camping area** (sites Skr175), lots of **cabins** (from Skr450), an enormous and rather characterless **hotel** (summer s/d from Skr800/1000), a conference centre, restaurant, café, pool, minigolf, Imax theatre and some other family-focused activities – plus it hosts

summer concerts and events – all behind a prisonlike fence with a discouraging front gate.

If that doesn't sound like your cup of tea, you may be better off in town at the central **STF Vandrarhem Piteå** (☎ 158 80; Storgatan 3; dm Skr200), in an old hospital set in a pretty park, or the more upmarket **Piteå Stadshotell** (☎ 197 00; info@piteastadshotell.com; Olof Palmesgata 1; s/d from Skr1200/1400), an elegant old hotel with lots of good facilities.

At the Stadshotell, you'll find both **Restaurang Röda Rummet** (mains Skr165-250), probably the finest restaurant in town (how does gin-flambéed reindeer fillet sound?), and the **Cockney Pub**, with a more casual atmosphere and menu to match (pasta, baked potatoes etc for less than Skr100).

Bus 100 runs between Umeå and Luleå via Piteå every one to three hours.

LULEÅ

☎ 0920 / pop 45,049

A very pretty town to approach by road, Luleå doesn't let up with the charm. It has a pedestrian thoroughfare that's pleasant to stroll along, full of shops and restaurants.

The area around the marina is attractively sculpted, with parks and fountains here and there. The capital of Norrbotten, the town was granted its charter in 1621, but was later moved to its present location in 1649 because of the falling sea level (9mm per year) which is due to postglacial uplift of the land. An extensive offshore archipelago contains some 1700 large and small islands, many decorated with classic red and white Swedish summer cottages.

Information

Forex (Storgatan 46) Currency exchange.

Interpress (Storgatan 17) For newspapers and magazines.

Library (Kyrkogatan) Internet access is available free of charge in this awesome old stone building.

Naturkompaniet (Kungsgatan 17) Sells all sorts of outdoor equipment.

Tourist office (☎ 29 35 00; www.lulea.se; Storgatan 42; ☎ mid-Jun–mid-Aug, Mon-Sat rest of yr) Can help with inquiries (there is also a small office at Gammelstad).

Sights & Activities

Norrbottens Museum (☎ 24 35 00; Storgatan 2; admission free; ☎ Tue-Sun) is worth a visit just for the Sami section, but there are also exhibits about

the Swedish settlers. **Konstens Hus** (☎ 29 40 80; Smedjegatan 2; admission free; ☎ Tue-Sun) is a modern art gallery. The neo-Gothic **Domkyrka** (☎ Mon-Fri summer) dates from 1893 and has an unusual altarpiece.

Teknikens Hus (☎ 492201; adult/child Skr50/30; ☎ mid-Jun-Aug, Tue-Sun rest of yr), within the university campus 4km north, is a museum with hands-on exhibitions of technological phenomena (take bus 17 or 35).

The most famous sight in Luleå is the Unesco World Heritage-listed **Gammelstad** (www.lulea.se/gammelstad), or 'Old Town', which was the medieval centre of northern Sweden. The stone church (from 1492), 424 wooden houses (where the pioneers stayed overnight on their weekend pilgrimages)

and six church stables remain. Many of the buildings are still in use, but some are open to the public. Guided tours (Skr30) of the site leave from the Gammelstad **tourist office** (☎ 25 43 10; worldheritage.gammelstad.lulea.se; ☎ 9am-6pm mid-Jun–mid-Aug, 10am-4pm Tue-Thu rest of yr) frequently between 10am and 4pm, mid-June to mid-August. The open-air museum, **Hägnan**, the old shop, **Lanthandeln**, and a nature reserve are nearby, and there are craft shops and a number of cafés in the area to rest weary sightseeing legs. Take bus 32 (hourly) from Luleå to the area.

A programme of **boat tours** of the archipelago with *M/S Laponia* and *M/S Favourite* depart from Norra Hamnen daily between June and August; typical prices are around

GAMMELSTAD

During the 13th century the pope increased the number of fast days, during which only fish could be eaten. This resulted in the rich Gulf of Bothnia fishing grounds becoming of great interest to the rest of Europe, and meant profit for whoever controlled the area.

With the northern border between Sweden and Russia insecure after the Treaty of Nöteborg in 1323, the Swedish crown secured control of northern Bothnia by handing over its river valleys as fiefs to noblemen from central Sweden. In 1327, Luleå was named for the first time in connection with such an enfeoffment and, in the 1340s, the region became a parish of its own, with separate chapels in Piteå and Torneå.

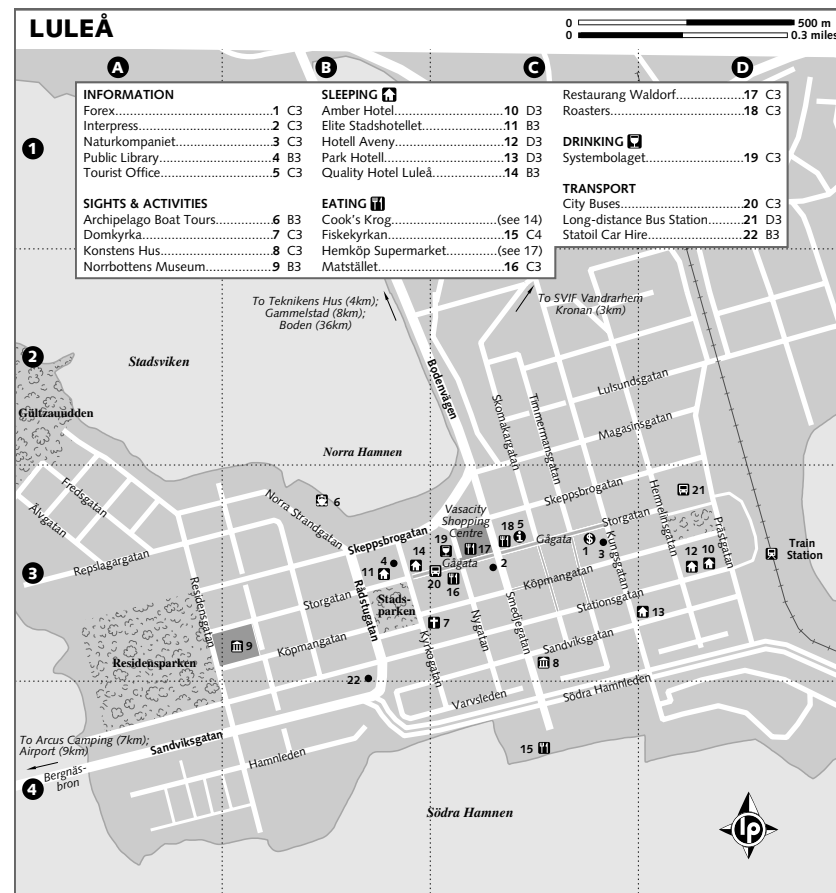
By the end of the 14th century, Luleå Old Town (today's Gammelstad) was the centre of a parish stretching from the coast to the mountains along the Lule and Råne rivers. The Luleå farmers prospered during the economic boom of the Middle Ages and a stone church was built in the 15th century.

In 1621, Luleå was granted a town charter, but its development progressed very slowly. This proved to be rather fortunate because by 1649 the previously navigable channel from the archipelago had become too shallow and it was necessary to move the whole city to a better harbour, the present northern harbour of the current Luleå City. The church, the church village and the surrounding buildings became Luleå Old Town (Gammelstad).

Gammelstad church is the largest medieval church in Norrland and the only one with a reredos worthy of a cathedral and choir stalls for a whole consistory.

The church village developed because parishioners had to travel considerable distances to attend church, and required overnight accommodation. Today, Gammelstad is the largest church village in Sweden.

There are two historical walks around Gammelstad – the church walk and the town walk – which can each be done in approximately one hour.



Skr150. Evening cruises are also popular; inquire at the tourist office.

Sleeping

The town's two finest hotels are neighbours at the eastern end of Storgatan – both have upmarket facilities, restaurants and bars, as well as nightclubs, and prices are identical: singles/doubles from Skr1200/1500, with the usual hefty seasonal discounts.

Elite Stadshotellet (☎ 670 00; stadshotellet@lulea.elite.se; Storgatan 15) This hotel has old-world class and elegance, and a charming glassed-in restaurant-pub called Tallkatten.

Quality Hotel Luleå (☎ 20 10 00; lulea@quality.choicehotels.se; Storgatan 17) A more modern place with business-grade rooms and a pool.

Park Hotell (☎ 21 11 49; hotellet@parkhotell.se; Kungsgatan 10; s/d from Skr490/690) One of a number of midrange options near the train station, Park Hotell offers pleasant rooms (some have private bathrooms and cost a little extra).

Amber Hotel (☎ 102 00; hotel.amber@telia.com; www.amberhotell.nu; Stationsgatan 67; s/d Skr790/950) Similar to the Hotellet Aveny, but a step up, is the Amber Hotel, with rooms in a pretty, wooden guesthouse.

Hotell Aveny (☎ 22 18 20; www.hotellaveny.com; Hermelingsgatan 10; s/d Skr795/965) This hotel offers comfortable rooms at about the same price level as the Amber Hotel.

SVIF Vandrarhem Kronan/Luleå (☎ 43 40 50; www.vandrarhemmetkronan.se in Swedish; Kronan H7; dm Skr160) A bit out of the way, this year-round hostel is nevertheless the best budget option in the area, with good facilities set in a forested location. To get here, take any bus heading toward Kronanområdet.

Arcus Camping (☎ 43 54 00; camping@lulea.se; low/high season sites Skr110/140, chalets from Skr480/540) This place is 7km west of town, in a wooded, waterside setting not far from the E4 (take bus 6).

Eating & Drinking

Fiskekyrkan (☎ 22 02 01; Södra Hamnen; meals Skr50-170) In an old warehouse at the south harbour, atmospheric Fiskekyrkan is a favourite with the locals, and its not hard to see why – there's live music Wednesday to Saturday, plus an affordable lunch buffet (around Skr70) and a range of meals on offer, from fast-food cheapies (kebabs and pizzas) to more 'gourmet' offerings. This is a very popular late-night drinking spot.

Cook's Krog (☎ 21 18 00; Storgatan 17; meals Skr80-250) At the Quality Hotel, this is a cosy place specialising in steaks and other meat and fish from the charcoal grill.

Restaurang Waldorf (☎ 22 26 16; Storgatan; lunch Skr65, meals Skr85-175) Inside the Vasacity shopping centre, this is a busy place, especially at lunchtime. It has a bizarre menu featuring almost every known cuisine, from Italian to Chinese, and including Japanese and Swedish dishes.

Matstället (cnr Nygatan & Storgatan; meals Skr40-60) This bright, modern place is a cut above most fast-food outlets, with an appealing interior and a great selection of food (pizzas, kebabs, burgers, pasta, Tex-Mex and Asian dishes) at kiosk prices.

Roasters (☎ 888 40; Storgatan 43; lunch from Skr65) A good café with great coffee and an interesting menu of trendy café fare. It shares an entrance with the tourist office.

There's a **Hemköp supermarket** (Vasacity shopping centre, Storgatan); to purchase alcohol, visit nearby **Systembolaget** (Storgatan 25).

Getting There & Around

AIR

The **airport** (☎ 24 49 00) is 9km southwest of the town centre. SAS/Skyways fly regularly to Stockholm, Sundsvall and Umeå, and Malmö Aviation flies daily to Stockholm. Other airlines serve smaller destinations, including Gällivare and Kiruna. Take the airport bus (Skr45) outside the Elite and Comfort Hotels on Storgatan.

BUS

Bus 100 is one of the most useful for travellers – it runs between Haparanda, Luleå, Skellefteå, Umeå and Sundsvall at least four times daily. Bus 28 runs frequently to Boden, bus 21 goes to Arvidsjaur (via Boden and Älvsbyn), and bus 44 to Jokkmokk and on to Gällivare (via Boden and Vuollerim).

CAR & TAXI

For car rental you should call **Statoil** (☎ 186 22; Stationsgatan 30). If you need a cab, call **Luleå Taxi** (☎ 100 00).

TRAIN

Direct Tågkompaniet trains from Stockholm and Göteborg run at night only. Most trains from Narvik and Kiruna via Boden terminate at Luleå.

BODEN

☎ 0921 / pop 20,000

Until quite recently closed to foreigners, Boden is Sweden's largest military town. It's surrounded by forts, built between 1901 and 1998 to defend the country from the Russians. It has a surprisingly inviting (if small) city centre that is good for strolling.

Boden has all facilities, including a friendly **tourist office** (☎ 624 10; www.upplevboden.nu; Kungsgatan 40; ☹ Jun-Aug, Mon-Sat rest of yr), in the middle of the town centre.

Rödbergsfortet (☎ 48 30 60; tours adult/child Skr90/60; ☹ late-Jun–mid-Aug), south of the centre, is the only fort remaining from Boden's old defences. It's open to guided tours only – these run every half-hour from 10am to 4pm. **Pansarmuseet** (☎ 681 56; adult/child Skr30/free; ☹ 11am–4pm Mon-Fri, noon–4pm Sat & Sun mid-Jul–mid-Aug), 3km towards Jokkmokk, is a museum of tanks and armoured cars. On the southwest edge of town, **Garnisonsmuséet** (☎ 683 99; Sveavägen; admission free; ☹ 11am–4pm Mon-Fri, noon–4pm Sat & Sun mid-Jul–mid-Aug) faithfully re-creates living conditions for the troops in the past.

Western Farm (☎ 151 00; www.western-farm.com; Buddbyvägen 6; adult/child Skr50/30; ☹ Jul–mid-Aug), 3km north of the station, is an unexpected find in this part of the world – it's a small Wild West town, complete with staff dressed up as native Americans and cowboys, with regular events and entertainment.

Luleå has a better selection of places to stay and eat, but there are a few options here. In the heart of town is **Quality Hotel Bodensia** (☎ 177 10; Kungsgatan 47; s/d Skr895/1130, discounted to Skr595/790), with comfortable, well-equipped rooms and good discounted rates. There's no shortage of pizzerias, grill bars and other eateries in town. **Hanssons** (☎ 544 84; Drottninggatan 9) is a pleasant café, right in the town centre, with a good selection of lunchtime snacks.

HAPARANDA

☎ 0922 / pop 4700

Haparanda was founded in 1821 as a trading town to replace Sweden's loss of Tornio (which is now in Finland) to Russia. These days the two border towns almost function as one entity (both the krona and euro are accepted at most places in both towns; Tornio is an hour ahead of Haparanda).

Haparanda's main **tourist office** (☎ 120 10; www.haparanda.se/turism; Torget 7; ☹ 8am–4pm Mon-Fri) is in Stadshotellet. There is another,

joint, Haparanda–Tornio tourist office located on the 'green line'.

There are few sights in Haparanda, and the ugly church looks exactly like a grain silo, but one noteworthy attraction is the unique golf course. The **Green Zone Golf Course** (☎ 106 60) lies right on the border of the two countries, and during a full round of golf the border is crossed exactly four times. You will need to book in advance if you want to play under the midnight sun.

Full-day **boat tours** (☎ 133 95) of the archipelago sail on Wednesday and Thursday in July (adult/child Skr450/350), and include a visit to **Sandskär**, the largest island in Haparanda Skärgård National Park. Inquire at the tourist office about **white-water rafting** trips on the Kukkolaforseen rapids.

The scenic **Kukkolaforseen rapids**, on the Torneälv 15km north of Haparanda, run by three million litres per second. In summer, you can watch locals fishing for whitefish using medieval dip nets. Also well worth a visit is the excellent tourist village here, which includes a **camping ground and cabins** (☎ 310 00; sites Skr150, 4-bed cabins from Skr500), plus a restaurant, café, fish smokehouse, saunas and a museum.

The comfortable, waterfront **STF Vandrarhem Haparanda** (☎ 61171; info@haparandavandrarhem.com; Strandgatan 26; dm from Skr120; ☹ yr-round) is nicely placed at the edge of a park close to the town centre. There's a kitchen, but meals are also available in the attached café-bar, which has a great patio open in summer.

The large, once-grand **Stadshotellet** (☎ 614 90; Torget 7; s/d from Skr1100/1400; summer budget beds Skr200) is the architectural focus of the town, and its pub-restaurant, **Gulasch Baronen**, offers a great range of reasonably priced meals (from Skr65).

Tapanis Buss (www.tapanis.se in Swedish; ☎ 129 55) runs express coaches from Tornio to Stockholm twice a week (Skr480, 15 hours). A regular local bus service connects Haparanda and Tornio. There are regional buses from Luleå (Skr121, 2½ hours, three daily) and towns further south. Daily bus 53 travels north along the border via the scenic Kukkolaforseen rapids, Övertorneå (Skr80, one to 1½ hours, three daily) and Pajala (Skr166, 3½ hours to 4½ hours, three daily), then continues west to Kiruna (Skr280, six hours, three daily).

THE INTERIOR

The northern parts of Norrbotten are dominated by forest and wandering reindeer, and there are numerous small towns to use as pit stops for further exploration.

The first major town you'll encounter if you head north from Haparanda, following the Torneälven river that marks the border with Finland, is the rather unremarkable **Övertorneå**. There's a bridge across the river to Finland here, and a tourist office by the bridge.

West of Övertorneå is **Överkalix**, a much better option. It's located at a scenic river junction on the Kalixälven, and has little hills nearby. The area is popular for **angling**; ask for permits at the small but very accommodating **tourist office** (☎ 0926-103 92; www.overkalix.se in Swedish; Storgatan 27). Take the winding road up to the top of the nearby hill, **Brännaberget**, for a fine view; there's a kiosk and little café here, as well as an amphitheatre for live music and stage productions. **Sirillus**, about a kilometre from the northern end of the bridge, is a beautiful Russian Orthodox church with an octagonal tower. **Martingården**, 5km north on road No 392, is a 17th-century **farm museum** with 'Överkalix paintings' on a cupboard and bed. There are a couple of eateries in the town, mostly grill bars.

There's a sign to mark the crossing of the Arctic Circle on road No 392. About 12km north of here is **Jockfall**, an impressive waterfall with a nearby **camping ground** (☎ 0926-600 33; sites from Skr65, cabins from Skr500), shop and a **café-restaurant** (meals from Skr45) serving locally caught salmon. This scenic area is a paradise for fishing folk.

Pressing on further north, **Pajala** (population 7300) has the world's largest **circular sundial** and a helpful **tourist office** (☎ 0978-100 15; www.pajalaturism.bd.se) located near the bus station. Other things worth a look are **Laestadius pöretet**, the mid-19th-century home of Lars Levi Laestadius, a local vicar and founder of a religious movement, and **Kengis Järnbruk**, a 17th-century iron foundry.

Bykrogen (☎ 0978-712 00; Soukolovägen 2; s/d Skr650/850) offers comfortable and newly renovated hotel rooms in Pajala. There's a wide range of food available at the attached restaurant, **Linkan** (meals Skr60-200), an attractive dining room done up in chic modern design, with a hopping evening beer garden in summer. There are a couple of other eateries in town,

as well as a camping ground that doubles as a youth hostel and two more hotels. At the camping ground you can rent bikes, canoes and boats.

Bus 55 runs from Luleå to Pajala via Överkalix (Skr260, five hours, twice daily direct), while bus 53 runs between Haparanda and Kiruna (Skr280, six hours, three daily) via Övertorneå and Pajala. From Pajala, you can press on southwest to Gällivare (bus 46, Skr139, two hours, three daily), or northwest to Vittangi (bus 51 or 53, Skr106, two hours, twice daily direct), and from Vittangi you can journey through the wilderness, north to Karesuando (bus 50), or west to Kiruna (bus 53, Skr80, one hour, three daily).

JÄMTLAND

ÖSTERSUND

☎ 063 / pop 58,000

If you're lucky you'll catch a glimpse of Östersund's favourite tourist attraction, the monster called Storsjödjuret, which usually stays hidden in the waters of Storsjön lake. Even if you're not that lucky, the town is worth a day or two of exploration. Many of its attractions lie on the adjacent island of Frösön, where there's a winter-sports centre. Östersund is also noteworthy as the starting point of the St Olavsleden pilgrim route to Trondheim in Norway.

A huge four-day music festival, Storsjöyran, is usually held over the last weekend in July, when the town centre gets sealed off in the evenings. Some 50,000 people attend the festival, but it's very expensive, with admission costing up to Skr350 per evening. Accommodation prices also shoot up at this time.

Information

The **tourist office** (☎ 1440 01; www.turist.ostersund.se; Rådhusgatan 44; ☹ mid-Jun-Aug, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri rest of yr) is opposite the town hall; ask about the **Östersund Card** (adult/child Skr140/55), which gives discounts or free entry to many local attractions between June and mid-August.

The large library, opposite the bus station, has free Internet access. The town has all facilities, including banks, supermarkets and shops selling outdoor gear, primarily on Prästgatan.

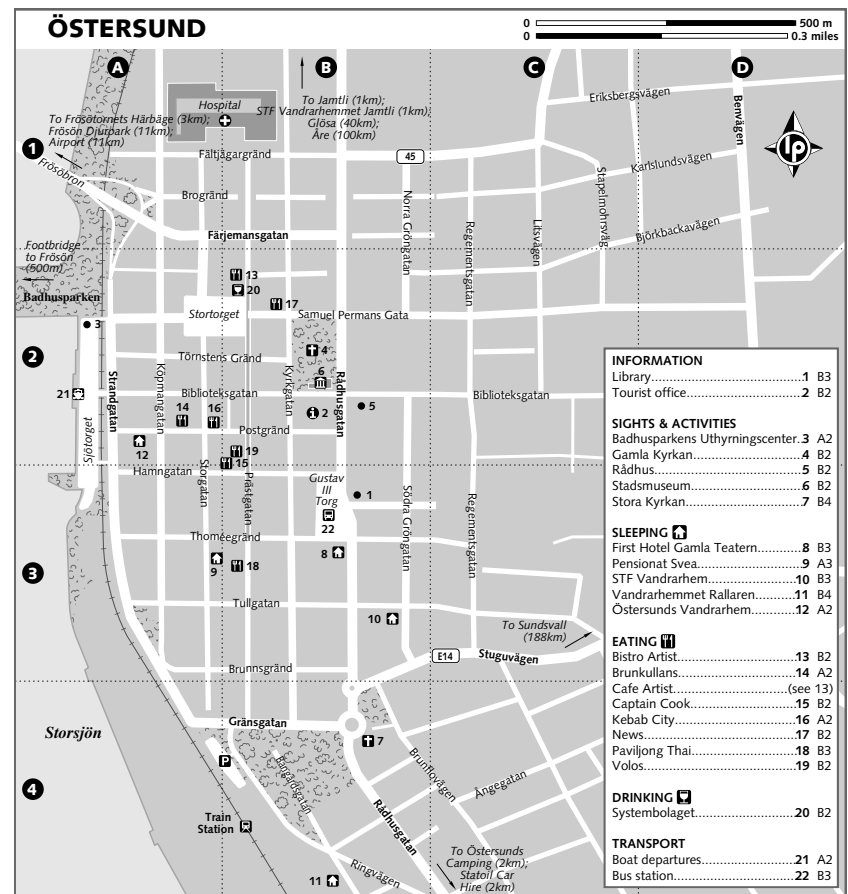
Sights & Activities

Don't miss **Jamtli** (☎ 15 01 00; adult/child Jun-Aug Skr90/25, rest of yr Skr60/20; ☹ Jun-Aug, Tue-Sun rest of yr), a kilometre north of the town centre. This museum is the highlight of Östersund, combining the lively exhibitions of the regional museum and a large museum village with staff wearing period clothing in summer. The regional museum exhibits the curious **Överhogdal Tapestry**, a Christian Viking relic from around 1100 which features lots of animals, people, ships and buildings (including kind churches). It's one of the oldest of its kind in Europe and may even predate the famous Bayeux tapestry.

The **Stadsmuseum** (☎ 12 13 24; adult/child Skr30/free; ☹ Jun-Aug, Tue-Sun rest of yr), across the street

from the tourist office, contains items of local historical, cultural and topographical interest. The adjacent **Gamla Kyrkan** is the old town church, completed in 1846. The impressive brick building with a cupola and tiled roof is the **rådhus** (town hall).

Activities include **lake cruises** (Skr65-95; ☹ Jun-early Sep) on the old S/S *Thomé* steamship. There are also **sightseeing coach trips** (adult/child Skr100/50), **town walks** (from Skr65) and **elk-spotting safaris** (from Skr185) at least once weekly from June to August. Book any of these at the tourist office. Canoes and fishing gear can be rented from **Badhusparkens Uthyrningscenter** (☎ 13 38 38; Sjötorget) which also rents bikes (for about Skr65/250 per day/week).



FRÖSÖN

This island is reached by road or footbridge from the middle of Östersund (the footbridge is from the pleasant Badhusparken – nearby you can rent bikes, inline skates and canoes). Just across the footbridge, outside Landstingshuset and near the Konsum supermarket, there's Sweden's northernmost **runestone**, which commemorates the arrival of Christianity in 1050.

Also featured on the island are the animals at **Frösöns Djurpark** (☎ 51 47 43; adult/child/senior Skr140/70/100; ☞ mid-Jun–mid-Aug; bus 5) as well as the restored, late-12th-century **Frösöns kyrka** (☞ 8am–8pm in summer, Mon–Fri rest of yr; bus 3), with its distinctive separate bell tower. If you are a skier there are both slalom and nordic ski runs on the island at Östberget, where there is also a **viewing tower** (Skr10; ☞ mid-May–mid-Sep) with fine views.

GLÖSA ROCK CARVINGS

Glösa, 40km northwest of Östersund and in the Älsensjön lake, has some of the finest **Stone Age rock carvings** (admission free; ☞ 24hr) in Sweden. The carvings, on rock slabs beside a stream, feature large numbers of elk and date from 4000 BC. There's also an excellent reconstruction of a **Stone Age hut** and replicas of skis, snowshoes, a sledge and an elk-skin boat.

Nearby, there are some displays about elk-hunting using traps (prohibited since 1864) and more modern methods. There are roughly 13,000 **fångstgropar** (pit traps) in Jämtland, set in lines across migration routes; a short walk through the woods (follow the sign saying *Fornminne*) will take you to four of them.

Take bus 533 from Östersund (two or three daily), then follow the sign from the public road (500m walk).

Sleeping

STF Vandrarhemmet Jamtli (☎ 12 20 60; dm Skr140–160) You can spend the night in the middle of Östersund's big attraction at this quaint hostel, inside the Jamtli museum precinct.

STF Vandrarhem (☎ 13 91 00; Södra Gröngatan 36; dm from Skr165; ☞ late Jun–early Aug) A second, summer-only option is this clean and central hostel.

Östersunds Vandrarhem (☎ 10 10 27; Postgränd 4; dm Skr145) A conveniently located hostel in the centre of town.

Vandrarhemmet Rallaren (☎ 13 22 32; Bangårds-gatan 6; dm Skr140) This is next to the train station.

Frösötornets Härbäge (☎ 51 57 67; Utsiktsvägen 10; dm from Skr130; ☞ May–Oct) This place has hostel beds in wonderful turf-roofed huts at the viewing tower on Frösön.

Pensionat Svea (☎ 51 29 01; pensionat svea@spray.se; Storgatan 49; s/d from Skr450/550) A cosy place close to the heart of town; prices include breakfast.

First Hotel Gamla Teatern (☎ 51 16 00; bokning@gamlateatern.se; Thoméegränd 20; s/d from Skr900/1200) An elegant place in an old theatre. The budget rooms are reasonably priced in summer; better standard rooms cost Skr200 to Skr250 more.

Östersunds Camping (☎ 14 46 15; ostersundcamping@ostersund.se; sites from Skr100, hostel d from Skr280, cabins from Skr300; bus 2, 6 or 9) Off Kronrikevägen, this large and well-equipped place is 2km southeast of the town centre and right beside a large adventure swimming pool.

Eating & Drinking

Restaurants line Prästgatan, the main pedestrian street.

Volos (☎ 51 66 89; Prästgatan 38; meals Skr60–170) With something for everyone's tastes – pizzas, pasta, nachos, salads, kebabs, Greek dishes and more.

Bistro Artist (☎ 55 60 10; Prästgatan 16; mains Skr100–215) At the Radisson hotel, this is a lovely restaurant offering predominantly Italian fare, including pasta dishes priced from Skr100 to Skr140.

Café Artist The adjacent Café Artist is a more casual place, with light meals and the usual café fare.

Brunkullans (☎ 10 14 54; Postgränd 5; mains Skr100–200) Popular and classy, this place has a great late-19th-century atmosphere. There's an appealing menu, with gourmet pasta dishes, fish, steak and other classic dishes on offer, which can be enjoyed in the outdoor courtyard. The lunch buffet is excellent value at Skr70.

News (☎ 10 11 31; Samuel Permans gata 9; mains Skr110–280) News is a slick – and somewhat pricey – bar and bistro, frequented by the fashionable set who like to be watched while they eat. There's trendy décor, good service and a pleasant outdoor terrace. Mains include salads, burgers, steak and rack of lamb, plus vegetarian options. Lunch is a

more casual affair, with bagels and *ciabatta* sandwiches from Skr45.

Paviljong Thai (☎ 13 00 99; Prästgatan 50B; lunch from Skr60, dishes Skr60–150) This place serves good-sized portions of great Thai cuisine, with all the favourite noodle, curry and seafood dishes on the menu.

Captain Cook (☎ 12 60 90; Hamngatan 9; meals Skr50–150) This is an Australian-themed pub with a good menu of bar food, ranging from light snacks to more hearty fare, and a selection of imported and local beer to wash it down.

Kebab City (☎ 13 70 22; Storgatan 31) Kebab City serves burger, kebab and falafel meals for around Skr50. It's one of many interchangeable kebab houses in town.

For alcohol, head to **Systembolaget** (Kyrkgatan 66, ☞ 10am–7pm Mon–Fri, 10am–3pm Sat).

Getting There & Around

The **airport** (☎ 19 30 00) is on Frösön, 11km west of the town centre, and the airport bus leaves regularly from the bus terminal (Skr50). SAS flies several times daily to Stockholm.

The train station is a short walk south from the town centre, but the main regional bus station is central on Gustav III Torg; local buses usually run to both. Local buses 1, 3, 4, 5 and 9 go to Frösön (Skr15, or free with the Östersund Card).

Bus 45 runs south to Mora twice a day; in summer the Inlandsbanan train runs once daily, to Gällivare or Mora. Bus 156 runs west to Åre; bus 63 runs twice daily northeast to Umeå.

Direct trains run from Stockholm via Gävle, and some continue to Storlien (from where you can catch trains to Norway). You can also catch a train east to Sundsvall.

For car hire, contact **Statoil** (☎ 12 39 75; Kronrikevägen 97). Bikes and inline skates can be hired from **Badhusparkens Uthyrningscenter**, see p293. There are also **taxis** (☎ 51 72 00).

ARÅDALEN & PERSÅSEN

This seldom-visited part of Jämtland is a favourite spot for trekkers. Its lonely landscapes make you feel like you're really in the middle of absolutely nowhere – and pretty happy to be there. In spring, keep your eyes trained on the marshy ground for signs of reddish-yellow cloudberry (*hjortron*) – the rest of the year your only company may be reindeer and a few wild birds.

The rustic, 18-bed **STF Vandrarhem Arådalen** (☎ 0687-140 54; dm Skr130; ☞ mid-Jun–Aug) is an excellent hiking base and probably the best place in the area to get regional information. Ask the helpful staff about a 5km hike to **Östra Arådalen's fäbod**, a well-preserved Sami farm that once produced cheese and is still in use for part of the year.

The barely-there village of Persåsen, now essentially confined to the large and modern museum/shop/hotel/restaurant complex that is the **Persåsen Hotell & STF Vandrarhem** (☎ 0643-44 55 50; www.persasen.se; Persåsen 3370, Oviken; dm from Skr130, cabins from Skr390, hotel s/d from Skr795/1195), was home to inventor John Ericsson (1803–89) for several years while he served in the military. Ericsson invented the caloric engine and the propeller while here, and the museum displays an intriguingly conflicted exhibit about his life. The shop acts as more of a crafts museum, with an astounding array of fine woodwork, textiles and other traditional handcrafted gifts from the region.

ÅRE & AROUND

☎ 0647 / pop 9692

Arguably Sweden's top mountain-sports destination, the **Åre area** (www.skistar.com/are) has 45 ski lifts that serve some 100 pistes and 1000 vertical metres of skiable slopes, including a superb 6.5km downhill run. The skiing season is from November to mid-May, but conditions are best from February, when daylight hours increase, and Easter is a hugely busy time. Unfortunately, Åre gets far too busy in winter and you can hardly move, let alone park your car. **Duved** is quieter.

The **Åre tourist office** (☎ 177 20) is in the train station. Most facilities are around the main square, which you reach by walking through the park opposite the station.

There are also excellent cross-country tracks in the area, and other winter activities, such as dogsledding, snowmobile safaris and sleigh rides (which are horse- or reindeer-drawn!) are available too. Åre also offers great summer outdoor recreation, including hiking, kayaking, rafting and fishing, as well as good mountain biking. The area west of Åre is popular among fell-walkers and there is a network of STF wilderness huts and lodges here for enthusiasts.

Sleeping & Eating

Things fill up quickly in winter, so it's best to book accommodation and skiing packages via **Åre Resor** (☎ 177 00; reservations@areresort.se).

A **Good Camping** (☎ 500 54; sites from Skr150) is a good summer option. **Park Villan** (☎ 177 33; Parkvägen 6; dm Skr170), the yellow house in the park opposite the train station, offers good backpacker accommodation outside of the ski season. The **STF Vandrarhem Åre** (☎ 301 38; brattlandsgården@spray.se; dm Skr130) is 8km east of Åre; daily buses connect it to town.

Not all hotels stay open in summer, but those that do offer great bargains. The huge ski lodge and resort **Åre Fjällby** (☎ 136 00; reception@arefjallby.com; summer self-contained apt from Skr550), for example, often has off-season specials and discounts.

Like the hotels, the majority of restaurants are closed in summer, but there are still some very good choices, primarily on the main square. Typical Swedish fast food is available at **Åre Kiosk & Grill**, but nearby **Liten Krog** (dishes around Skr70) and **Werséns** (dishes around Skr70) have more style. **Villa Tottebo** (mains from Skr145), opposite the train station, is a classy establishment open year-round, and there's an inviting bar upstairs with a stellar view. There's a Konsum supermarket on the square.

Getting There & Away

Regional bus 156 runs from Östersund and connects Åre to the nearby winter-sports centre of Duved (much quieter and more family-oriented than Åre). Regular trains between Stockholm and Storlien, via Östersund, stop at Åre. Storlien is the terminus for SJ trains; change here for Norwegian trains to Hell and Trondheim.

STORLIEN & AROUND

☎ 0647

The area west of Åre is justly popular among fell-walkers, particularly around Sylarna, one of the finest mountains for trekking and climbing in Sweden. There's a very good network of STF wilderness huts and lodges along the trails, with meals available in most of them. Reservations aren't possible, but you're guaranteed a place to sleep (though it may be on the floor). Most hikers in this area seek out the **Jämtland Triangle** just north of Sylarna; ask at the Storlien tourist office or any STF lodge for details.

Storlien, near the Norwegian border, has a popular downhill skiing area (the Swedish king himself has a winter chalet here), as well as a supermarket and a **tourist office** (☎ 705 70; www.storlienfjallen.com in Swedish; ☎ summer) at the train station.

The excellent **STF Vandrarhem Storvallen/Storlien** (☎ 700 50; dm Skr150-170), 600m off the E14 and about 5km east of Storlien, offers top-quality accommodation, good meals, friendly service and good hiking advice.

Le Ski (mains Skr50-150), in the village at Hotel Storlien, has a daily buffet, plus a good menu of reasonably priced meals like pizza, meatballs, salmon and steak.

HÄRJEDALEN

This is the least populated of Sweden's counties, but that just means fewer people to get in the way of its spectacular views. Härjedalen is a wilderness of forest, lake and mountain in the west, and forest, lake and marsh in the east. The rugged mountain scenery in the far northwest is breathtaking. There aren't many towns in the region worth visiting, but, after all, the reason you come to a place like this is to get far away from city life.

FUNÄSDALEN & AROUND

☎ 0684 / pop 2000

Dominated by the impressive peak **Funäsdalsberget**, Funäsdalen and the surrounding area is a favourite among hikers, skiers and other outdoor sports enthusiasts.

The **tourist office** (☎ 164 10; www.funasdalsfjall.se; Rörosvägen 30; ☎ mid-Jun-mid-Aug, Mon-Fri rest of yr) is at the Fjällmuseum, and all the main tourist facilities are on Rörosvägen, the main road through town.

Sights & Activities

Härjedalens Fjällmuseum (☎ 164 10; adult/child Skr60/free) has displays covering the Sami, local farmers and miners, and includes the **Forminnesparken** outdoor section. A **golf course**, one of Sweden's finest, can be found in Ljusnedal, just east of town.

There's an office of the forest agency **Naturum** (☎ 242 00; ☎ Jun-Aug & Dec-Apr) 15km south at Tännäs Fiskecentrum, with information on the **Rogen Nature Reserve**, including details about the moraine ridges and the local musk ox. Excellent hiking can be

found in the reserve, but it's better accessed from Grövelsjön in Dalarna. **Högvålen**, about 30km south of Tännäs on road No 311, is Sweden's highest village (830m).

Ramundberget, over 20km north of Funäsdalen, and **Tännaldalen** (12km west), have excellent downhill and nordic **ski areas**. There are 24 ski lifts and 75 runs, and the 300km of cross-country trails constitute the longest ski system in the world. The profile of the mountain **Stor-Mittakläppen** (1212m), as seen from Hågnvallen (4km east of Ramundberget), is most impressive.

Ljungdalen, about 40km north of Funäsdalen, is close to **Helagsfjället** (1797m), the highest peak in the area. There's good hiking and skiing here; the 12km one-way hike from Kläppen (north of Ljungdalen) to the STF cabin at Helags goes via some old **summer farms** and is reasonably easy. There is also a small **ski area** as well as a **tourist office** (☎ 0687-200 79).

Sleeping & Eating

There are a few STF hostels in the area, including one at **Ljungdalen** (☎ 0687-203 64; Dunsjögården; dm Skr120) and **Tännaldalen/Skarvruet** (☎ 0684-221 11; Skavruets Fjällhotell; dm Skr145-175). Both are open year-round.

Hotel Funäsdalen (☎ 214 30; info@hotell-funasdal.se; summer hostel beds Skr175, s/d Skr550/800) Off the main road in Funäsdalen is this large, well-equipped hotel, with a range of accommodation options plus a good restaurant.

Wårdshuset Gyllene Bocken (☎ 210 90; info@gyllenebocken.se; summer s/d from Skr450/700) This is a lovely old inn opposite the fine golf course in Ljusnedal, with a good restaurant attached. Rooms with private facilities are also available. The staff can organise golf for guests, plus other activities in the area.

Veras Stekhus & Pub (☎ 215 30; lunch around Skr85, mains Skr145-215) In the heart of Funäsdalen, near the tourist office, this is a relatively upmarket steakhouse with a great view from its outdoor terrace and a comprehensive menu of steak, reindeer and other meats (though there's not much to please vegetarians).

Not far away is **Café Loftet** (☎ 291 49; ☎ lunch), with good café fare such as baguettes, quiche and salads from Skr30, plus more of that scenic panorama from its veranda.

Getting There & Away

Härjedalingen (www.harjedalingen.se in Swedish) runs buses between Stockholm and Funäsdalen (Skr380), via Gävle and Järvsö, several days a week; on Saturday buses also connect with Tännaldalen and Ramundberget (Skr400). Contact the tourist office for information and bookings.

Local bus 622 and 623 run from Funäsdalen to Ramundberget and Tännaldalen, respectively; there are also daily ski buses during winter. There is not a direct connection with Ljungdalen; take the once-daily bus 613 from Åsarna (which has an Inlandsbanan train station), about 100km east. Bus 164 runs from Funäsdalen via Åsarna to Östersund once or twice daily.

LAPPLAND

KARESUANDO (GÁRRASAVVON)

☎ 0981 / pop 350

This is the northernmost village in Sweden, and it feels that way. Directly across the bridge from the Finnish town of Kaarasuanto, the tiny village is more interesting for what it takes to get there than for anything you can find in it. The main attractions here are natural ones: from late May to mid-July, there's a 90% chance of observing the midnight sun, while in winter temperatures drop to -50°C.

There's a fairly professional **tourist office** (☎ 202 05; www.karesuando.com in Swedish; ☎ May-Sep) on the bridge to Finland. Inside there's regional information, souvenirs and a café serving drinks and cakes. There are no banks in the village, but there are a couple of convenience shops and fuel stations; eating options are very limited.

Items of interest in Karesuando are an **octagonal school** (1993); **Vita Huset** (☎ 8am-4pm), a folk museum with mainly Norwegian items from WWII; and **Sámiid Viessu**, a Sami art and handicraft exhibition and museum.

Tretriksöset, about 100km northwest of the village, is the point where Norway, Sweden and Finland meet; ask the tourist office for details of boats leaving from Kilpisjärvi (on the Finnish side of the border) to visit this hard-to-access area.

There's a small **STF Vandrarhem** (☎ 203 30; dm Skr140; ☎ mid-May-mid-Sep) up here, about a kilometre before you reach the bridge

ARCTIC PHENOMENA

Aurora Borealis

There are few sights as mesmerising as an undulating aurora. Although these appear in many forms – pillars, streaks, wisps and haloes of vibrating light – they're most memorable when they take the form of pale curtains, apparently wafting on a gentle breeze. Most often, the Arctic aurora appears faint green, light yellow or rose-coloured, but in periods of extreme activity it can change to bright yellow or crimson.

The visible aurora borealis, or northern lights (*norrskjen*), are caused by streams of charged particles from the sun and the solar winds, which are diverted by the earth's magnetic field towards the polar regions. Because the field curves downward in a halo surrounding the magnetic poles, the charged particles are drawn earthward here. Their interaction with atoms in the upper atmosphere (about 160km above the surface) releases the energy creating the visible aurora (in the southern hemisphere, the corresponding phenomenon is called the aurora australis). During periods of high activity, a single auroral storm can produce a trillion watts of electricity with a current of one million amps.

Although science dismisses it as imagination, most people report that the aurora is often accompanied by a crackling or whirring sound. Don't feel unbalanced if you hear it – that's the sort of sound you'd expect to hear from such a dramatic display, and if it's an illusion, it's a very convincing one. The best time of year to catch the northern lights in Sweden is from October to March, although you may well see them as early as August in the far north.

Midnight Sun & Polar Night

Because the earth is tilted on its axis, the polar regions are constantly facing the sun at their respective summer solstices, and are tilted away from it in the winter. The Arctic and Antarctic Circles, at latitudes 66°32'N and 66°32'S respectively, are the southern and northern limits of constant daylight on the longest day of the year.

The northern one-seventh of Sweden lies north of the Arctic Circle, but even in central Sweden, the summer sun is never far below the horizon. Between late May and mid-August, nowhere north of Stockholm experiences true darkness; in Umeå, for example, the first stars aren't visible until mid-August. Although many visitors initially find it difficult to sleep while the sun is shining brightly outside, most people get used to it.

Conversely, winters in the far north are dark and bitterly cold, with only a few hours of twilight to break the long polar nights. During this period, some people suffer from SAD (seasonal affective disorder) syndrome, which occurs when they're deprived of the vitamin D provided by sunlight. Its effects may be minimised by taking supplements of vitamin D (as found in cod liver oil) or with special solar spectrum light bulbs.

and tourist office. It's operated jointly with the **Hotel Karesuando** (☎ 203 30; s/d Skr550/650), across the road, with en suite rooms and a restaurant serving good, simple meals.

KIRUNA (GIRON)

☎ 0980 / pop 23,407

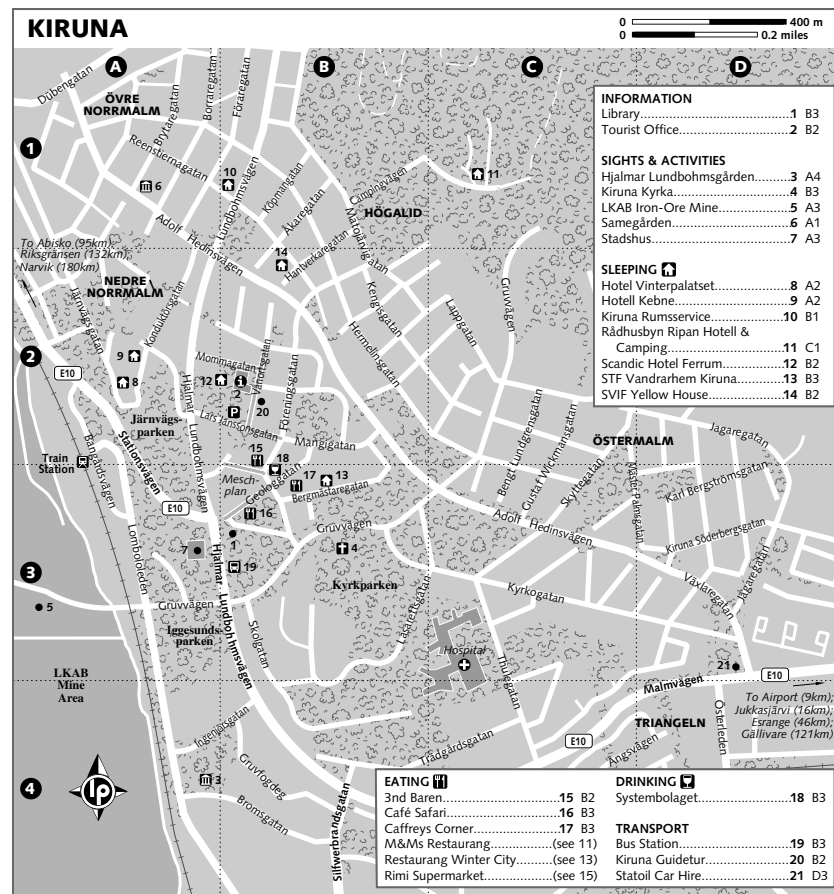
There's not much to Kiruna, but it's the major town this far north – in fact it's the northernmost town in Sweden. The surrounding district includes Sweden's highest peak, **Keblekaise** (2111m), and some of the country's best national parks and hiking routes; see p301 for suggestions on tackling them.

This far north, the midnight sun lasts from 31 May to 14 July, and there's a blu-

ish darkness throughout December and the New Year period. Many people speak Finnish, and Samis are a small minority – there are local radio stations that broadcast in both languages.

The helpful and efficient **tourist office** (☎ 188 80; www.kiruna.se, www.lappland.se; Lars Janssonsgatan 17; ☎ 8.30am-9pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-6pm Sat & Sun Jun-Aug, Mon-Sat rest of yr) is next to the Scandic Hotel and has loads of excellent brochures, as well as a row of computers for Internet access. Staff can arrange various activities, including rafting, dogsledding and snow scooter trips, although these can be quite expensive.

Banks and other facilities can be found along Lars Janssonsgatan, and the library,



behind the bus station, offers free Internet access.

Sights & Activities

A visit to the depths of the **LKAB iron-ore mine**, 540m underground, is recommended – many of the facts about this place are mind-boggling. Tours depart from the tourist office regularly from mid-June to mid-August (adult/child Skr220/50), though tours in English happen only a few times a week; make bookings through the tourist office.

Kiruna kyrka (Gruvvägen; ☎ 10am-9pm summer) looks like a huge Sami *kåta* (hut), and it's particularly pretty against a snowy backdrop. Another landmark, firmly at the opposite end of the aesthetics spectrum, is the

Stadshus (town hall; ☎ 705 21; Hjalmar Lundbohmvägen; ☎ 9am-6pm), which, despite its grim façade, is actually very nice inside and has a free slide show on the hour, and free guided tours.

Hjalmar Lundbohmgården (☎ 701 10; Ingenjörsgatan 1; adult/child Skr30/10; ☎ 8am or 10am-6pm Mon-Fri summer) is the former home of the first LKAB director and is now a museum. **Samegården** (☎ 170 29; Brytaregatan 14; adult/child Skr20/free; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri summer) has displays about Sami culture and an expensive handicrafts shop.

As well as the famous Ice Hotel, tiny **Jukkasjärvi**, 18km east of Kiruna, is home to a **church** (☎ 8am-10pm summer), which has a modern Sami painting behind the altar. Near the church is **Gårdi** (adult/child Skr60/30; tours 10am-6pm

mid-Jun–mid-Aug), a reindeer yard that you can tour with a Sami guide to learn about reindeer farming and Sami culture. Also in this area is the **Hembygdsgård**, a typical open-air homestead museum. Regular bus 501 runs between Kiruna and Jukkasjärvi (Skr26, 30 minutes, several daily).

Some 23km further out is the space base **Esrang**, which researches the northern lights (*norrskén*) – see p298. Detailed four-hour **tours** (adult/child Skr390/200) of the facility are offered to enthusiasts in summer, but must be arranged in advance; inquire at the Kiruna tourist office.

Held in the last week of January, the **Kiruna Snow Festival** (www.kiruna.com/snowfestival) is based around a snow-sculpting competition. The tradition started in 1985 as a space-themed snow-sculpture contest to celebrate the launching of a rocket (*Viking*) from Esrang.

Sleeping

Rådhusbyn Ripan Hotell & Camping (☎ 630 00; ripan@kiruna.se; Campingvägen 5; sites Skr100, hotel s/d from Skr650/750, 4-bed cabins from Skr650; 🚽) In the northern part of town, this is a large and well-equipped camping ground with a good restaurant-pub. It has hotel-standard chalets in addition to its caravan and tent sites.

STF Vandrarhem Kiruna (☎ 171 95; Bergmästaregatan 7; dm Skr150-180, s/d from Skr290/380; 🏠) yr-round) This central hostel has good facilities and an adjacent Chinese restaurant.

SVIF Yellow House (☎ 137 50; yellowhouse@mbx301.swipnet.se; Hantverkaregatan 25; dm from Skr150, s/d Skr300/400) There are more excellent facilities here, including a sauna, kitchen and laundry, a TV in each room, and a nice, quiet enclosed garden.

Kiruna Rumsservice (☎ 195 60; krs@kiruna.se; Hjalmar Lundbohmsvägen 53; d from Skr350) Another good option, especially for small groups. It offers rooms and apartments with a varying number of beds. Breakfast is additional.

Scandic Hotel Ferrum (☎ 39 86 00; ferrum@scandic-hotels.com; Lars Janssonsgatan 15; s/d Skr1212/1410, discounted to Skr690/840) Near the tourist office, this is a town landmark. It offers the finest rooms in town and has excellent facilities, including a café, restaurant and nightclub on the premises.

Hotel Vinterpalatset (☎ 677 70; vinterp@kiruna.se; Jämvägsgatan 18; s/d from Skr750/900) This pretty

hotel is near Hotel Kebne and has pleasant upmarket rooms.

Hotell Kebne (☎ 681 80; info@hotellkebn.com; Konduktörsgratan 7; s/d from Skr950/1200) Ask about seasonal and weekend specials at this place, which has comfortable rooms and a good central location.

Eating & Drinking

M&Ms Restaurang (Campingvägen; meals Skr95-225). This restaurant at the camping ground (of all places) has an interesting and creative menu, which includes tortillas, beef fillets, reindeer, salmon, veggie dishes and burgers. The lunch buffet is Skr75.

3rd Baren (Föreningsgatan 11; meals Skr85-240) This is a popular, moderately priced restaurant and lively drinking spot of an evening. Try local specialities, such as reindeer or arctic char (fish); there are also vegetarian selections.

Restaurang Winter City (☎ 109 00; Bergmästaregatan 7; lunch Skr65, meals Skr55-140) This eatery, at the STF hostel, offers a lunch special, plus a range of pizzas, as well as classic Chinese and other Asian dishes.

Café Safari (☎ 174 60; Geologsgatan 4) This is the nicest café in town with good coffee, cakes and light meals, such as sandwiches, quiche and baked potatoes.

Caffreys Corner (☎ 611 11; Bergmästaregatan; meals Skr75-185) This is an unremarkable restaurant with a comprehensive menu, but the cosy bar is an inviting place, and there's an outdoor terrace where you can take advantage of good weather.

There's a **Rimi supermarket** (Föreningsgatan) near 3rd Baren, and the **Systembolaget** (Geologsgatan 7) is also central.

Getting There & Around

The small **airport** (☎ 680 00), 7km east of the town, has two to three daily nonstop flights to Stockholm with SAS, and to Umeå (weekdays only) with Skyways. The **airport bus** (☎ 156 90) connects with most flights (Skr45).

Regional buses to and from the **bus station** (Hjalmar Lundbohmsvägen), opposite the Stadshuset, serve all major settlements around Norrbotten. Bus 10 runs twice daily to Gällivare (Skr121) and Luleå (Skr260), and 92 goes two to four times daily to Nikkaluokta (Skr71) for the Kebnekaise trail head. To reach Karesuando and Finland, take bus 50 (Skr162, not Saturday). Bus 91 runs two or

THE ICE HOTEL

If you're up this far north at the right time of year, don't miss the chance to visit to the fabulous **Ice Hotel** (www.icehotel.com), a unique and super-cool experience – if you'll pardon the pun.

Every winter at Jukkasjärvi, 18km east of Kiruna, an amazing structure is built from hundreds of tonnes of ice, taken from the frozen local river. This custom-built 'igloo' has a chapel (popular for weddings – giving new meaning to the expression 'cold feet!'), plus a bar – you can enjoy a drink (preferably vodka) from a glass made purely of ice – and exhibitions of beautiful ice sculpture by international artists. It also has 50 'hotel rooms' where guests can stay, on beds covered with reindeer skins and inside sleeping bags guaranteed to keep you warm despite the –5°C temperatures (and in winter that's nothing, outside the hotel it can be as low as –30°C).

There are numerous activities for guests to pursue here, and staff can arrange pursuits such as snowmobile safaris, skiing, ice-fishing or dogsledding.

All this can be quite pricey for a budget traveller, but anyone can go to the hotel for a **day visit** (adult/child Skr100/50), which is highly recommended. If you do visit, ask the bartender where the stereo is being kept – chances are it's in the fridge, as it's warmer there!

Even after the Ice Hotel has melted away in summer, visitors can still experience a little of the magic. Inside a giant freezer warehouse, called the **Ice Hotel Art Center**, at a temperature of –5°C, there are a few of the Ice Hotel features: a bar, ice sculptures and even small igloos where guests can stay overnight. Day visitors are welcome (the entry fee is the same as in winter and warm clothing is supplied). A recent exhibition featured sculptures based on the artwork of John Bauer, who illustrated many of the classic Swedish fairy tales.

Rooms inside the hotel in winter cost from Skr2800 for two. There are also stylish hotel rooms (heated – and *not* made of ice), three-bed cabins with skylights enabling you to watch the northern lights in winter, and chalets (with kitchen) sleeping up to four. These are all available year-round – summer prices are quite reasonable. See the website for more details and a list of seasonal rates.

three times daily to Riksgränsen via Abisko (Skr130).

Trains connect Kiruna with Luleå, Stockholm and Narvik (Norway). Trains to Narvik call at Abisko and Riksgränsen.

Contact **Statoil** (☎ 143 65; Växlaregatan 20) for car hire.

Standard bicycles are available for hire from **Kiruna Guidetur** (☎ 811 10; Vänortsgatan) for Skr75/295 per day/week. Mountain bikes are also available (Skr125/495).

ABISKO (ABESKOVVU)

☎ 0980

An exceptionally inviting and rewarding place to hike, the 75-sq-km **Abisko National Park** spreads out from the southern shore of scenic Lake Torneträsk. It's less rugged than either Sarek or Padjelanta, and easier to get to, being well served by trains, buses and the scenic mountain motorway between Kiruna to Narvik.

Abisko is the driest place in Sweden, with only 300mm of rainfall per year, which creates an interesting landscape, quite distinct from its surroundings. One

of the most renowned mountain profiles in Lappland, **Lappporten**, can be seen from Abisko.

Sights & Activities

The popular **Kungleden** trail follows the Abiskojäkka valley and day trips of 10km or 20km are no problem from Abisko. Kungleden extends 450km south from Abisko to Hemavan, with STF huts serving most of the trail. Other hikes include the overnight trip to the STF hut at **Kårsavagge** (west of Abisko, 15km each way), the four-hour return trip to rock formations at **Kärkevagge**, with **Rissajävrrre** the 'Sulphur Lake', and a four-hour return hike to **Paddus**, a former Sami sacrificial site, 4km south of Abisko Östra train station. There's also a route around **Abisko canyon** and a 39km-long **Navy Trail** to Riksgränsen, alongside the railway line. Use the map *Fjällkartan BD6* (available at the STF lodge or at Naturum). For more information on the Kungleden trail see p49.

Naturum (☎ 401 77; 🏠 Jul–mid-Sep) has an office and exhibition space next to STF Abisko

Turiststation; it provides some good information to help you prepare for the hikes described above, plus many others.

The **Linbana chair lift** (one-way/return from Skr70/95) takes you to 900m on **Njulla** (1169m), where there's a **café** (☎ 9.30am-3pm summer).

In Björkliden, 8km northwest of Abisko, you will find **Hotell Fjället** (☎ 641 00; www.bjorkliden.com) which offers various summer and winter activities, including hiking and caving (spelunking). The STF also organises great hikes for groups of all sizes; both places offer outdoor gear for hire or for sale.

The unique **Björklidens golf course** (☎ 0980-641 00; info@bjorkliden.com; ☎ 8am-4:30pm Apr-Sep), which was rated in the Top 100 by *Golf World* magazine, is the world's northernmost golf course – and as a result has a fairly short season (it is covered in snow for most of the year).

Sleeping & Eating

Abisko Fjällturer (☎ 401 03; www.abisko.net; dm per person Skr150) Just behind the town, this is a backpacker's delight. The small hostel has basic comfortable accommodation and a wonderful wooden sauna, but the treat is in the reasonably priced activities on offer, especially in winter. Owner, Tomas, and his father keep a large team of sledge dogs; one package includes a night's accommodation plus the chance to drive your own sled, pulled by dogs, for about 10km. There are also very popular week-long sled trips (around Skr8000), which include all of your meals and accommodation – you will need to book very early for these. During summer you can take mountain walks with the dogs. To find the place, follow signs to the 'Dog Hostel – Vandrarnhem'.

STF Abisko Turiststation (☎ 402 00; info@abisko.nu, www.abisko.nu; dm from Skr190) This is another excellent option, kept to the usual high STF standards. Trekking gear can be hired here, there's a variety of guided tours, a shop with basic groceries, and breakfast/lunch/dinner available for Skr70/75/205. A packed lunch costs Skr70, and there's a pub in the basement that often has live music.

Hotell Fjället (☎ 641 00; info@bjorkliden.com; sites from Skr75, cabins from Skr600, s/d from Skr650/1000) This is a well-equipped resort about 8km northwest of Abisko in Björkliden, offering camping and cabin accommodation, as well as rooms in a large hotel. There are loads of

facilities, including a restaurant, bar, equipment rental (ski gear in winter, bicycles and golf, fishing and hiking gear in summer), organised activities, and even a nine-hole golf course. Prices vary wildly depending on the season, and it's best to book ahead at any time of year.

Läktajtjälko (☎ 641 00; dm from Skr425) Nine kilometres further west of Hotell Fjället, this is the highest place to stay in Sweden, at 1228m, and you'll have to hike into the hills to reach it. It has good facilities for weary hikers, such as a sauna and restaurant, and breakfast is included in the tariff.

Self-service **STF huts** (bed Skr160-220, nonmembers additional Skr50) along Kungsleden are spread at 10km to 20km intervals between Abisko and Kvikjkjokk; you'll need a sleeping bag. Day visitors/campers are charged Skr25/45.

If you can invest the time, there's a great, highly recommended 100km trek from Abisko to Nikkaluokta that runs via the STF lodge **Kebnekaise Fjällstation** (☎ 0980-550 00; info@kebnekaise.stfturist.se; dm spring/summer from Skr190/280; ☎ Mar-Apr & mid-Jun-mid-Sep). Meals are available here, and guided tours to the summit of Kebnekaise are offered.

Lapporten Stormarknad (☎ 8am-10pm), in Abisko village, is a grocery store that also carries a range of outdoor supplies, such as batteries, candles, bug spray and basic camping gear.

Getting There & Away

In addition to trains (stations at Abisko Östra and Abisko Turiststation) between Luleå and Narvik, bus 91 runs from Kiruna to Abisko (Skr997, one hour 20 minutes).

RIKSGRÄNSEN

☎ 0980

One of the most spectacular drives in this part of the country goes between Abisko village and Riksgränsen, a microscopic frontier settlement (Riksgränsen translates as 'National Border'). If you have a hankering to ski into Norway and back at midnight in June, this is the place to do it. Rental of downhill gear costs from Skr210 per day, and day lift passes start around Skr250.

There's not much to the tiny settlement here, but you can visit Sven Hörnell's gallery to view his **wilderness photography exhibition** (☎ 431 11; admission free; ☎ Feb-Sep, show 3pm daily Jun-Aug). There's an excellent audiovisual

show; the commentary is in Swedish, but you don't have to understand it to appreciate the stunning photography.

The historical **Navy Trail** walkway follows the railway line and takes you to Abisko (39km) or Rombaksbotn, Norway (15km). **Katterjåkk Turiststation** (☎ 431 08; katterjakk@kiruna.friluftss.se; summer dm from Skr170; ☎ Feb-Sep) is a well-run hostel 2km east of Riksgränsen. **Riksgränsen** (☎ 400 80; info@riksgransen.nu; summer/winter accommodation from Skr425/800 per person) dominates the hillside, this is a large resort which is popular with skiers in winter and converts to an 'alpine spa' retreat in summer. There are lots of organised wilderness activities in both seasons (also open to non-guests), and you can rent outdoor gear, including mountain bikes and canoes. There's also a café and restaurant here.

Getting There & Away

From Kiruna, bus 91 (Skr130, two hours, two or three daily) goes to Riksgränsen, via Abisko. Riksgränsen is the last train station in Sweden before the train rushes through tunnels and mountain scenery back to sea level at Narvik in Norway; three daily trains run on the Luleå-Kiruna-Narvik route.

GÄLLIVARE (VÁHTJER)

☎ 0970 / pop 19,500

Gällivare and its northern twin, Malmberget, are surrounded by forest and dwarfed by the bald Dundret hill. After Kiruna, Malmberget is the second-largest iron-ore mine in Sweden.

The helpful **tourist office** (☎ 166 60; www.gellivare.se; Storgatan 16; Internet access per 15 min Skr10; ☎ 8am-6pm daily mid-Jun-mid-Aug; Mon-Fri rest of yr) is near the church in the town's centre, and staff can organise a number of activities and wilderness excursions. The town has all the main facilities, including banks and supermarkets, primarily on Storgatan. The **library** (Hantverkargatan) also has free Internet access.

Stora Sjöfallet National Park

This wild area of mountains and lakes lies over 115km west of Gällivare, but transport links are good. At the eastern end of the park, you can cross the Stora Lulevatten lake on the STF ferry to Saltoluokta lodge, and climb **Lulep Gierkav** (1139m) for the best views.

There's an interesting **Sami church** and inexpensive **handicraft outlet** at Saltoluokta,

and the **Kungsleden trail** runs north and south from here. **Stora Sjöfallet** is now dry, due to the hydroelectric schemes, and many of the local lakes have artificial shorelines. Take the bus to the end of the road at the Sami village **Ritsem**, where there's an STF lodge, and you can cross by ferry to the northern end of the **Padjentalaleden trail**. Ask for details, maps and road conditions at the tourist office, or at any STF in the area.

Other Sights

The **Hembygdsmuseum** (admission free; ☎ 11am-3.30pm daily mid-Jun-mid-Aug, Mon-Fri rest of yr), above the tourist office, has a cute collection of local artefacts. The 1882 **church** (☎ summer) is also worth a look. The **old church** near the train station dates from 1755.

The **hembygdsområde** (☎ summer), by the camping ground, has pioneer and Sami huts in a small open-air museum.

Dundret (821m) is a nature reserve with excellent views, and you can see the mid-night sun here from 2 June to 12 July. In winter there are four nordic courses and 10 ski runs of varying difficulty, and the mountaintop resort rents out gear and organises numerous activities.

In Malmberget, 5km north of Gällivare, **Kåkstan** (admission free) is a historical 'shanty town' museum village, dating from the 1888 iron-ore rush. Contact the Gällivare tourist office for details of the **LKAB iron-ore mine tour** (Skr150; mid-Jul-late Aug). And if you like that, you'll love the **Gruvmuseum** (☎ 2-5pm Tue-Thu mid-Jul-late Aug), covering 250 years of mining. Bus 1 to Malmberget departs from directly opposite the Gällivare church.

The Gällivare tourist office also runs tours of the **Aitik copper mine** (adult/child Skr150/75; ☎ Mon-Fri late Jun-early Aug) if there's enough demand.

Sleeping & Eating

STF Vandrarnhem (☎ 143 80; Barnhemsvägen 2; dm Skr150-160; closed May & Oct) This rural retreat is just across the footbridges from the train station; bike hire is available, and there's a good cycle path leading here from the town centre.

Quality Hotel Gällivare (☎ 550200; gallivare@quality.choicehotels.se; Lasarettsgatan 1; s/d Skr1090/1450, discounted Skr690/890) This is a large, modern hotel opposite the train station. It has comfortable rooms and a good restaurant-pub.

Dundret (☎ 145 60; info@dundret.se; summer s/d Skr750/895, cabins from Skr550) At the top of Dundret hill, this is a large resort offering hotel and cabin accommodation, as well as a restaurant, outdoor gear rental and lots of activities – especially in winter. Prices are considerably higher in winter.

Gällivare Camping (☎ 100 10; Hembygdsområdet; sites Skr100, 2- & 4-bed cabins from Skr300; ☞ Jun-early Sep) This campground occupies a lovely spot beside the river; the cabins are set up more like apartments, with excellent, modern facilities. A short, well-marked footpath leads to an ICA supermarket.

Dining choices are pretty limited. Your best bet for anything other than fast food is the **Vassara Pub** (Lasarettsgatan 1; lunch Skr60-80, meals Skr70-220) inside the Quality Hotel, offering good-value lunch options and a decent selection of à la carte dishes.

The eastern part of Storgatan is home to two good restaurants: at No 17, **New Delhi** (☎ 169 60; lunch around Skr65) serves a range of Indian meals, while **Restaurang Peking** (☎ 176 85; lunch around Skr65) at No 21, has Chinese and Thai dishes on offer.

Getting There & Away

Regional buses depart from the train station. Bus 45 runs daily to Östersund (via Jokkmokk and Arvidsjaur, bus 93 serves Ritsem and Kungsleden in Stora Sjöfallet National Park (mid-June to mid-September only), buses 10 and 52 go to Kiruna, and bus 44 runs to Jokkmokk and Luleå.

Tågkompaniet (☎ 0771-44 41 11; www.tagkompaniet.se in Swedish) trains come from Luleå and Stockholm (sometimes changing at Boden), and from Narvik in Norway. More exotic is the **Inlandsbanan** (☎ 0771-535353; www.inlandsbanan.se), which terminates at Gällivare.

JOKKMOKK (DÁLVADDIS)

☎ 0971 / pop 5633

Jokkmokk is the home of perhaps the best museum devoted to Sami culture in the entire country, and the village is worth a stop just for that. Jokkmokk also serves as a base for those visiting the **Laponia World Heritage site**; ask for information on the site at the tourist office or the Ájtte museum (below). Just north of the Arctic Circle, it can be reached by Inlandsbanan. Started as a Sami market and mission, Jokkmokk has been home (since 1605) to the **Sami**

winter fair – a three-day event which attracts some 30,000 people and starts on the first Thursday in February – during which you can shop seriously for Sami *duodji* (handicraft).

The **tourist office** (☎ 121 40; www.turism.jokkmokk.se; Stortorget 4; ☞ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri yr-round, plus 10am-4pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun–mid-Aug) can help with information, and has Internet access. There are banks and other facilities in the small town centre.

For daily weather reports and forecasts, call ☎ 0980-113 50.

Sights & Activities

The welcoming and illuminating **Ájtte Museum** (☎ 170 70; Kyrkogatan 3; adult/child Skr50/free; ☞ 9am-6pm mid-Jun–mid-Aug, 10am-4pm Mon-Fri rest of yr) is the highlight of a visit to Jokkmokk; it gives the most thorough introduction to Sami culture anywhere in Sweden, including Sami dress, silverware and an interesting display of 400-year-old shamans' drums. Look out for replicas of sacrificial sites, and a diagram explaining the significance of various reindeer entrails. There are extensive notes in English. The museum also has a very practical section, with information on Lappland's mountain areas, including detailed maps, slides, videos and a reference library.

Naturfoto (☎ 557 65; ☞ Jun-Aug), at the main Klockartorget intersection, exhibits and sells work by local wilderness photographer, Edvin Nilsson. The beautiful **wooden church** (Storgatan; ☞ Jun-Aug), near Naturfoto, is worth a visit if you have time. The 'old' octagonal church on Hantverkargatan has been rebuilt, as the original was burned down in 1972.

Jokkmokks Fjällträdgård (adult/child Skr25/free), by the lake, introduces mountain trees and other local flora, and there's a **homestead museum** just across the road. **Jokkmokks Sten-center**, with lapidary and mineral exhibits, is reached from Borgargatan. These attractions are all open daily in summer, but keep irregular hours the rest of the year; check with the tourist office for details.

About 7km south of Jokkmokk you will cross the **Arctic Circle** on road No 45. There is a café and campsite at the site that awards cute but corny certificates to those interested in having proof that they have travelled this far north.

HIKING

Kvikkjokk (Huttán), around 100km west of Jokkmokk, is on the **Kungsleden** and **Padjelantaleden** trails. There are several fantastic day walks from the village, including climbs to **Sjnjerak** (809m, three hours return), a steeper ascent of **Prinskullen** (749m, three hours return), and **Nammatj** (662m, two hours, but this hike requires taking a boat to the quay on the southern side of Tarraänto).

The best hiking in this area, at least for experienced and well-outfitted trekkers, is in **Sarek National Park** (☎ 0920-962 00). Sarek is full of sharp peaks and huge glaciers, and its largest valley, Rapadalen, is lush with birch and willow trees. The Kungsleden trail dips briefly into Sarek, at the south-eastern corner of the park. Trekking here is certainly not for the casual walker, and hikers must be prepared for very rugged conditions. Major trails are often washed out or in poor repair, and the extremes of terrain make for volatile weather conditions. There are no tourist facilities within the park, so be sure to check with an STF lodge or the National Park office before setting out. For more information on hiking in these regions see p48.

Sleeping & Eating

Jokkmokks Camping Center (☎ 123 70; camping center@jokkmokk.com; sites Skr120, d hostel rooms Skr300, cabins from Skr510) This is 3km southeast of town and is popular in summer.

Gula Villan (☎ 550 26; Stationsgatan; s/d from Skr150/225) This is the diminutive yellow guesthouse with the sign advertising 'rum' as you exit the train station; rooms are simple but adequate.

STF Vandrarhem Åsgård (☎ 559 77; asgard@jokkmokkhostel.com; Åsgatan 20; dm Skr120-160; ☞ yr-round) The STF hostel is a clean, comfortable place behind the tourist office, surrounded by green lawns and trees.

Hotell Gästis (☎ 100 12; Herrevägen 1; s/d from Skr700/900) This place has very pleasant rooms, although it doesn't look too promising from the outside. There's also a good restaurant here, with lunch specials and à la carte dinners.

There is an unexpected surprise at the park located near the tourist office: a caravan where you can actually buy authentic takeaway **Laotian food** (around Skr55 for lunch).

SAMI CHURCH VILLAGES

Lappstaden, in Arvidsjaur, is the best-preserved Sami church village and has been at its present location since the 1820s, although the first church was built nearby in 1607. Sami people and settlers stayed overnight in such villages during major religious festivals, when they had probably travelled a long way from home. The buildings in Lappstaden are in distinct areas – one for church cottages and settlers' stables, another for market traders' cottages and a third for Forest Lapps' tents and storehouses. Forest Lapps were Sami people who lived in forest regions – they didn't keep reindeer like the Mountain Lapps, but were hunters and also fisherfolk.

At the **Ájtte museum restaurant** (lunch specials Skr65-80) you can try unusual regional dishes, local fish or perhaps a reindeer sandwich.

Café Piano (☎ 104 00; Porjusvägen 4; dinner mains Skr80-100) This is another good choice, with a grand piano inside, a large garden seating area outside and an extensive menu that features pasta and wok meals (around Skr65 at lunch).

For self-caterers, there's a **Konsum supermarket** (Storgatan) in town.

Getting There & Away

Buses arrive and leave from the bus station on Klockarvägen. Buses 44 and 45 run twice daily to and from Gällivare (Skr97, three to six hours), and bus 45 goes to and from Arvidsjaur once a day (Skr146, two to three hours). Bus 94 runs to Kvikkjokk (Skr121, three hours) twice daily.

Inlandsbanan trains stop in Jokkmokk. For main-line trains, take bus 94 to Murjek via Vuollerim (Skr171, up to six times daily) or bus 44 bus to Boden and Luleå (Skr162). Another alternative is bus 36 to Älvsbyn via Bredsel (Skr130), where you can visit the amazing 82m Storforsen, Europe's greatest cataract falls (best May–June).

ARVIDSJAUR

☎ 0960 / pop 6948

The small settlement of Arvidsjaur, on Inlandsbanan, was established as a Sami marketplace. The **tourist office** (☎ 175 00; www.arvidsjaur.se/turism/; Östra Skolgatan 18C; ☞ 9.30-6pm summer,

8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri rest of yr) is behind the park by the main square, and can provide useful information for seeing the area. There are facilities such as banks and supermarkets on Storgatan, the main road through town.

Lappstaden (admission free; ☎ 10am-7pm), a well-preserved Sami church village, contains almost 100 buildings as well as forestry and reindeer-breeding concerns. Guided tours cost Skr25 and leave at 5pm (July only). From early July to early August, an old **steam train** makes return evening trips to Slagnäs on Friday, and Moskosel on Saturday. Also in summer is the opportunity for **white-water rafting** (adult/child Skr350/175) on the nearby Piteälven.

Arvidsjaur is bustling in winter, when test drivers from around Europe put cars through their paces in the tough weather conditions, and there are excellent cold-weather activities available, including dog-sledding. Inquire at the tourist office for more details of all activities.

Friendly, cosy **Lappugglans Turistviste** (☎ 124 13; Västra Skolgatan 9; per person Skr150) and the small, stylish **Rallaren** (☎ 070-682 32 84; Stationsgatan 4; per person Skr150; ☎ summer only), both near the train station, have excellent hostel accommodation.

Kaffestugan (☎ 126 00; Storgatan 21) is a popular café by the main square, with good daily lunch specials (Skr60), plus an assortment of cakes, sandwiches and light meals. There's also **Athena** (☎ 105 95; Storgatan 10; mains Skr65-90), offering pastas, salads and grill dishes.

The daily bus between Gällivare and Östersund (No 45) stops at the bus station

on Storgatan. Bus 200 runs daily between Skellefteå and Bodø (Norway) via Arvidsjaur. The Inlandsbanan train can take you north to Gällivare via Jokkmokk, or south to Mora via Östersund.

SORSELE

☎ 0952 / pop 2981

Sleepy Sorsele, on Inlandsbanan, has the small but sincere **Inlandsbanamuseet** (adult/child Skr20/free; ☎ summer) at the train station – a must for train enthusiasts. The adjoining **tourist office** (☎ 140 90; turist@vindelalven.se; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, noon-5pm Sat & Sun), at the Inlandsbanamuseet, has details of local activities, including fishing and canoe tours. Internet access is available (Skr10 per 10 minutes). Sorsele has all facilities, including a bank, supermarket and public library (with Internet access).

The local **Hembygdsgård** (☎ 1-8pm Jun-Aug) has a good café with home-made food. Also out this way is the **STF Vandrarhem** (☎ 100 48; dm Skr120, cabins per person Skr140), 500m west of the train station. Reception is at the nearby **camping ground** (☎ 101 24; sites Skr75, 4-bed cabins from Skr295; ☎), which has bikes and canoes for hire.

The Inlandsbanan train stops here, and bus 45 runs daily on the Gällivare–Jokkmokk–Arvidsjaur–Sorsele–Storuman–Östersund route.

TÄRNABY & AROUND

☎ 0954

A skiing capital in the Swedish lake district, Tärnaby, 125km northwest of Storuman on

the E12, has gorgeous views of the nearby lakes. The village has most facilities and a **tourist office** (☎ 104 50; www.tarnaby.se; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Fri & 10am-6pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun–mid-Aug, weekdays only rest of yr). The tourist office dispenses coffee and cakes, stamps, fish cards and snow-scooter licenses. It also organises various talks and tours in summer, including Sami culture evenings, fishing, hiking, and cave and glacier tours.

Mountain biking is a warm-weather activity growing in popularity in the region. There's a very popular winter **ski area** here, and many of Sweden's champion skiers hail from the area – ask at the tourist office if the planned museum dedicated to them and their achievements has opened. Take the time to hike to the top of **Laxfjället** (820m) for great views of the lakes.

Samegården (☎ 104 40; Tärnafors; adult/child Skr30/15; ☎ Mon-Fri summer), 5km east of the tourist office, has exhibits about the Sami and their lifestyle.

Hemavan, 18km north of Tärnaby, has a larger **ski area** and a summer **chairlift** (adult/child one way Skr65/50, return Skr75/60; ☎ 10am-5pm Jul-Aug), plus basic facilities. The southern entry to **Kungleden** (Sweden's finest hiking route) is here, but most people doing just this section start in Ammarnäs.

The **STF Vandrarhem Tärnaby/Åkerlundskagården** (☎ 300 02; dm Skr160-180, s/d from Skr320; ☎ Mar-May & mid-Jun–Sep) is a wonderful place, perched halfway up the hillside with killer views across the valley, comfortable bunks in cosy, rustic rooms, and modern facilities. There's a restaurant on the ground floor that serves meals, including a vast breakfast buffet for around Skr65.

The friendly **Hotell Sänninggården** (☎ 330 00; bjame@sanninggarden.com; B&B/full board per person from Skr395/695), 6km north of Hemavan, has good-value, cosy accommodation, and an acclaimed **restaurant** (lunch buffet Skr99, dinner mains Skr130-260) serving regional specialities like herb-fried reindeer in Madeira, and *ripa* baked in berry sauce. If you're out this way, it's well worth stopping in for a unique meal – the extensive menu includes well-prepared elk, game birds, Arctic char and even the occasional bear. There are vegetarian options for those uncomfortable with consuming the local wildlife, and the magnificent desserts will please everyone – try the delectable arctic raspberry and cloudberry parfait.

UMNÄS

☎ 0951

Slightly off the beaten trail is this quirky tourist 'village'. **Umnäs Skoterhotellet** (☎ 520 20; frihet.lappland@telia.com; dm Skr150, s/d Skr650/850) is a friendly place, about 6km off the scenic E12 road (also known as the Blå Vägen, or Blue Hwy), 64km northwest of Storuman. There's a hotel with bar and **restaurant** (meals Skr35 to Skr185), a hostel and self-contained cabins are available, plus there's the opportunity for some great activities in the vicinity – including guided or self-guided snowmobile safaris (best February to April). But the main attraction on the premises is the unique **snow scooter museum** (admission Skr40), which contains some 70 vehicles from the 1960s right up to the present, as well as a separate **museum** (admission Skr20) of local history.

The **Silent Way** (☎ 520 43; www.silent-way.com) is also based in Umnäs, near the hotel (and run by another family member). This company offers guided **dogsledding tours** from December to May, with various trips possible, from a half-day excursion to a 16-day safari. Appropriate cold-weather gear can be rented, and food and accommodation in cabins is included in the cost. These trips are extremely popular, so book well ahead. The website has comprehensive information, as well as options, schedules and prices.

Bus between Storuman and Tärnaby stop at Slussfors on the E12, about 8km from Umnäs.

STORUMAN

☎ 0951 / pop 6595

Storuman, on Inlandsbanan, has an interesting location at the southern end of the 56km-long lake with which it shares a name. The very scenic **Strandvägen** road links the centre with a series of islands, including **Luspholmen**, with a small outdoor museum. Follow the road Utsiktsvägen (across the E12 from the train station) for 1.5km to the viewpoint at **Utsikten**; sunsets over the lake are magnificent. Sweden's largest **wooden church** is at **Stensele**, about 3km from Storuman towards Umeå on the E12.

The **tourist office** (☎ 333 70; entreappland@swipnet.se; Järnvägsgatan 13; ☎ Jun-Aug, Mon-Fri rest of yr) is at Hotell Lusen, near the station, and the town has most facilities.

Hotell Lusen (☎ 333 80; luspenhotell@swipnet.se; hostel s/d from Skr200/300, hotel s/d Skr600/720) is a

SAMI CULTURE & TRADITIONS

Sami life was originally based on hunting and fishing, but, sometime during the 16th century, the majority of reindeer were domesticated and the hunting economy transformed into a nomadic herding economy. While reindeer still figure prominently in Sami life, only about 16% of the Sami people are still directly involved in reindeer herding and transport by reindeer sled, and only a handful of traditionalists continue to lead a truly nomadic lifestyle.

A major identifying element of Sami culture is the *joik* (or *yoik*). This is a rhythmic poem composed for a specific person to describe their innate nature, and is considered to be owned by the person it describes. Other traditional elements of the culture include the use of folk medicine, shamanism, artistic pursuits (especially woodcarving and silver smithing) and striving for ecological harmony.

The Sami national dress is the only genuine folk dress that's still in casual use in Sweden, and you'll readily see it on the streets of Jokkmokk, especially during the winter fair. Each district has its own distinct fashion, but all include a highly decorated and embroidered combination of red and blue felt shirts or frocks, trousers or skirts, and boots and hats. On special occasions, the women's dress is topped off with a crown of pearls and a garland of silk hair ribbons.

friendly place by the train station, offering accommodation to suit most budgets. The helpful tourist office is also here, and you can rent bikes for exploration for Skr60 per day.

Eating options in the village are basically limited to fast food. There's an ICA and a Konsum supermarket on the main drag (E12), both open daily.

Bus 45 runs every day on the Gällivare–Jokkmokk–Arvidsjaur–Sorsele–Storuman–Östersund route. Buses between Mo i Rana (Norway) and Umeå also run daily, via Storuman and Tärnaby, and the **Laplandspilen** (☎ 333 70) buses run overnight three times weekly from Hemavan to Stockholm, via Storuman. In summer, Inlandsbanan trains stop here.

FATMOMAKKE & AROUND

The southern areas of Lappland have some of the finest mountain scenery in Sweden,

particularly around the mountain **Marsfjället** (1590m); you can hike up and back from Fatmomakke, but it's a long day (28km, 10 hours). The trek through the mountains to the village **Kittelfjäll** (where the scenery is even more impressive), via the wilderness cabin **Blerikstugan**, is best over two days (32km).

The late-18th-century **Sami church village** at Fatmomakke has an exhibition, *kåtas* (huts) and other old buildings. Silver shamanistic Sami jewellery was found here in 1981.

Klimpfjäll is about 20km west from here, and **Saxnäs** – a small village set in a scenic spot between lakes, and considered a paradise for fishing folk – is about 25km east.

The journey from Fatmomakke into Jämtland, close to the Norwegian border, offers some stunning scenery (mountains, plateaus and small lakeside settlements), and is highly recommended – although it's only possible with your own transport.