

# Arctic Scandinavia Travel Routes



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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Making it to **Svalbard** (p324), one of the most impressive destinations on earth
- Enjoying a cocktail at the ultra-cool **Ice Hotel** near Kiruna (p309)
- Hiking in **Pallas-Ounastunturi National Park** (p327) or the **Kilpisjärvi** region (p328)
- Looking out over the turquoise seas and fabulous scenery of the **Lofoten islands** (p303)
- Sitting back and admiring the fantastic coastal scenery from the legendary **Hurtigruten steamer** (p298)



The starkly beautiful wilderness of the Scandinavian Arctic makes it a perfect place for the road trip of a lifetime. It's one of Europe's last great wilderness areas and a land of invigorating extremes, but at the same time it's much more accessible than other Arctic regions. A good network of roads, buses and ferries makes travel relatively easy, and the incredible beauty, sense of space and air of serenity that pervade the region are simply unforgettable.

Nature reigns supreme in northern Scandinavia: the scenic coastline, idyllic islands and dramatic fjords dotted with tiny fishing villages give way to majestic mountains, wild forests and the vast windswept stretch of the upland plateau, home to the Sami people, who have herded their reindeer in this area for centuries. Offshore, the Caribbean-coloured seas of Lofoten and the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard are truly an assault on the senses.

The far north of Scandinavia is a land set apart by climate as much as by culture. Long nights of bitter cold and dancing aurora yield to the stark blue skies and crunching snow beloved by skiers, dog-mushers, snowmobilers and ice-fishers. Spring gives way to a fleeting but intense spurt of summer, when you can hike some of Europe's largest and grandest national parks, play midnight golf or hole up in a ramshackle cottage by a lakeshore.

Throw in the towel at work and plan to cover the whole route given here, or bite off a small chunk and explore it in more detail. Dive from a sauna into the snow, sip cocktails in an ice hotel, hike the thousands of kilometres of trails, meander along the coast in search of your own little slice of heaven and enjoy Arctic Scandinavia at its best.

## GETTING AROUND

Although most of Arctic Scandinavia is accessible by bus and ferry, it will take you a minor eternity by public transport, as connections only run a couple of times a week on some sections and distances are large. Even for budget travellers, it's worth considering taking the odd flight, or only planning to cover part of the following itineraries. There's a maze of schedules for transport operators, and local tourist offices are invaluable for navigating the region.

### Air

The quickest way to get to the far north is by air. **SAS** ([www.scandinavian.net](http://www.scandinavian.net)) flies to a variety of destinations, including Alta, Bodø, Kirkenes, Kiruna, Narvik and Tromsø. **Braathens** ([www.braathens.no](http://www.braathens.no)) and **Widerøe** ([www.wideroe.no](http://www.wideroe.no)) fly to Alta, Bodø, Hammerfest, Kirkenes, Mo i Rana and Tromsø. **Norwegian Air** ([www.norwegian.no](http://www.norwegian.no)) flies to Alta, Bodø, Kirkenes, Narvik and Tromsø, and **Finnair** ([www.finnair.com](http://www.finnair.com)) has flights to Ivalo, Kemi, Kittilä and Rovaniemi. Swedish domestic carrier **Skyways** ([www.skyways.se](http://www.skyways.se)) flies to Luleå.

For the best ticket prices book online at least seven days in advance or consider buying an air pass. If you're under 25 it's worth

heading to the airport on the off-chance of getting a standby ticket.

### Boat

In Norway an extensive network of car ferries and express boats links the country's offshore islands, coastal towns and fjord districts. Most ferries on the road system accommodate vehicles, but express coastal services normally take only foot passengers and cyclists.

The legendary **Hurtigruten** ([www.hurtigruten.no](http://www.hurtigruten.no)) heads north from Bergen every night of the year, pulling into 33 ports on its six-day journey to Kirkenes, where it turns around and heads back south. The return journey takes 11 days and covers a distance of 2500 nautical miles. In agreeable weather, the fjord and mountain scenery along the way is nothing short of spectacular.

### Bus

Express buses follow most main highways across the far north, but they may not be frequent. Distances are long and costs can mount up. Generally, there's no price difference between express and regular buses, and discounts are normally available for students, seniors and children. Inter-Rail and ScanRail

## TO THE NORTH POLE

Getting to the North Pole from Scandinavia is probably the simplest route around, and a host of companies offer trips and tours. It's not possible to do this trip independently, but you should have no problem finding a package to suit your interests. Many companies can also arrange tailor-made trips if you have special requirements. The jumping-off point of Svalbard (see p324) is not only the world's most accessible bit of the polar north but also one of the most spectacular places imaginable.

For a sedate passage to the Pole, Amazing Cruises & Travel (see p65) offers two-week cruises to the North Pole from Helsinki. If you fancy a simple champagne flight, plenty of companies will help arrange this. Many also offer tours by dogsled, or ski-the-last-degree trips, where you can ski the last geographic degree to the Pole, a trip of six to 10 days. Contact Global Expedition Adventures (p66), Polar Circle Expeditions (p68) or Arcturus Expeditions (p68) for more details.

For extreme marathon runners, **North Pole Marathon** ([www.npmarathon.com](http://www.npmarathon.com)) organises polar running adventures and provides athletes with return flights from Svalbard, heated tents and food while at the Pole, entry to the official North Pole Marathon, and helicopter flights to the exact Geographic North Pole (US\$10,000).

passholders get a 50% discount on most long-distance bus routes. All companies offer bus passes, and these generally work out cheaper than buying individual tickets if you're planning plenty of bus travel.

For further information on routes, timetables, fares and passes, contact the national bus companies:

**Connex** ([www.connex.se](http://www.connex.se), not in English) For routes in Norway and Sweden.

**Express Bus** ([www.expressbus.com](http://www.expressbus.com)) Finnish routes.

**Länstrafiken** ([www.ltnbd.se](http://www.ltnbd.se), in Swedish) For routes in northern Sweden.

**Matkahuolto** ([www.matkahuolto.fi](http://www.matkahuolto.fi)) Finnish routes.

**Nor-Way Bussekspress** ([www.nor-way.no](http://www.nor-way.no)) For Norwegian routes.

## Car & Motorcycle

Driving around the far north is one of the best ways to see the region without being confined by irregular timetables and limited public transport on more obscure routes. Expensive car rental is available in all major towns in the far north, but it's generally cheaper to book through an overseas company before you leave home.

Snow and ice can make driving hazardous from September until as late as June, and it's wise to have at least radial snow tyres and, preferably, studded tyres. Petrol is expensive, and in the far north you'd be advised to fill up whenever you can, as stations can be separated by long distances. Rambling reindeer and moose present road hazards, and all incidents involving large animals should be reported to the police.

On long journeys it's a good idea to bring spare tyres and plenty of food and water, as supply posts are limited in some areas.

## Train

In Norway **NSB** (Norges Statsbaner or Norwegian State Railways; [www.nsb.no](http://www.nsb.no), in Norwegian) trains run as far north as Bodø; for destinations further north, there are buses and boats.

There are several dozen train operators in Sweden, although the national network of **Sveriges Järnväg** ([www.sj.se](http://www.sj.se)) covers all the main lines. **Connex** ([www.connex.se](http://www.connex.se), not in English) operates overnight trains to the far north. In summer, most visitors want to take the renowned **Inlandsbanan** ([www.inlandsbanan.se](http://www.inlandsbanan.se)) which travels 1000km from Mora to Gällivare via Östersund, Storuman, Arvidsjaur and Jokkmokk, offering a scenic but slow journey north.

The main rail route into the Finnish far north is the Pohjanmaa line, which connects Helsinki with Oulu and continues to Kemijärvi, via Rovaniemi. It's quicker and cheaper than the bus. For more information, visit **VR Ltd Finnish Railways** ([www.vr.fi](http://www.vr.fi)).

# ITINERARY 1: THE SCANDINAVIAN NORTH

A winding loop from Mo i Rana (Norway), through the fabulous Lofoten Islands, and the best of Arctic Scandinavia's national parks via the Russian frontier, traditional Sami villages and the northernmost tip of Scandinavia.

This route takes you across the top of Scandinavia in a long, winding journey that features the most spectacular scenery, cultural attractions and pristine wilderness Arctic Scandinavia has to offer. Starting in Norway, it takes in the incredible off-shore islands, dramatic fjords and tiny fishing villages of the coast before heading inland

to cross into Sweden, the Abisko National Park and some wonderful hiking opportunities. In Finland the route picks up some strong Sami culture and splendid scenery before crossing back into Norway for a trip to Europe's northernmost tip, and then south through the cosmopolitan towns of Alta and Tromsø.

#### FAST FACTS

- **Access for independent travellers** Excellent
- **Best time to travel** May to September
- **Difficulty level** Easy to moderate
- **Don't forget** Camera, film, binoculars, insect repellent, head-net; if driving, spare tyres, basic tools, plenty of food and water, blankets, and first-aid kit
- **Don't miss** The dramatic peaks of the Lofoten islands, the Easter Festival at Kautokeino
- **Gateway city** Mo i Rana, Norway
- **Length of route** Approximately 3600km
- **Modes of travel** Car, bus, or a combination of train, bus, boat and air
- **Recommended map** Reise Know-How Verlag *Northern Scandinavia* 1:875,000
- **Time needed** Three weeks to a lifetime



NORWEGIAN SEA



This mammoth route could take a lifetime to do it justice, and you may well want to choose a shorter section to cover. Travelling by public transport can be slow, and it's well worth considering taking some flights or hiring a car if you plan on covering large distances.

The scenery is magnificent and the opportunities for outdoor activities unrivalled elsewhere in Europe. For a traveller looking for a taste of the Arctic, this is one of the most stunning and accessible trips around.

#### MO I RANA

pop 17,500

Said to be Norway's friendliest town, Mo i Rana is the third largest city in the north, and although it's not the most fascinating place in itself it's a good gateway to the spruce forests, caves and glaciers of the Arctic Circle region. You'll find information at the **Polarsirkelen Reiseliv** (☎ 75 13 92 00; cinfo@Arctic-circle.no; Ole Tobias Olsensgate 3; ☹; 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat & 1-7pm Sun mid-Jun-Aug, 10am-3pm Mon-Fri Sep-mid-Jun).

#### Sights & Activities

Start at the Rana Museum, which has two sections: a **Natural History Museum** (☎ 75 14 61 80; Moholmen 20; admission Nkr15; ☹; 10am-3pm Mon-Fri & 10am-2pm Sat year-round, plus 6-9pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug), which concentrates on the geology, ecology, flora and wildlife of the Arctic Circle region, and the **Museum of Cultural History** (☎ 75 14 61 70; Fridtjof Nansensgata 22; admission Nkr15; ☹; 10am-3pm Mon-Fri & 10am-2pm Sat year-round, plus 6-9pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug), where you'll find exhibits on the local southern Sami culture and the history of Nordic settlement in southern Nordland.

The limestone-and-marble country northwest of Mo i Rana is riddled with caves and sinkholes. The most accessible cave to visit is **Grønligrotta** (☎ 75 13 25 86; Grønli; adult/child Nkr80/40; ☹; 10am-7pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug), where a 30-minute tour takes you along an underground river, through a rock maze and past a granite block torn off by a glacier.

About 1km closer to town, the trip through **Setergrotta** (☎ 75 16 23 50; Røvassdalen; tours adult/child Nkr175/110; ☹; 11.30am Jun-Aug) is considerably more adventurous. Headlamps, hard hats and coveralls are provided to get you through a couple of extremely tight squeezes and a thrilling shuffle between rock walls while straddling a 15m gorge.

The caves are about 22km from town and there's no public transport.

Mo i Rana is also a convenient base for exploring the **Svartisen glacier** (see p28), the largest ice sheet in northern Scandinavia. Tongues of ice spread down from the ice sheet to form valley glaciers and can be visited in several spots, but the best way to view the massive ice sheet is to take a trip on Lake Svartivatnet. Boats chug along the lake at least four times daily from late June to August. Ask at the tourist office for details. The ice sheet is 33km north of town.

#### Sleeping & Eating

**Anna's Camping** (☎ 75 14 80 74; E6 Røssvoll; caravan/cabin Nkr70/115) About 12km out of town toward the glacier, this riverside camp site has caravans and cabins with shared kitchen and bathroom facilities.

**Fammy Leilighetshotell** (☎ 75 15 19 99; hotel@fammy.no; Ole Tobias Olsens gate 4; s/d Nkr545/695; ☹ ☹) Rooms at this bright, modern place are fairly functional, and service is casual, but they're good value and have mini-kitchens for self-caterers.

**Golden Rainbow Hotel Holmen** (☎ 75 15 14 44; holmenho@online.no; TV Westens gate 2; s/d Nkr685/890; ☹ ☹; wheelchair access) Don't be put off by the drab exterior – rooms here are pretty plush and come with minibars and satellite TV. The restaurant (mains Nkr80 to Nkr225) serves a good choice of traditional Norwegian food and has some vegetarian specials.

**Abelone Mat og Vinstue** (☎ 75 15 38 88; OT Olsensgt 6; mains Nkr70-180) This traditional Norwegian restaurant is a great option if you're travelling with children, and also offers a serious à la carte menu and a pleasant outside dining area.

A Bunnpris supermarket is opposite the tourist office.

#### Getting There & Away

Mo i Rana's Røssvoll airport, 14km from town, is served by Widerøe and Braathens. You'll get excellent views of the Svartisen icecaps if you arrive by air.

Most visitors arrive at Mo i Rana's unique octagonal train station on one of the two or three daily trains from Trondheim (Nkr625, 6¾ hours) or Bodø (Nkr340, three hours). To go to Bodø by bus you'll have to change at Fauske.

## ARCTIC CIRCLE (POLARSIRKELEN)

Along the Arctic Hwy between Mo i Rana and Fauske, the Arctic Circle is made into quite a big deal, with exhibits on Arctic phenomena. The bleak moors on this section of the road are more a result of the 600m altitude than the latitude, however, and northbound travellers quickly descend into the relatively lush, well-vegetated environment that's more typical of northern mainland Norway. At the Polarsirkelsentert, visitors can pay Nkr55 to learn what the Arctic Circle is, peruse a collection of stuffed wildlife specimens and watch an audiovisual presentation on the Arctic regions.

## BODØ

pop 42,000

Although set against a wonderful mountain backdrop, Bodø itself has the underwhelming appearance of a town flattened during WWII air raids and completely rebuilt in the not-so-glittering '50s. However, it is the terminus of the northern railway line and a jumping-off point for Lofoten.

## Information

There are several banks with ATMs in the central area.

**Post office** (Havnegata 9)

**Tourist office** (☎ 75 54 80 00; www.visitbodø.com;

Sjøgata 3; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat & noon-8pm Sun Jun-Aug, shorter hrs rest of year) Internet access is available here for Nkr1 per minute.

## Sights & Activities

The **Nordlandsmuseet** (☎ 75 52 16 40; Prinsens gate 116; adult/student Nkr30/15; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon-Fri & noon-3pm Sat & Sun Sep-Apr, shorter hrs May-Aug) covers Nordland history in one of Bodø's oldest buildings. There's also a modern **cathedral** (Kongens gate; ☎ 9am-2.30pm Mon-Fri mid-Jun-Aug).

The **aviation museum** (☎ 75 50 78 50; Olav V gate; adult/student Nkr75/50; ☎ 10am-7pm Sun-Fri & 10am-5pm Sat mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 10am-4pm Mon-Fri & 11am-5pm Sat & Sun mid-Aug-mid-Jun), 2km southeast of town, shouldn't be missed if you have even a passing interest in flight and aviation history. Displays include some scary simulations of the jet-fighter flying. About 1km southeast of the aviation museum there's the small **Bodin Kirke** (Gamleriksvei68; ☎ 10am-3pm Mon-Fri late Jun-mid-Aug), a little onion-domed stone church dating from around 1240.

The lovely 19th-century trading station **Kjerringøy**, 40km north of Bodø, lies on a sleepy peninsula beside luminescent turquoise seas with a backdrop of soaring granite peaks. Most of the timber-built historic district has been preserved as an open-air museum. Buses from Bodø (1½ hours, Nkr65) leave on summer weekdays; fares include the Festvåg-Misten ferry.

The **Saltstraumen Strait** connects Saltenfjord and Skjerstadfjord, where the tides cause one fjord to drain into the other and create a swirling, churning, 20-knot watery chaos that shifts 400 million cubic metres of water every six hours. The maelstrom can be viewed from the Saltstraumbua bridge.

## Sleeping

**Bodø HI Hostel & Bodø Gjestegård** (guesthouse ☎ 75 52 04 02, hostel ☎ 75 52 11 22; bodø.hostel@vandrerhjem.no; Storgata 90; dm/s/d Nkr150/250/350) This combined hostel and guesthouse uses two buildings. The hostel is newly remodelled and clean, while the simple guesthouse provides homey rooms with separate bath. Breakfast costs Nkr60.

**Norrøna Hotel** (☎ 75 52 55 50; norrøna.hotell@radissonsas.com; Storgata 4B; s/d winter Nkr690/860, summer Nkr490/630; ☎ ☎) This good-value hotel, opposite the bus station, has comfortable rooms with private bath and especially affordable summer (July and August) prices.

**Nordlys Hotel** (☎ 75 53 19 00; nordlys@rainbow-hotels.no; Moloveien 14; s Nkr495-1120, d Nkr695-1400; ☎ ☎) Scandinavian design touches run throughout this swish hotel, and the harbourside rooms provide great views.

Rooms in private homes (from Nkr200 per person) can be booked through the tourist office.

## Eating

**Kafé Kafka** (☎ 75 52 35 50; Sandgata 5b; sandwiches Nkr68-89; ☎ from 11am Mon-Sat, 3pm-midnight Sun) This cool-kid café-bar serves marinated-vegetable sandwiches, and makes a good place to read. There's live music on some weekends.

**Min Plass** (☎ 75 52 26 88; Sjøgata 12; dishes Nkr69-124; ☎ 11am-2am Mon-Thu, 11am-3am Fri & Sat, 2pm-midnight Sun) This popular place serves bar snacks such as olives and fish and chips (Nkr49) in addition to burgers, salads and grilled meat. There's a good late-night scene. A freaky trinket-filled plastic man guards the route to the WC.

**Løvdal's** (☎ 75 52 02 61; Tollbugata 9; dishes Nkr35-115; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat) You'll find this place, which has big windows offering a view over the water, above a fisherman's outfitter. It bustles at lunchtime, offering daily specials of traditional Norwegian grub.

## Getting There & Around

The airport, 2km away, is served by SAS, Braathens, Widerøe and Norwegian Air. Local buses (Nkr22) marked Sentrumsrunden bring you to town. A taxi costs about Nkr80.

Bodø is the northern terminus of the Norwegian rail network. There is service to Trondheim (Nkr861, 10 hours, three daily). If you're continuing north by bus, be sure to get off 40 minutes before Bodø at Fauske, where the two daily express buses to Narvik (Nkr467, five hours) connect with the train.

The *Hurtigruten* coastal steamer makes its way to and from Lofoten, as do car ferries and express boats. See the tourist office for schedules.

The tourist office rents bikes for Nkr60 per day, plus a deposit. Guests can rent bikes from Norrøna Hostel for Nkr50.

## LOFOTEN

The rugged beauty of the Lofoten islands is a highlight of any trip to Arctic Scandinavia. Spectacular glacier-carved mountains soar straight out of the sea, sheer cliffs loom above strikingly picturesque fishing villages, sheltered bays and fjords line the coast, and verdant farmland and sheep pasture fill the gaps in between.

Fishing has dominated the Lofoten economy for years, and although fish stocks have dwindled greatly in recent times the area is still Norway's prime winter fishing ground. Cod is hung out to dry on ubiquitous wooden racks in early summer, shoals of sperm and killer whales ply the waters, and the world's biggest cold-water coral reef lies just offshore, 300m below the surface.

Lofoten is the kind of place you'll be reluctant to leave, not only because of the fabulous scenery but also because of the luxurious accommodation. Many of the fishing community's *rorbuer* (winter shanties) and *sjøhus* (former fishermen's bunkhouses) have been converted into tourist accommodation and provide some of Norway's most atmospheric places to stay.

The four main islands of Austvågøy, Vestvågøy, Flakstadøy and Moskenesøy are all linked by bridge or tunnel, with buses running the entire length of the Lofoten road (E10). This itinerary runs south to north. If you take a ferry from Bodø you'll arrive at Moskenes near Å; take the *Hurtigruten* and you'll arrive in Stamsund.

Tourist information is available at www.lofoten-tourist.no and www.lofoten-info.no.

## Å

Å is a wonderfully atmospheric place to start your journey through Lofoten. Red-painted *rorbuer* line the shore of this preserved fishing village, many of them sticking out into the sea, perched on grim rocks connected by wooden footbridges. Racks of drying cod lie nearly everywhere, and picture-postcard scenes occur at almost every turn. In summer visitors enliven the tiny place, while in winter it's stark, haunting and beautiful.

Set in a 1920 cod plant, the **Tørrfiskmuseum** (Stockfish Museum; ☎ 76 09 12 11; adult/student Nkr40/25; ☎ 10am-5pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 11am-5pm Mon-Fri rest of Jun & Aug, otherwise by appointment) details the history of the stockfish industry, taking in every step from catching to cooking. Steinar Larson, the gregarious operator, has long family ties to Å, and explains everything about cod (and Å) in fantastic, excited detail.

Many of Å's 19th-century buildings are set aside as the **Norwegian Fishing Village Museum** (☎ 76 09 14 88; admission Nkr40; ☎ 10am-5pm late Jun-late Aug, 11am-3pm Mon-Fri late Aug-late Jun), complete with old boats and boathouses, an 1844 bakery, Europe's oldest cod-liver oil factory, and traditional storehouses.

The camp site at the end of the village has a good hillside view of Værøy island (see p304), which lies on the other side of **Moskenesstraumen**, the swirling maelstrom that inspired the fictional tales by, among others, Jules Verne and Edgar Allan Poe. Just south of Å, you'll find the basic **Moskenesstrømmen Camping** (☎ 76 09 13 44; tent sites from Nkr60, huts Nkr300-500; ☎).

**Å HI Hostel** (☎ 76 09 11 21; www.lofoten-rorbu.com; dm Nkr175, rorbuer Nkr800-1550; ☎) offers accommodation in some of the museum's historic seaside buildings. Breakfast is Nkr60 extra. The inviting **Å-Hamna Rorbuer** (☎ 76 09 12 11; aa-hamna@lofoten-info.no; dm/d Nkr100/350, rorbuer Nkr500-950; ☎), also at the museum, has pleasant rooms, a pretty communal space in a restored 1860s

home, and cosy *rorbuer*, usually with magnificent views, containing four to eight beds each. Off season you can get the best *rorbuer* for around Nkr350, firewood included.

Food choices are limited. The only restaurant is the over-water **Brygga** (☎ 76 09 11 21; mains Nkr115-200), which – predictably – serves good fish. It also operates as the village bar. You can also buy fresh fish from local fishers and pick up other supplies at the small food shop behind the hostel office.

#### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Nordtrafikk runs up to three daily buses from Å to Leknes (Nkr198, 1½ hours), Svølvar (Nkr178, 3¼ hours) and Sortland (Nkr320, 5¼ hours).

**Ofotens og Vesteraalens Dampskibsselskab** (OVDS; ☎ 76 96 76 00; www.ovds.no) runs car ferries from Bodø to Moskenes, 5km north of Å. The trip takes four hours, costs Nkr132 for a passenger and Nkr477 for a car, and

operates up to five times daily from 28 June to 11 August (otherwise, it runs once or twice daily except Saturday). Some of these ferries operate via Værøy and Røst.

#### Reine & Hamnøy

The delightful village of Reine, on the island of Moskenesøy, is another great first-night option if you're straight off the ferry from Bodø. Situated on a calm turquoise bay backed by ranks of mountain cliffs and pinnacles, it has an almost fairytales setting, and it's easy to see why the village has been voted the most scenic place in all of Norway. All buses between Å and Leknes stop in Reine.

Ferries travel from Reine to Vindstad (Nkr21, 40 minutes) through the scenic Reinefjord. From Vindstad, it's a one-hour hike over a ridge to the abandoned settlement of Bunes on the other side of the island, with a magnificent beach, vast quantities of driftwood and the 610m-high

cliff of Helvetestind. Every weekday except Tuesday you can take a morning ferry from Reine and then catch an afternoon ferry back – call ☎ 76 09 12 78 or ☎ 94 89 43 05 for the current schedule.

The quiet and scenic little fishing islet of Hamnøy, 4.5km north of central Reine, has the pretty **Eliassan Rorbuer** (☎ 76 09 23 05; rorbuer@online.no; Hamnøy; 2-/4-person rorbuer Nkr550/750; **P**), right on the water. Linen costs Nkr80 extra. The highly regarded **Hamnøy Mat og Vinbu** (☎ 76 09 21 45; Hamnøy; mains Nkr130-165; ☹ closed winter) restaurant serves stellar local specialities, including *bacalao* (dried and salted cod) and cod tongues. There's a deck with picnic tables and a cosy dining room.

There's a Coop supermarket in Reine.

#### Stamsund

pop 1000

The traditional fishing village of Stamsund makes a fine destination largely because of its dockside hostel, a magnet for travellers, who sometimes stay for weeks on end. Here, as elsewhere on Lofoten, highlights include hiking, fishing and feeling overwhelmed. A popular town activity is to stare at the *Hurtigruten's* approach.

The wonderful old beach house **Justad HI Hostel/Rorbuer** (☎ 76 08 93 34; fax 76 08 97 39; dm/s/d Nkr115/250/300, cabins Nkr600-800; ☹ mid-Dec–mid-Oct; **P**), 1km from the centre, is a haven for independent travellers and very difficult to leave. Rowing-boat rental is free, and if the aurora borealis is out, the host might pound on your door to let you know.

The village centre contains a bakery and the fine Skæbrygga bar and restaurant (fishy mains are Nkr150 to Nkr175). A Joker supermarket, post office and bus stop are a couple of minutes uphill from the hostel, and there's a Hansen bakery by the main road at the southern end of the village.

The *Hurtigruten* coastal steamer stops en route between Bodø (Nkr325) and Svølvar (Nkr116). From 20 August to 24 June, buses from Leknes to Stamsund (Nkr29, 25 minutes) run up to eight times daily, less often on Saturday and Sunday, with the last bus departing from Leknes at 8.50pm.

#### Henningsvær

pop 500

Henningsvær's nickname, 'The Venice of Lofoten', is a tad overblown, but few people

would disagree that this bohemian enclave and active fishing village is the brightest and trendiest place in the archipelago. The outdoor seating at the waterside bars and restaurants is ideal for observing the lively scene, especially at weekends. There's also a couple of **art galleries** and a climbing school, **Nord Norske Klatreskole** (☎ 76 07 49 11; www.nordnorsk.klatreskole.no, in Norwegian; N-8330 Henningsvær), which offers a wide range of technical climbing, kayaking and skiing courses all around Arctic Norway. If you want to tackle Svølvargeita or any other Lofoten peak, climbing with an experienced guide, including equipment, costs Nkr900/1000 per day for one/two people.

Accommodation at the climbing school's **Den Siste Viking** (☎ 76 07 49 11; Misværveien 10; dm Nkr175) crosses a Lofoten *rorbu* with an English pub and a Himalayan trekkers' lodge. Its **Klatrefeften** (☹ 11am-1am) has a small selection of homemade light meals (Nkr75 to Nkr130) and snacks, as well as coffee and desserts.

Buses shuttle from Henningsvær to Svølvar (Nkr39, 35 minutes) and Kabelvåg (Nkr36, 25 minutes) two to eight times daily.

#### Lofotr Vikingmuseum

This 83m-long chieftain's house, Norway's largest Viking building, has been excavated at Borg, near the centre of Vestvågøy. The site's **Lofotr Vikingmuseum** (☎ 76 08 49 00; adult/student/child Nkr90/70/45; ☹ 10am-7pm mid-May–Aug, 1-3pm Fri Sep-Apr) offers an insight into life in Viking times, complete with a scale-model reconstruction of the building, guides in Viking costume and a replica Viking ship, which you can row at 2pm (Nkr20).

#### Kabelvåg

Kabelvåg presents a more intimate face than its larger neighbour, Svølvar. A few old timber buildings remain, and the small town square wraps around the harbour and has an informal outdoor market. The road into the village passes Norway's second-largest **wooden church**. Built a century ago to minister to the influx of seasonal fisherfolk, the church has 1200 seats – far more than are needed for the village's current population.

Behind the old prison, a trail leads uphill to the **statue of King Øystein**, who in 1120 ordered the first *rorbu* to be built to house fishermen who had been sleeping under their overturned rowing boats. This was not just a touch of kindness, as the tax on the

#### SIDE TRIP: VÆRØY & RØST

Lofoten's southern islands of Værøy and Røst have some of the finest bird-watching in Norway, with large colonies of fulmars, guillemots, kittiwakes and terns. There are puffins as well, but the population has dropped by more than 50% in the past decade as a result of dwindling stocks of herring, the main food source for puffin chicks. Although Værøy is mainly high and rugged and Røst is flat as a pancake, both islands offer good hiking, and you'll also find a rare measure of solitude here, considering how well toured Lofoten generally is.

Craggy Værøy has only 775 people, but 100,000 nesting sea birds. Hiking trails take in some of the more spectacular sea-bird rookeries. The main trail goes along the west coast, beginning about 300m past the island airstrip, and continues south all the way to the virtually deserted fishing village of Mostad. This 10km hike makes for a full day's outing and is not too strenuous, but it is exposed to the elements, so it's best done in fair weather. Other bird-watching outings, including boat tours, can be arranged through the hostel.

Røst, south of Værøy, enjoys one of the mildest climates in northern Norway, thanks to its location in the middle of the Gulf Stream. Access to the best bird-watching requires a boat, as the largest rookeries are on offshore islands. **Kårøy Sjøhus** (☎ 76 09 62 38) can arrange all-day boat trips (Nkr125) that cruise past major sea-bird colonies and stop at an 1887 lighthouse and a vista point. En route it's common to see seals, and there are occasional sightings of orcas (killer whales). Røst itself is flat and, other than the boat trip, there's not much to do.

Atmospheric and authentic *rorbu* accommodation is available at **Værøy HI Hostel** (☎ 76 09 53 75; vaeroy.hostel@vandrerhjem.no; dm/d Nkr150/275; ☹ May–mid-Sep), about an hour's walk north of the ferry landing. A bus can pick you up at the dock. Værøy's only nightlife option, **Kornelius Kro** (☎ 76 09 52 99; kom-kro@online.no; Sørland; r Nkr350-700), also has a restaurant, a pub and a few simple but clean cottages out the back.

From 29 June to 12 August there's at least one ferry daily between Bodø and Værøy (Nkr121, four to six hours) and six days a week between Moskenes and Værøy (Nkr53, 1½ hours). There's a boat service from Værøy to Røst (Nkr65, two hours, five days a week) and from Røst to Bodø (Nkr145, 4¼ hours, once or twice daily). Sailing durations given are for direct ferries, but note that not every boat is direct. If your trip begins and ends in Bodø, ask about discounted return fares. Detailed schedules are available at boat terminals and tourist offices.

exported dried fish was the main source of the king's revenue.

Some of these original *rorbuer* have been excavated as part of the **Lofotmuseet** (☎ 76 06 97 90; www.lofotmuseet.no; Storvågan; adult/student Nkr45/35; ☎ 9am-6pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 9am-3pm mid-Aug-mid-Jun), a regional history museum on the site of the first town in the polar regions.

Nearby, the seafront **Lofoten Aquarium** (☎ 76 07 86 65; Storvågan; adult/student/child Nkr80/60/40; ☎ 10am-7pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 11am-3pm mid-Aug-Nov & Feb-mid-Jun) shows you some of the faces that made Lofoten great, including the heroic cod and some harbour seals in an outdoor tank. You can eat their relatives (the cod, not the seals) in the museum café.

**Ørsvågvar Camping** (☎ 76 07 81 80; www.orsvag.no, in Norwegian; Ørsvågvar; tent sites Nkr100, cabins Nkr300-940; (P)), located 3km and two inlets west of Kabelvåg, has basic cabins. The **Kabelvåg HI Hostel** (☎ 76 06 98 98; kabelvaag.hostel@vandrerhjem.no; dm/s/d Nkr245/405/605; ☎ Jun-mid-Aug; (P)) is at a school 10 minutes north of the village centre; breakfast is included. The hostel has a cafeteria with sporadic hours, and the charming fish, sandwich and pizza pub **Præstenbrygga** (☎ 76 07 80 60; Torget; mains Nkr35-140; ☎ from 11am), affiliated with an outdoor school for college types and other students, is in the village centre.

You can walk the 5km to Svolvær or catch one of the roughly hourly buses (Nkr18, 10 minutes).

## Svolvær

pop 4100

By Lofoten standards the main port town of Svolvær is busy and modern. On the square facing the harbour you'll find a couple of banks, a taxi stand and the helpful regional tourist office, **Destination Lofoten** (☎ 76 06 98 00; Torget; ☎ 9am-9.30pm Mon-Fri & 9am-8pm Sat, 10am-9.30pm Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hrs rest of year).

Daredevils, or just plain crazy mountaineers, like to scale **Svolværgaitea** (The Svolvær Goat), a distinctive two-pronged peak visible from the harbour, and then jump the 1.5m from one horn to the other – a graveyard at the bottom awaits those who miss. For phenomenal views, hikers can ascend the steep path to the base of the Goat and up the slopes behind it. There's also a rough route from the Goat over to the extraordinary **Devil's Gate**; ask the tourist office for details.

A fun trip from Svolvær is a boat trip into the spectacularly steep and narrow **Trollfjord**. Tours run five times daily between about 10 June and 20 August, and cost Nkr300 per person; the tourist office has details.

For 83km of breathtaking cycling, take the Narvik ferry to Holandshamn and make your way back to Svolvær along the **Kaiser Route**. Along the way, lonely shore, jagged mountains and abandoned farms will be your constant companions. Unlike trips to the west side of Lofoten, this trip takes in parts of the islands largely undiscovered by tourists. A long stretch runs parallel to the **Trollfjord**. The Danish site www.digermulen.de outlines the journey (click on Kaiserroute), and provides a glimpse of the scenery. Do your planning at the tourist office, where you can pick up the handy *Sykkel Guide* (Nkr120), containing detailed topographic maps.

The tourist office can also help you book world-class fishing trips (Nkr400) in the bountiful waters.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Svolvær Sjøhuscamping** (☎ 76 07 03 36; www.svolver-sjohuscamp.no; Parkgata 12; d per person Nkr390) This rustic red beach house has a dockside location: turn right onto the first road past the library, and it's a five-minute walk east of the harbour.

**Rica Hotel Svolvær** (☎ 76 07 22 22; rica.hotel.svolvar@rica.no; Lamholmen; s Nkr795-1345, d Nkr995-1345; (P) ☎) This flamboyant contemporary hotel juts right out over the water and combines modern comforts with nifty *rorbu* styling. The hotel has even cut a hole in the floor of one suite to accommodate jig fishing.

**Bacalao** (☎ 76 07 94 00; Kirkegata; mains Nkr70-125; ☎ 10.30am-1am Mon-Thu, 10am-2.30am Fri & Sat, noon-1am Sun) A hangout for fishers and students, this large, minimalist café in a room feels like a retrofitted garage, and dishes up cakes, salads, club sandwiches and reindeer with pasta.

**Kjøkkenet** (☎ 76 06 84 80; Lamholmen; small dishes Nkr90-95, mains Nkr225-250) Down on the harbour-side, this restaurant looks like an old-time Scandinavian kitchen (it serves the traditional staple: fish) and has a bar made from a WWII Polish troop ship lifeboat. Whale tartar anyone?

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Svolvær has a small airport where you can catch Widerøe flights to Bodø.

Buses to and from Vesterålen (below) travel between Svolvær and Sortland (Nkr136, 2½ hours) three to four times daily, crossing the dramatically scenic waters of the Fiskebøl-Melbu ferry (Nkr68 for car and driver). Buses to Leknes (Nkr98, 1½ hours), with connections to Å (Nkr178, 3½ hours), leave Svolvær four to six times daily. The Narvik-Lofoten Ekspresen runs between Svolvær and Narvik (Nkr436, eight to 9¼ hours, one to two daily).

Express boats ply the waters between Svolvær and Bodø (Nkr246, 3½ hours), and Svolvær and Narvik (Nkr350, 3½ hours), daily except Saturday (but there's no Monday sailing from Svolvær to Narvik).

Svolvær is also a stop for the *Hurtigruten* coastal steamer.

## VESTERÅLEN

The islands of Vesterålen aren't quite as dramatic as those of Lofoten, but they're still very attractive to visitors. For tourist information, consult **Vesterålen Reiseliv** (☎ 76 11 14 80; Kjøpmannsgata 2, Sortland).

Vesterålen is connected by ferry from Fiskebøl on Austvågøy (Lofoten) to **Melbu** on Hadseløya. Melbu has a couple of **museums** and a famous **music festival**, featuring classical, jazz and blues, every July. The other main town, **Stokmarknes**, is a quiet market community best known as the birthplace of the *Hurtigruten* coastal steamer.

**Nyksund** (www.nyksund-info.com), on Langøya, is a former abandoned fishing village that's now re-emerging as an artists' colony. From the crumbling and collapsing old structures to the faithfully renovated commercial buildings, every scene is a photo opportunity, and the lively youthful atmosphere belies the fact that only recently Nyksund was considered a ghost village. There's a great walk over the headland from Nyksund to Stø (three hours return), at the northernmost tip of Langøya. Ask the tourist office for details of **whale-watching tours** from Stø.

**Andenes**, on Andøy, seems a long way from anywhere, but there's whale-watching, a whale centre, a natural history centre, a lighthouse and a couple of museums. **Whale Safari** (☎ 76 11 56 00; www.whalesafari.no) runs popular three-to five-hour whale-watching cruises from the whale centre between late May and mid-September. Trips depart at least once daily (at 10.30am) and cost Nkr695. Sightings of

sperm whales are guaranteed, or your next trip is free. Dress warmly.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Holmvik Brygge** (☎ 76 13 47 96; www.nyksund.com; s/d Nkr250/350) In Nyksund, this cosy place offers irregular rooms done up like those in an old fisherman's house. The facilities are shared.

**Andenes HI Hostel** (☎ 76 14 28 50; andenes.hostel@vandrerhjem.no; Havnegata 31, Andenes; dm/s/d Nkr150/215/325; ☎ Jun-Aug; (P)) This timber-built hostel, which includes the Lankanholmen Sjøhus, is a wonderful old building by the sea; breakfast is Nkr60 extra.

**Den Gamle Fyrmesterbolig** (☎ 76 14 10 27; Richard Withs gate 11, Andenes; s Nkr250-350, d Nkr300-400; (P)) The rooms here in the charming lighthouse-keeper's cottage are another great option.

A bakery and an informal café can be found at the Andenes whale centre, while the restaurant at the Norlandia Hotel serves a good Arctic menu.

## Getting There & Away

Sortland is the main transport hub in Vesterålen. Both Sortland and Stokmarknes are stops for the *Hurtigruten* coastal steamer. Buses between Melbu and Stokmarknes (Nkr45, 45 minutes) run several times daily on weekdays and twice daily at weekends. Bus No 8 runs between Sortland and Svolvær (Nkr136, 2½ hours) three to four times daily. Buses to Leknes (Nkr98, 1½ hours), with connections to Å (Nkr178, 3½ hours), leave Svolvær four to six times daily.

## NARVIK

pop 14,100

Narvik was established a century ago as an ice-free port for the rich Kiruna iron-ore mines in Swedish Lapland (spelt Lapland in Norway and Finland). The town is bisected by a monstrous transshipment facility, where the ore is offloaded from rail cars onto ships bound for distant smelters. In April and May 1940, during WWII, fierce land and naval battles took place around the town as the Germans and the Allies fought to control the iron-ore trade.

Ask the helpful Narvik **tourist office** (☎ 76 94 33 09; www.narvikinfo.no; Kongens gate 26; 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 11am-7pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hrs rest of year) for details of local hiking routes. The post office is 300m south on Kongens

gate, the train station is at the north end of town, and the Lofoten express boat dock is on Havnegata, just over 1km south of the centre, down Kongens gate.

## Sights

The impressive **Red Cross War Museum** (☎ 76 94 44 26; Kongens gate; adult/child Nkr40/10; ☎ 10am–10pm Mon–Sat & 11am–5pm Sun mid–Jun–mid–Sep, 11am–3pm Mar–Jun) displays WWII equipment and tells the tale of the Nazi occupation of Narvik, coveted for its ore production. The presentation isn't flash, but you're still likely to leave feeling rather stunned.

The town's **Ofoten Museum** (☎ 76 96 00 50; Administrasjonsveien 2; adult/child Nkr25/5; ☎ 11am–3.30pm Mon–Fri & noon–3pm Sat & Sun Jul, 10.30am–3pm Mon–Fri Aug–Jun) occupies a wonderful building dating from 1902, and tells of Narvik's farming, railway-building and ore-transshipment heritage.

Weather permitting, the Fjellheisen **cable car** (☎ 76 96 04 94; Mårveien; return adult/child Nkr80/45; ☎ 10am–1am mid–Jun–Jul, 1–9pm early Jun & Aug) soars up 656m for breathtaking views of the mid-night sun and the surrounding peaks and fjords.

The tourist office can arrange sightseeing, fishing and whale-watching tours. In October and November, **Tysfjord Turistsenter** (☎ 75 77 53 70; Storfjord; www.tysfjord-turistsenter.no

/safari; cruises Nkr700) runs extraordinary orca-watching cruises from Storfjord, about 85km south of Narvik on the E6. The Nor-Way Bussekspress bus to and from Fauske passes less than 1km from Storfjord.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Narvik Camping** (☎ 76 94 58 10; Rombaksveien 75; tent sites Nkr75, cabins Nkr500–750) The nearest camp site to Narvik, this place is 2km northeast of town on the E6.

**Spor 1 Gjestegård** (☎ 76 94 60 20; post@spor1.no; Brugata 2; dm/s/d Nkr160/400/500) This place made for backpackers is located in former rail cabins by the tracks. It has well-kept dorm rooms, charming hosts, a sauna, and a well-equipped, clean kitchen.

**Narvik HI Hostel** (☎ 76 96 22 00; narvik.hostel@vanderhjem.no; Dronningensgate 58; dm/s/d Nkr195/375/475; ☎ 24 Jun–17 Aug) Recently moved to a central downtown location, this bright, modern place has good rooms. Breakfast is Nkr60 extra.

**Breidablikk Gjesthus** (☎ 76 94 14 18; www.breidablikk.no; Tore Hunds gate 41; dm/s/d Nkr185/425/550) Another central option, this pleasant guesthouse, with a hillside fjord view, is a good bet. Ask for a room on the higher floors. Breakfast costs Nkr50.

There are several places to eat within easy walking distance of the tourist office, most of which aren't very nice. Rising above the rest is **Astrup Kjeller'n** (☎ 76 96 04 02; Kinobakken 1; mains Nkr85–225; ☎ from 11am), with an old-time feel and huge servings of pasta, steak and local specialties. The **Narvik Senter shopping centre** (Kongens gata 66) 300m west of the train station has one of Norway's many Peppe's Pizza outlets and a Rimi supermarket.

## Getting There & Away

Narvik's airport is served by Widerøe from Bodø and Tromsø. Norwegian Air flies from Oslo.

Some express bus connections between Fauske and Tromsø require an overnight break in Narvik. Nor-Way Bussekspress buses run to and from Fauske (Nkr381, five hours, twice daily), and to and from Tromsø (Nkr315, four to five hours, two or three daily). The Narvik–Lofoten Ekspressen runs daily between Narvik and Svolvær (Nkr501, eight to 9¼ hours).

The spectacular mountain-hugging **Ofotbanen railway** spans a range of landscapes –

fjord-side cliffs, birch forests and rocky plateaus – all within the 55 minutes between Narvik and the Swedish border. Riksgränsen (Nkr88, 55 minutes) is the first stop inside Sweden, and you'll pass through some 50 tunnels and snowsheds to get there. Trains continue on to Kiruna (Nkr155, three hours) with overnight connections to Stockholm. For information on the express boat to Svolvær, see p306.

## RIKSGRÄNSEN

☎ 0980 / pop 50

Your first stop in Sweden is tiny Riksgränsen village, set in rugged countryside and promoted as 'the most northerly ski resort in the world'. The craggy mountains provide dramatic descents, and you can even ski under the midnight sun in June. Rental of downhill gear/snowboards costs from Skr280/317 per day, and a daily lift pass is Skr294; the ski season can run until midsummer.

There's not much to the tiny settlement here, but you can visit **Sven Hörnell's wilderness photography exhibition** (☎ 43111; www.sven-hornell.se; ☎ 9am–6pm Feb–Sep) at his gallery and shop. The exhibition itself is free, and there's an **audiovisual show** (Skr70; ☎ 3pm daily mid–Jun–Aug, call for other times). Commentary is in Swedish only, but you don't have to understand it to appreciate the stunning photography of Norrland (several provinces in the northern half of Sweden).

**Riksgränsen Ski & Spa Resort** (☎ 40080; www.riksgransen.nu; r per person summer/winter from Skr436/601; ☎ mid–Feb–Sep) is a large resort popular with skiers, and offers lots of organised wilderness activities in both the skiing and summer seasons. Rooms and apartments are available.

Bus No 91 runs from Riksgränsen via Abisko to Kiruna (Skr117, two or three a day). Three daily trains run on the Narvik–Kiruna–Luleå route.

## KIRUNA

☎ 0980 / pop 23,900

Kiruna, the northernmost town and largest *kommun* (municipality) in Sweden, takes in the country's highest peak, Kebnekaise (2111m), and several fine national parks and trekking routes, making it an excellent base for wilderness tours. It's also home to Sweden's most famous ice hotel.

The helpful **tourist office** (☎ 18880; www.kiruna.se; Lars Janssonvägen 17; ☎ 8.30am–8pm Mon–Fri

## THE ICE HOTEL

The highlight of a trip this far north is a visit to the fabulous **Ice Hotel** (☎ 66800; www.icehotel.com; Marknadsvägen, Jukkasjärvi; day visit adult/child Skr120/60), a truly unique experience.

Every winter at Jukkasjärvi, 18km east of Kiruna, an amazing structure is built from tonnes of ice taken from the frozen local river. This huge, custom-built *igloo* has a chapel, a bar – where you can drink from a glass made of ice – and exhibitions of ice sculpture by international artists. It also has more than 60 rooms where guests can sleep on beds covered with reindeer skins and sub-zero sleeping bags. Temperatures inside the structure remain a balmy -5°C to -8°C (outside it can be as low as -30°C). The hotel is normally open from mid-December to late April (weather permitting), and there are numerous activities for guests to pursue, from snowmobile safaris and skiing to ice fishing and dogsledding.

Bus No 510 goes to the hotel. See the Sleeping and Eating sections (below and p311) for further details of accommodation prices.

& 8.30am–6pm Sat & Sun summer, Mon–Sat rest of year) has loads of detailed brochures, and staff can arrange various activities, including year-round Sami experiences; rafting, hiking, horse-riding, rock-climbing and fishing in warmer weather; and ice fishing, dogsledding and snowmobile safaris in winter. The **library** (Biblioteksgatan), behind the bus station, offers free Internet access.

A visit to the Ice Hotel (see boxed text above) is a must. Also worthwhile is a visit to **Kiruna kyrka** (Kyrkogatan), the town church, which looks like a gigantic Sami tent; it's particularly pretty against a snowy backdrop. You can also visit the depths of the **LKAB iron-ore mine** (☎ 18880; tours adult/child Skr195/50), 540m underground. Two-hour English-language tours depart from the tourist office regularly from June to August, although they operate during other months if there's enough interest.

## Sleeping

**STF Vandrarhem Kiruna** (☎ 17195; www.kirunahotel.com; Bergmästaregatan 7; dm/s/d Skr150/270/360) The central location, good facilities (including

## SIDE TRIP: ØVRE DIVIDAL NATIONAL PARK

A wild, roadless and lake-studded 750-sq-km chunk of Norway between Setermoen and the Swedish and Finnish borders comprises Øvre Dividal National Park. While it lacks the spectacular steep-walled scenery of coastal Norway, this remote semi-forested upland wilderness still enjoys lots of alpine peaks and views. The most popular hike is the eight-day Troms Border Trail, which links seven unstaffed Den Norske Turistforening (Norwegian Mountain Touring Association) huts. The map to use on the Troms Border Trail and the Abisko Link is Statens Kartverk's *Turkart Indre Troms*, at a scale of 1:100,000. In summer, hikers cannot underestimate the mosquito nuisance in this area; use a head-net and carry plenty of repellent. Access to the park is difficult and by private vehicle only.

### SIDE TRIP: ABISKO NATIONAL PARK

Less rugged and more accessible than other parks in Arctic Sweden, the 77-sq-km **Abisko National Park** lies on the southern shore of scenic Lake Torneträsk and is full of excellent day hikes. The park is well served by buses, trains and the scenic mountain highway between Kiruna and Narvik.

The **Naturum** (☎ 40177; www.abisko-naturum.nu), next to the Svenska Vandrarhem i Förening (STF; Swedish Tourist Association) lodge in Abisko, provides good information on the region. For breathtaking views, take the **Linbana chairlift** (return Skr110; ☎ 9.30am-4pm), 900m up to the mountain top of **Njulla** (1169m).

### Hiking

The popular **Kungsleden** ('King's Trail') follows the Abiskojökka Valley 450km south from Abisko to Hemavan; there are huts and lodges along most of the route. From Absiko village you can opt for day trips of 10km or 20km along the route. For longer hikes you can try diversions to the summit of **Kebnekaise** (2111m), the country's highest peak, or the magical national park of **Sarek** (which has no huts and few bridges).

A good alternative to the Kungsleden is a trek to **Sjangeli**, southwest of Abisko. It was an unsuccessful mine in the 17th century but is now a Sami-run wilderness centre. A 70km loop route connects Sjangeli with both Abisko and Riksgränsen.

In Björkliden, 8km northwest of Abisko, the **Björkliden Fjällby resort** (☎ 64100; www.bjorkliden.com) offers a full range of summer and winter activities and even has a nine-hole golf course. Tours are also organised by STF at Abisko Turiststation (see Sleeping & Eating, following); both places offer outdoor gear for hire.

July, August and September are recommended months for hiking, but be aware that the boggy ground nurses millions of mosquitoes. You'll need waterproof (preferably rubber) boots at any time of the year, and warm clothes; despite the midnight sun, it can still get cold very quickly. Winter escapades are too risky for the uninitiated, due to blizzards, extreme cold and avalanches.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Abisko Fjällturer** (☎ 40103; www.abisko.net; dm Skr150) This small hostel is a backpacker's delight. It has comfortable accommodation and a lovely wooden sauna, but the treat is in the activities on offer. The friendly owners keep a large team of sled dogs, and for Skr600 in winter you get a night's hostel accommodation and the chance to drive your own sled. There are also half-/full-day sled trips (Skr900/1500), and popular week-long sled trips from late February to early April (Skr8800, including meals and accommodation). You'll need to book very early for the longer trips. In summer you can take mountain walks with the dogs (Skr300, including one night in a dorm).

**Abisko Turiststation** (☎ 40200; www.abisko.nu; dm/s/d/Skr290/510/700; ☎ Mar-Apr & mid-Jun–mid-Sep) This is another excellent choice, with a variety of accommodation options, all kept to the usual high STF standards. Trekking gear can be hired here, and there are guided tours, a shop with basic groceries, a pub, and a restaurant (breakfast/lunch/dinner Skr75/75/195). Accommodation prices here are reduced by Skr100 for HI/STF members.

There's a supermarket in Abisko village for self-caterers, and a café-restaurant nearby.

Self-service **STF huts** (dm members Skr185-275, nonmembers Skr285-375) along Kungsleden are spread at 10km to 20km intervals between Abisko and Kvikkjokk; you'll need a sleeping bag. Member/non-member day visitors are charged Skr40/50; campers pay Skr60/80. The excellent 100km trek from Abisko to Nikkaluokta runs via the STF lodge **Kebnekaise Fjällstation** (☎ 55000; info@kebnekaise.st.se; dm/s/d from Skr320/850/1000; ☎ Mar-Apr & mid-Jun–mid-Sep). Meals are available here, and guided tours to the summit of Kebnekaise are offered.

### Getting There & Away

In addition to trains (stations are at Abisko Östra and Abisko Turiststation) between Luleå and Narvik, bus No 91 runs from Kiruna to Abisko (Skr94). Bus No 92 travels from Kiruna to Nikkaluokta (Skr69, two to three a day), at the Kebnekaise trail heads. Kvikkjokk is served by bus No 47, which runs twice daily on weekdays to and from Jokkmokk (Skr117).

sauna) and adjacent Chinese restaurant make this hostel a basic but good bet. Breakfast is Skr60.

**Hotell City** (☎ 66655; www.hotellcity.se, in Swedish; Bergmästaregatan 7; s/d Skr750/850) In the same building as the hostel, this new hotel has pleasant, modern rooms and affordable rates. Prices include breakfast and access to the hostel's kitchen.

**Gullriset Lägenhetshotellet** (☎ 10937; www.fabmf.se/gullriset, in Swedish; Bromsgatan 12; apartments Skr400-700) About 1.5km from the tourist office is this bargain option, perfect for self-caterers and those who fancy more space than a hotel room offers. You can rent an apartment sleeping up to four people, with kitchen, bathroom and cable TV.

**Ice Hotel** (☎ 66800; www.icehotel.com; Marknadsvägen, Jukkasjärvi; d from Skr2800) Staying at the Ice Hotel is a unique experience, and if you have the cash it shouldn't be missed. There are other options, including stylish hotel rooms (heated and *not* made of ice; doubles in winter/summer are Skr2800/1330), or three-bed cabins with skylights enabling you to watch the northern lights from your bed in winter (single, double or triple Skr2800).

### Eating

Kiruna is not particularly well endowed with great eateries.

**Café Safari** (☎ 17460; Geologsgatan 4; light meals Skr20-60) Easily the nicest in town, this café has good coffee, cakes, and light meals such as sandwiches, quiche and baked potatoes.

**Restaurant Winter City** (☎ 10900; Bergmästaregatan 7; lunch buffet Skr55, meals Skr92-140) Adjacent to the STF hostel, this cosy place offers classic Chinese dishes, cheap lunches, takeaway meals and kids' options.

**3rd Baren** (☎ 66380; Föreningsgatan 11; lunch Skr65, dinner mains Skr69-189) This popular, moderately priced restaurant serves local specialties like reindeer, or you can play safe with steak or pasta. It's a lively drinking spot in the evening.

**Ice Hotel Restaurant** (☎ 66884; Marknadsvägen, Jukkasjärvi; mains Skr190-280) Opposite the accommodation complex in Jukkasjärvi is this high-quality restaurant specialising in local produce. Try the Arctic char or reindeer and, for dessert, cloudberry mousse or moose cheese parfait. Some meals even come on plates made of ice. The lunch buffet (available in summer) costs Skr95.

There's an **ICA supermarket** (Föreningsgatan; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat, 11am-4pm Sun), next to 3rd Baren.

### Getting There & Away

The small **airport** (☎ 68000; www.lfv.se), 9km east of the town, has direct daily flights to Stockholm with SAS. An airport bus (Skr50) connects with most flights.

Regional buses in this vast region are operated by **Länstrafiken Norrbotten** (☎ 020-470047; www.ltnbd.se, in Swedish). Buses operate from the bus station on Hjalmar Lundbohmsvägen, opposite the Stadshus (town hall), and serve all major settlements. Bus No 91 runs two or three times daily to Riksgränsen (Skr117) via Abisko (Skr94); bus Nos 10 and 52 go to Gällivare (Skr117).

Regular trains connect Kiruna with Stockholm (overnight) and Narvik (Norway). Trains going to Narvik call at Abisko and Riksgränsen.

### GÄLLIVARE

☎ 0970 / pop 19,700

The town of Gällivare and its northern twin Malmberget are surrounded by forest and dwarfed by the bald Dundret hill. It's not the world's most interesting place, but it is important as the northern terminus for Inlandsbanan, and there are good opportunities for summer and winter activities.

The **tourist office** (☎ 16660; www.gellivare.se; Centralplan; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri), by the train station, hires bicycles and can organise wilderness excursions.

**Dundret** (821m) is a nature reserve with superb views; you can view the midnight sun here from 2 June to 12 July. In winter there are four Nordic courses and 10 ski runs of varying difficulty. The mountaintop resort also organises numerous activities including snowmobile safaris and northern lights tours.

**Käkstan** (Malmberget; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm) is a historical 'shanty town' museum village dating from the 1888 iron-ore rush. Bus No 1 to Malmberget (5km north of Gällivare) departs from opposite the Gällivare church.

**STF Vandrarhem Gällivare** (☎ 14380; www.explore.lapland.com; Barnhemsvägen 2; dm member/non-member Skr150/195) is across the footbridge from the train station. Accommodation is in well-equipped cabins, bikes can be hired, and a variety of activities can be organised.



**Quality Hotel Lapland** (☎ 55020; www.qualityhotel.gellivare.se; Lasarettsgatan 1; s/d Skr1195/1490, discounted to Skr690/890; ♿; wheelchair access) Opposite the train station is a more expensive option, with large comfortable rooms. Your best bets for dining in Gällivare are the restaurant (lunch Skr68) and the pub (mains Skr95 to Skr230) here. It also has a decent menu of cheaper dishes such as pasta and burgers, and local specialities such as elk fillet and Arctic char.

### Getting There & Away

Regional buses depart from the train station. Bus No 45 runs daily to Östersund (Skr410) via Jokkmokk and Arvidsjaur, bus No 93 serves Kungleden (from mid-June to mid-September only), bus Nos 10 and 52 go to Kiruna (Skr117), and bus No 44 runs to Jokkmokk (Skr94).

Connex trains come from Luleå and Stockholm (sometimes changing at Boden), and from Narvik in Norway. More exotic is Inlandsbanan (see p299), which terminates at Gällivare; the train journey from Östersund costs Skr697.

### JOKKMOKK

☎ 0971 / pop 5900

The small town of Jokkmokk, also on Inlandsbanan, is just north of the Arctic Circle and started as a Sami market and mission. Since 1605 the **Jokkmokk Winter Market** (www.jokkmokksmarknad.com) has taken place here; the three-day event attracts some 30,000 people and starts on the first Thursday in February. If you're interested in Sami handicrafts this is the place to go.

The **tourist office** (☎ 22250; www.turism.jokkmokk.se; Stortorget 4; ☎ 8am-5pm mid-Jun–mid-Aug, Mon-Fri rest of year) can help with visitor information.

The **Åjtte museum** (☎ 17070; Kyrkogatan 3; adult/child Skr50/free; ☎ 9am-5pm May-Sep, Sun-Fri Oct-Apr) is the highlight of a visit to Jokkmokk; it gives the most thorough introduction to Sami culture anywhere in Sweden. It also offers exhaustive information on Lapland's mountain areas, with a full set of maps, slides and videos, and a library. A research visit is recommended for planning wilderness trips.

**Naturfoto** (☎ 55765; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Jun-Aug), at the main Klockartorget intersection, exhibits and sells work by a local wilderness photographer, Edvin Nilsson. There are a number of

Sami handicraft studios around town – ask at the tourist office.

About 7km south of Jokkmokk you'll cross the **Arctic Circle**; you'll find a summertime café and camp site here on road No 45.

### Sleeping & Eating

**STF Vandrarhem Jokkmokk** (☎ 55977; www.jokkmokk.hostel.com; Åsgatan 20; dm/d Skr165/410; ☎) This comfortable hostel behind the tourist office has laundry, sauna, Internet facilities and bikes for rent. It's a favourite with Inlandsbanan travellers and worth booking in advance in summer.

**Hotell Gästis** (☎ 10012; www.hotell-gastis.com, in Swedish; Herrevägen 1; s/d/tr Skr850/995/1200, discounted to Skr650/750/900) It doesn't look too promising from the outside, but this hotel offers decent value with pleasant but unremarkable rooms, sauna, and a good restaurant with lunch specials and à la carte dinners. The hotel has discounted rates from mid-June to mid-October.

**Åjtte museum restaurant** (Kyrkogatan 3; lunch Skr65) Here you can try local and Sami specialities, including fresh local fish or a sandwich with reindeer meat.

**Café Piano** (☎ 10400; Porjusvägen 4; lunch Skr60, dinner mains Skr50-120; ☎ Mon-Sat) This is one of the town's best options, with a grand piano inside, a large garden outside, and an extensive menu, including inexpensive pizza, pasta and wok meals.

### Getting There & Away

Buses arrive and leave from the bus station on Klockarvägen. Bus Nos 44 and 45 run daily to and from Gällivare (Skr94). Inlandsbanan trains stop in Jokkmokk; for mainline trains, take bus No 43 to Murjek (up to six a day) or bus No 44 to Boden (Skr126) and Luleå (Skr157).

### LULEÅ

☎ 0920 / pop 72,000

The capital of Norrbotten, Sweden's largest county, Luleå is a major transport hub with some interesting diversions and good-value accommodation. The **tourist office** (☎ 293500; www.lulea.se; Storgatan 43; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri & 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Jun-Aug, 10am-6pm Mon-Fri & 10am-2pm Sat Sep-May) will help with inquiries, and the **library** (Kyrkogatan) has free Internet access.

The most famous sight in Luleå is the Unesco World Heritage-listed **Gammelstad**,

or Old Town, which was the medieval centre of northern Sweden. The stone church dates from 1492 and is surrounded by 424 wooden houses where the faithful from outlying villages would stay in order to attend church on Sunday or religious festivals. Six church stables also remain. The open-air museum **Hägnan** (☎ Jun-Aug) and a nature reserve are nearby.

**Norbottens Museum** (☎ 243500; Storgatan 2; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) is worth a visit for the Sami section and some very interesting short films on the northern lights and Sami identity. In summer there are a number of boat trips to the surrounding archipelago.

If you'd like to stay, the **Comfort Hotel Max** (☎ 220220; www.choicehotels.se; Storgatan 59; s/d Skr1125/1325, discounted to Skr490/690) is a huge bargain at weekends and in summer, as discounted rates at this well-equipped business hotel include breakfast and a dinner buffet.

For food, head to **Roasters** (☎ 88840; Storgatan 43; lunch Skr67, snacks Skr28-59), a stylish spot with extensive lunch options, grilled foccacia and ciabatta, strong coffee, and outdoor seating.

### Getting There & Away

The **airport** (☎ 244900; www.lfv.se) is 9km southwest of the town centre. There are about a dozen flights daily between Stockholm and Luleå with SAS and **Nordic Airlink** (☎ 08-528 06820; www.flynordic.com). An airport bus (Skr50) and **Skyways** (www.skyways.se) will get you directly to and from Gothenburg. Take the airport bus from the bus station (Skr45).

Länstrafiken Norrbotten buses cover the 100,000-sq-km county. The maximum fare is Skr280, a 30-day pass covering the entire county costs Skr1475 and bicycles are carried for Skr50. Bus No 100 runs to Haparanda (Skr117) four times daily. Bus No 44 goes to Jokkmokk (Skr157) and on to Gällivare (Skr245) once daily.

Direct Connex trains from Stockholm and Gothenburg run at night only. Most trains from Narvik and Kiruna terminate at Luleå.

### HAPARANDA & TORNIO

Haparanda ☎ 0922 / pop 10,400

Tornio ☎ 016 / pop 23,200

Haparanda was founded in 1821 as a trading town to replace Tornio (spelt Torneå in Swedish), which Sweden had lost to Russia. Now the two border towns almost function

as one entity and are most famous for their 18-hole golf course.

Both the krona and the euro are accepted at most places. Tornio is one hour ahead of Haparanda.

**Green Line Centre** (☎ Sweden 12010, Finland 432 733; http://infokiosk.haparanda.se, or www.tornio.fi, in Finnish; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri & 10am-8pm Sat & Sun Jun–mid-Aug, 8-11.30am & 12.30-4pm Mon-Fri mid-Aug–May) is the joint Haparanda–Tornio tourist centre.

### Sights & Activities

There are few sights in Haparanda but Tornio has a pair of lovely churches worth visiting: the beautiful wooden **Tornio Church** (built 1686) on Seminaarinkatu and the tiny **Orthodox Church** on Lukiokatu, built by order of Tsar Alexander I. Also worth a visit are the **Lapin Kulta Brewery** (☎ 43366; Lapinkullankatu 1; ☎ free tours 2pm Tue & Thu Jun-Aug) and the **Aine Art Museum** (☎ 432 438; Torikatu 2; adult/child €2/1; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue-Thu, 11am-3pm Fri-Sun), which has a big collection of Finnish art from the 19th and 20th centuries.

The biggest attraction, however, is the unique **Green Zone Golf Course** (Finland ☎ 431711; Närantie 1; green fees 18 holes €33, par 3 course €8, dub hire €10). Not only can you play midnight golf (with the sun shining), but the course actually straddles the border. You can tee off in Finland and hit the ball into Sweden; this means that if you start at, say, 12.30am, the ball will remain in the air for an hour and land in yesterday. All this novelty, and a round on a pretty good course, can be yours when the snow melts away between late May and late August. To play after 10pm you need to book in advance.

The scenic **Kukkolaforsen rapids**, on the Torne älv 15km north of town, are also well worth a visit (take bus No 53 or 54). There's a **tourist village** (☎ midsummer to mid-August) that includes a camp site and cabins, a restaurant, a café, a fish smokehouse, saunas, and a museum. For rafting trips, contact **Lapland Connection** (☎ 253 405; www.safarisunlimited.fi).

### Sleeping & Eating

**Camping Tornio** (☎ 445 945; sirkka.hyry@pp.inet.fi; Matkailijantie; tent sites €18, cabins per double €54) This place is about 3km from town on the road to Kemi.

**STF Vandrarhem Haparanda** (☎ 61171; www.haparandavandrarhem.net; Strandgatan 26; dm/s/d Skr160/250/320) This excellent hostel isn't far from

Haparanda town centre. Some rooms have private bathroom, plus there's a sauna, a laundry and self-catering facilities. You can also opt for a meal at the decent onsite restaurant.

**Stadshotellet** (☎ 61490; www.haparandastadshotell.se; Torget 7; s/d Skr1090/1390, discounted to Skr650/850) This large, once grand hotel is the focus of Haparanda, and its pub-restaurant, the Gulasch Baronen (mains Skr70 to Skr120) offers reasonably priced meals in a convivial atmosphere. Some beds are as little as Skr295 in summer.

**Matkakotti Heta** (☎ 480 897; Saarenpääkatu 39; s/d €27/42/60) Located in a pretty part of Tornio, this guesthouse has slightly eccentric owners, who add to the character of the place. There's a cosy lounge with art gallery and sauna. Breakfast is available (€5).

**Umpitunneli** (☎ 430 360; Hallituskatu 15; ☎ 11am-2am, to 4am Fri & Sat) For entertainment Finnish-style, head to this classic open-air dance pub and restaurant where you can see the *humppa* (traditional dance and music) in full swing from Wednesday to Saturday. Year-round it's a rollicking bar and nightclub.

### Getting There & Away

Regular buses connect Haparanda and Tornio (Skr15). There are regional buses from Luleå (Skr117) and towns further south. Daily, bus No 53 travels north along the border via the Kukkolaforsen rapids, Övertorneå and Pajala, and then continues west to Kiruna (Skr270). Buses to Rovaniemi (€17.50, 2½ hours) run via Kemi.

### ROVANIEMI

☎ 016 / pop 35,400

Rovaniemi is the capital of and gateway to Lapland, though there's not much Lappish about the town. It was razed by retreating Germans in WWII, and rebuilt with the main streets radiating out from Hallituskatu in the shape of reindeer antlers – obvious only from the air. Despite its lack of architectural appeal, it still makes a good base for activities such as dog or reindeer sledding, white-water rafting, skiing, and touring by snowmobile. It's also a friendly place for the budget traveller.

### Information

**Ettäinen** (☎ 647 820; ☎ 10am-5pm) At Napapiiri (the Arctic Circle), this is the information centre for the national

parks and trekking regions, with information on hiking and fishing in Lapland.

**Main post office** (Postikatu 1; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri)  
**Rovaniemi Health Centre** (☎ Sweden 32241, Finland 322 4900; Sairaalakatu 1)

**Santa Claus Tourist Centre** (☎ 346 270; www.rovaniemi.fi; Koskikatu 1; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri & 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Jun-late Aug, 8am-4pm Mon-Fri late Aug-May) It has a corny name, but this is an excellent source of information for all of Lapland. It also has Internet access (per 15 minutes €2).

### Sights & Activities

With its beautifully designed glass tunnel stretching out to the Kemijoki River, spacious layout, and engrossing, well-presented exhibitions, **Arktikum** (☎ 317 830; www.arktikum.fi; Pohjoisranta 4; adult/child €11/5; ☎ 9am-7pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 10am-6pm early Jun & late Aug, 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Sep-May) is one of Finland's premier museums. Superb displays focus on Arctic flora and fauna as well as the Sami and other people of the Arctic. Give yourself at least a couple of hours to get around it. It's a pleasant walk from the centre if you follow the path along the river.

The smaller **Rovaniemi Art Museum** (☎ 322 2822; Lapinkävijäntie 4; adult/child €4/2, admission free Sat; ☎ noon-5pm Tue-Sat) has changing exhibitions of Finnish modern art. Across the Ounasjoki River and 3km above the town, the **Ounasvaara Ski Centre** (☎ 369 045; www.ounasvaara.net) has six downhill ski slopes and three ski jumps, plus a summer tobogganing run. It's a good spot for hiking in summer. Two-hour **boat cruises** (☎ 0400-292 132; adult/child €10/5; ☎ 2pm, 5pm & 8pm) on the Kemijoki River are another good summer activity.

### Tours

Several tour companies in town specialise in the 'Lapland experience'. In winter and early spring the most popular activities include snowmobiling (from €88), and husky and reindeer safaris (from €100). Summer tours include river cruises from €20, and white-water rafting and fishing expeditions from €45 to €115 per person. Ask at the tourist office for details.

### Festivals & Events

Rovaniemi hosts a bursting calendar of festivals and events all year round. For more details, visit www.rovaniemi.fi. Some of the best:

### FEBRUARY

**Northern Lights Festival** A variety of sports and arts events.

### MARCH

**Reindeer City Race** Skiers fly through the town centre behind their charges.

**Ounasvaara Winter Games** Skiing and ski-jumping competitions.

### JUNE

**Jutajaiset** Showcase of folk music, dance and other Sami traditions.

### JULY

**Kemijoki Rock Festival** The best of local and smaller international rock acts.

### AUGUST

**Roots & River Blues Festival** A northern festival for the blues enthusiast.

### Sleeping

**Matka Borealis** (☎ /fax 342 0130; www.matkaborealis.com; Asemieskatu 1; s/d €45/58; ☎ (P)) Rovaniemi's cosiest and best-value guesthouse is just about opposite the train station. It's a friendly place with clean, simple rooms, all with attached bathroom. Breakfast is included.

**Hotel Aakenus** (☎ 342 2051; www.hotelliaakenus.net; Koskikatu 47; s/d €65/75, d summer €50; ☎) This simple but welcoming private hotel is a short walk north of the centre. It has a sauna, a restaurant and nonsmoking rooms, and the local swimming hall is around the corner.

**Hotel Santa Claus** (☎ 321 321; www.hotelsantaclaus.fi; Korkalonkatu 29; s/d €110/132; ☎ (I)) Rovaniemi's newest hotel has unusually large rooms with modern trimmings and some strange '70s touches involving red velour. Some fifth-floor rooms have balconies overlooking Koskikatu. Breakfast and sauna are included.

**City Hotel** (☎ 330 0111; www.cityhotel.fi; Pekankatu 9; s/d €91/115). This stylish boutique hotel with piano bar and chesterfield couches in the lobby has neat, compact rooms with satellite TV and minibar.

**Rantasipi Pohjanhovi** (☎ 33711; www.rantasipi.fi; Pohjanpuistikko 2; s/d €113/133) Rovaniemi's oldest hotel (rebuilt in 1947 after the WWII destruction) retains some charm and has the legendary restaurant and dance club Nite Life (see right).

### Eating

**Mariza** (☎ 319 616; Ruokasenkatu 2; lunch buffet €5.90-6.50; ☎ 10am-3pm Mon-Fri) This simple diner offers a fabulous lunch buffet of home-cooked Finnish food, including hot dishes, soup and salad.

**Cómico** (☎ 344 433; Koskikatu 25; nachos €3.50, mains €7.80-16.60; ☎ 11am-midnight Mon-Wed, 11am-2am Thu & Fri, noon-2am Sat & Sun) A colourful bar and restaurant just below street level with American-diner seating, this place shows old movies and serves Tex-Mex (nachos and burritos), burgers, steaks, and salads.

**Hai Long** (☎ 313133; Valtakatu 35; lunch €7.50, dinner mains €6-12; ☎ 11am-10pm) For inexpensive Chinese food and good lunch buffets (11am to 3pm) you can't go too far wrong here.

**Fransmanni** (☎ 0201-234695; Koskikatu 4; mains €8.50-20; ☎ 11am-midnight Mon-Thu, 11am-1am Fri, 1pm-1am Sat, 1pm-midnight Sun) A casual atmosphere and tempting menu make this French-Finnish fusion chain with booth seating a good option. It's one of several Rovaniemi restaurants to add a 'Lapland menu' to its usual fare – try the whitefish, sautéed reindeer or breadcheese with cloudberry cream.

**Puolukka** (☎ 310 222; Valtakatu; mains €16-25; ☎ 11am-3pm & 5-11pm Mon-Fri, 4-11pm Sat, 5-10pm Sun) This is arguably Rovaniemi's best restaurant when it comes to traditional Lappish cuisine. It's not cheap, and the restaurant itself is unassuming, but the food is delicious and includes reindeer, whitefish, and cloudberry desserts.

### Entertainment

Rovaniemi has loads of bars and nightclubs in the town centre.

In summer **Oluhuone** (Koskikatu) is a great place to kick back under the midnight sun in the open-air beer terrace.

A tiny, eccentric pub with no seats, **Pub Ylityö** (Koskikatu 5) was voted one of the world's best bars by *Newsweek* in 1996.

**Irish Times** (☎ 319 925; Valtakatu 35; ☎ 11am-2am Mon-Sat, noon-2am Sun) is Rovaniemi's best Irish pub. It has a great heated terrace at the back, international beers, pool tables downstairs and a relaxed vibe.

**Nite Life** (☎ 33711; Pohjanpuistikko 2; ☎ to 4am Fri & Sat) is the place for some real Finnish-style partying; head to the dance club (*humppa* and tango) at Rantasipi Pohjanhovi, then cram into the nightclub (€8).

## Getting There & Away

Finnair has daily flights to Rovaniemi from Helsinki, Kemi and Oulu. An airport bus (€5) meets all flights; it leaves the central bus station one hour before flight departures.

Frequent buses travel to Kemi (€15.20, 1½ hours), Hetta (in Enontekiö, five hours), Sodankylä (€17.50, two hours), Ivalo (4½ hours) and Inari (five hours).

The train is the best way to travel between Helsinki and Rovaniemi (€70.20, 10 to 12 hours) – it's quicker and cheaper than the bus. There are eight daily trains (via Oulu), including four overnight services.

Major car-hire companies have offices in Rovaniemi or at the airport. Rates are highest from February to April and June to August. Try **Europcar** (☎ 0400-433507; Koskikatu 6) or **Budget** (☎ 312 266; Koskikatu 9).

## NAPAPIIRI (THE ARCTIC CIRCLE)

The official **Arctic Circle marker** is in Napapiiri, 8km north of Rovaniemi. Built on top of it is the 'official' **Santa Claus village**. The **Santa Claus post office** receives close to a million letters each year – he and his helpers actually reply to almost 50,000. As tacky as it sounds, it's all good fun. You can send a postcard home with an official Santa stamp (you can arrange to have it delivered at Christmas) and meet the bearded man in red in his grotto (that's free, but signs warn that Santa is a registered trademark and can only be photographed by his elves – the cost is €17). There are also some excellent souvenir and handicraft shops here. You can visit the dogs in **Husky Park** and, in winter, take short

husky sled rides. Bus No 8 goes hourly from Rovaniemi train station (€5.20 return).

## SODANKYLÄ

☎ 016 / pop 9900

The busy market town of Sodankylä is a reasonable place to break the journey between Rovaniemi and northern Lapland, and is renowned for the **Midnight Sun Film Festival** ([www.msfilmfestival.fi](http://www.msfilmfestival.fi)), held in mid-June. Tickets and programs are available from the **tourist office** (☎ 618 168; [www.sodankyla.fi](http://www.sodankyla.fi); Jäämerentie 3; ☹ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri).

The **old wooden church** (☹ 10am-6pm Jun-Aug), near the town centre, is worth a look. It was built in 1689, making it one of the oldest in Lapland. Mummified bodies of local priests and their families are buried beneath the church floor.

In the same building as the tourist office, the **Andraes Alariesto Gallery** (☎ 618 643; adult/child €5/2) displays Sami art by famous Lapp painter Alariesto, who favoured a primitive style to depict traditional Sami life.

If you plan to stay, **Majatalo Kolme Veljestä** (☎ 611 216; Ivalontie 1; s/d/tr €38/54/65) is a lovely guesthouse with tidy rooms (shared bathroom), a guest lounge with open fire, sauna, kitchen, and breakfast included. For food, head to **Café Kerttuli** (☎ 624 383; Jäämerentie 11; snacks €2-5, mains €5.50-16; ☹ 10am-8pm Mon-Thu, 10am-10pm Fri & Sat, noon-6pm Sun), where the lunchtime buffet (€9) and sunny terrace facing the main street make this Sodankylä's top choice.

There are daily buses to and from Rovaniemi (€17.90, 1½ hours) and Ivalo (€19.70, two hours).

### SIDE TRIP: PYHÄ-LUOSTO REGION

The area between the fells of Luosto (514m) and Pyhä (540m) forms a popular winter-sports centre midway between Kemijärvi and Sodankylä. The high season extends from February to May, but in summer it's also excellent for trekking, particularly in the 43-sq-km **Pyhäntunturi National Park** that surrounds **Pyhä Fell**. The most notable sight is the steep **Pyhäkuru Gorge** between the Kultakero and Ukonhattu peaks. According to local legend, **Lake Pyhänkasteenlampi** (Lake of Holy Baptism), in the gorge, was where EM Fellman, the 'Apostle of Lapland', forcibly baptised the Sompio Sami in the 17th century to convert them to Christianity. Pyhä and Luosto each have resort 'villages' packed with hotels and restaurants. For information on the area, accommodation, weather and slope conditions visit [www.luosto.fi](http://www.luosto.fi) or [www.pyha.fi](http://www.pyha.fi).

You can also try **Pyhä-Luosto Matkailu** (☎ 020-838 4248; Pyhä-Luostontie 2) in Luosto or the **Pyhähippu Reservation Centre** (☎ 882 820) in Pyhä for tourist information.

**Pyhäntunturi Nature Centre** (☎ 882 773) has information on Pyhäntunturi National Park, as well as summer activities. It's adjacent to the Pyhä downhill ski centre; follow the signs from the main Kemijärvi-Sodankylä road (road No 5).

## URHO KEKKONEN NATIONAL PARK

The 255,000-hectare **Urho Kekkonen National Park** ([www.metsa.fi/natural/nationalparks/urhokekkonen-nationalpark](http://www.metsa.fi/natural/nationalparks/urhokekkonen-nationalpark)) is a highly rated trekking area, partly because of the large network of wilderness huts, but also because of the unspoilt beauty of the low **tunturi** (hills). The northern part of the park is a barren wilderness area of fells crossed by ravines, steep slopes and scree. Further south, treeless tundra gives way to forest wilderness.

The three main entry points to the park have information centres:

**Saariselkä Information Cabin** (☎ 668 122)

**Savukoski National Park Visitor Centre** (☎ 841 401; Samperintie 32)

**Tankavaara National Park Visitor Centre** (☎ 626 251)

## Hiking

The park is divided into four zones, each with different rules; you'll get details from the visitor centres. Hikers need to carry all their food, as wilderness huts in the park are not stocked with supplies. Note that hiking can be challenging, as many marked trails are either faint or almost nonexistent. A map and compass are essential for much of the park. The three maps to have are the 1:50,000 **Sompio-Kiilopää** map, which will do for short hikes from Saariselkä; the 1:50,000 **Sokosti-Suomujoki** map, which takes in Lake Luirojärvi; and the 1:100,000 **Koilliskaira** map, which shows the entire park.

There are lots of possible walking routes around Saariselkä using wilderness huts as bases. The main attractions are the **Rumakuru Gorge**; **Lake Luirojärvi**, including a climb up nearby **Sokosti** (718m); **Paratiisikuru**; and **Lumikuru**. There are also two historical **Scot fields**, with restored old houses, 2km south of Raja-Jooseppi and 2km west of Snelmanninmaja hut, respectively.

The four- to six-day loop from the main road to Lake Luirojärvi is the most popular route, and can be extended beyond the lake. To reach more remote areas you can take the week-long trek from Kiilopää to Kemihaara, but the least crowded option follows old roads and walking routes all the way from Raja-Jooseppi in the north to Kemihaara or Tulppio in the southeast.

Within the park are 200 designated free camp sites and 30 free wilderness huts; a handful of other huts carry a €9 nightly

charge and must be booked in advance through any of the park visitor centres. More distant huts usually have mattresses, gas or wood-burning stoves and sometimes telephones or saunas. Almost all are near water. The visitor centres can supply maps and details of the huts.

Buses run to Saariselkä from Sodankylä daily.

## INARI

☎ 016 / pop 550

As unprepossessing as it seems at first, the tiny village of Inari is the most interesting point of civilisation in far northern Lapland. This is the main Sami community in the region and a centre for genuine Sami handicrafts under the name 'Sami Duodji'.

**Inari Info** (☎ 661 666; [www.inarilapland.org](http://www.inarilapland.org); ☹ 9am-7pm Jun-Aug, 10am-4pm Mon-Fri rest of year) doubles as the post office and Alko store.

Don't miss **Siida** (☎ 665 212; [www.samimuseum.fi](http://www.samimuseum.fi); adult/child €7/3; ☹ 9am-8pm Jun-Sep, 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Oct-May), one of the finest conceptual and open-air museums in Finland. The exhibition successfully brings to life Sami origins, culture, lifestyle and present-day struggles. Outside is a fine open-air museum featuring Sami buildings, handicrafts and artefacts (open summer only).

There's a marked 7.5km walking track (starting from the Siida parking area) to the 18th-century **Pielpajärvi wilderness church**. If you have a vehicle, there's another parking area 3km closer. In winter or spring you'll need snowshoes and a keen attitude to tackle this walk.

In summer, boat trips leave for the prominent **Ukko Island** on Lake Inarijärvi, an ancient sacred site for the Inari Sami. The two-hour cruises are run by **Lake & Snow** (☎ 0400-295 731; adult/child €12/6; ☹ tours 2pm Jun, Aug & Sep, 2pm & 6pm Jul). From November to late April, when the lake is frozen over, you can take a snowmobile out to the island (€60 to €100 per person).

**Inarin Porofarmi** (☎ 673 912) is a reindeer farm run by a Sami family. You can meet reindeer, try lassoing, see Sami shows, and take reindeer safaris in winter. The farm is 14km from Inari on the back road to Kittila.

**Reindeer races** are held on the lake in the first week of April, and a big **ice-fishing competition** draws the crowds two weeks later.

**SIDE TRIP: LEMMENJOKI NATIONAL PARK**

Slush through desolate wilderness rivers, explore the rough Arctic landscape and bump into isolated gold panners in the middle of nowhere in 2855-sq-km **Lemmenjoki** ([www.metsa.fi/natural/nationalparks/lemmenjoki/first.htm](http://www.metsa.fi/natural/nationalparks/lemmenjoki/first.htm)), Finland's largest national park. One of the country's most diverse parks, its hiking trails extend for over 70km through the vast reserve, and there are several free wilderness huts.

**Lemmenjoki Nature Centre** (☎ 0205-647 793; 🕒 9am-9pm Jun-Sep) is just before the village of Njurgulahti, about 50km southwest of Inari. It has a small interpretive exhibition and a powerful set of binoculars, and sells maps and fishing permits. Accommodation at Njurgulahti includes two camp sites.

Almost all trails start from Njurgulahti, including a 4km marked nature trail suitable for families with children. The majority of the trekking routes lie within the relatively small area between the Lemmenjoki and the Vaskojoki Rivers. A 18km loop between Kultala and Ravadasjärvi huts takes you to some of the most interesting gold-panning areas. As you can do this in two days, many trekkers head over Ladnjoaivi Fell to Vaskojoki hut and back, which extends the trek to four or five days. For any serious trekking you will need the 1:100,000 *Lemmenjoki* map.

As well as hiking trails and opportunities for gold panning, there's a **boat cruise** along the Lemmenjoki valley in summer, from Njurgulahti village to the Kultahamina wilderness hut at Gold Harbour. A 20km marked trail also follows the course of the river, so you can take the boat one way, then hike back.

The **Sallivaara Reindeer Roundup site**, 70km south of Inari, was used by Sami reindeer herders twice yearly until 1964. Roundups were an important social event for the people of northern Lapland, usually lasting several weeks and involving hundreds of people and animals. The Sallivaara reindeer corrals and cabins were reconstructed in 1997, and there are plans to stage roundups here in autumn and spring. Park at Repojoiki, then follow the marked trail, 6km one way.

In summer, Gold Line buses run at least once a day from Inari to Lemmenjoki (two hours).

**Sleeping & Eating**

**Uruniemi Camping** (☎ 671 331; tentsites €11, 2-person cottages €17-23, 4-person cottages €30-70; 🕒 Jun-late Sep) About 2km south of town, this is a well-equipped lakeside camp site with cottages, a café, a sauna, and boats and bikes for hire.

**Hostel Jokitörmä** (☎ 672 725; [www.jokitorma.com](http://www.jokitorma.com); dm/s/d €16/26/38; 📍) This great place has cosy two- and four-person rooms, and a separate set of cottages, each with their own kitchen and bathroom facilities. The hostel is on the Arctic Hwy about 27km north of Inari. All buses will stop here on request.

**Hotel Inari** (☎ 671 026; [hotelli.inari@luukku.com](mailto:hotelli.inari@luukku.com); s/d/tr €38/45/60; 🕒 year-round) The local hotel is also the hub of the village – pub, restaurant, Saturday night disco and general local hangout. Upstairs there are small simple rooms with attached bath. The restaurant (mains €8 to €11, pizzas €5 to €9) offers Lappish dishes and interesting pizzas such as the one with sautéed reindeer, peach and onion. The terrace at the front is a great place to sit in summer and meet the locals.

**Getting There & Away**

The Arctic Hwy runs through Inari, so buses from Rovaniemi ply the route right through to Nordkapp, Tana Bru and Kirkenes (all in Norway) in summer. Buses stop outside the tourist office. Although you can't make reservations or buy tickets here, you can pick up timetables, and there are no problems getting a seat (pay the driver). Gold Line buses run daily to and from Ivalo (€6, 40 minutes), with connections south to Rovaniemi.

**KARIGASNIEMI**

The small village of Karigasniemi is a crossing point from Finland to Norway along the popular Nordkapp route. It has services such as a bank and a post office. Fell Sami, the language of the local people of Karigasniemi, is also the main dialect spoken across the border in Norway.

**Camping Tenorinne** (☎ 676 113; tent/cabin €14/30; 🕒 Jun-mid-Sep) has rustic log cabins and a pleasant location away from the main road.

Two buses a day travel from Ivalo to Karigasniemi, continuing on to the Norwegian town of Karasjok. A shared taxi travels to

Sami villages north of Karigasniemi along the Teno River on Tuesday and Friday.

**KARASJOK**

pop 2900

While Kautokeino is the most Sami settlement in Norway, Karasjok (Kárásvohka in Sami) is the undisputed capital of Sami Norway and home of the Sametinget, the Sami parliament. It also has Finnmark's oldest **church** (1807), the only building left standing in Karasjok after WWII. The Nazis' burnings mean that the centre of today's Karasjok consists of a couple of strip malls connected by the E6 and Rv92. But, this being Finnmark, the settlement area doesn't extend very far before vast and empty wilderness returns.

The **tourist office** (☎ 78 46 88 10; [www.koas.no](http://www.koas.no); Porsangerveien 1; 🕒 9am-7pm Jun-mid-Aug, 9am-4pm Mon-Fri rest of year), at the junction of E6 and route Rv92, can book winter dogsled rides, and arrange salmon fishing, riverboat trips and other summer activities.

The **Sami Museum** (☎ 78 46 99 50; Museumsgata 17; adult/child Nkr25/5; 🕒 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun 9 Jun-19 Aug, shorter hrs rest of year), just 500m northeast of the town centre, covers Sami history. For something flashier and much more superficial, try the **Sami Park** (☎ 78 46 88 10; Porsangerveien 1; adult/child Nkr95/60; 🕒 9am-7pm mid-Jun-late Aug, shorter hrs rest of year) – a theme park and reindeer farm.

The wonderful **Karasjok HI Hostel** (☎ 78 46 71 66; [karasjok.hostel@vanderhjem.no](mailto:karasjok.hostel@vanderhjem.no); dm/s/d Nkr150/300/375; 📍) is 6km west of town; breakfast costs Nkr60, dinner is available, and staff can organise a variety of summer and winter tours. At **Engholm's Husky** (☎ 78 46 71 66; [www.engholm.no](http://www.engholm.no); Rv92; cabins Nkr150-300 plus per guest Nkr100; 📍), dog lovers will enjoy the rustic, well-furnished cabins near where owner Sven keeps his sled dogs and pups. Most cabins have a kitchen but no bathroom. Breakfast costs Nkr50, and there is a free sauna. Sven also offers excellent winter dogsled and cross-country skiing tours (Nkr7400 to Nkr13,200), as well as summer dog-packing tours.

**Gammen** (☎ 78 46 74 00; Porsangerveien 1; mains Nkr190-250; 🕒 11am-11pm mid-May-mid-Aug), at Sami Park, offers traditional dishes in a 'Sami-inspired' dining room. The place consists of four squat, turf-covered huts with a central hearth – very hobbit. In the central shopping centre, **Márkan Kafé** (Markangeidnu 1; dishes Nkr25-95; 🕒 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) sells

**SIDE TRIP: KEVO NATURE RESERVE**

Some of the most breathtaking scenery in Finland is protected by the 712-sq-km Kevo Nature Reserve. Within its boundaries you'll find the splendid gorge of the Kevo River, which features some spectacular waterfalls.

The main trail runs through the canyon from the Utsjoki-Kaamanen road to the Karigasniemi-Kaamanen road and is 63km long. The trek is rough and takes about four days one way. You'll need the 1:100,000 *Kevo* topographical sheet to tackle it.

Rules for visiting the Kevo reserve are stricter than those concerning national parks: hikers cannot hunt, fish or collect plants and berries, *must* stay on marked trails, and can only overnight at designated camp sites. The gorge area is off limits from April to mid-June.

sandwiches and omelettes at bargain prices, and there's a nearby supermarket.

**Getting There & Away**

Buses connect Karasjok with Hammerfest (Nkr308, 4¼ hours, daily except Saturday), Kirkenes (Nkr452, 5½ hours) and Nordkapp (Nkr435, five hours, summer only). The Finnish Lapin Linjat buses to Ivalo (Nkr180, 3¼ hours) and Rovaniemi (Nkr450, 5½ hours) also pass through Karasjok. Bus No 405 runs from Karasjok to Kautokeino (Nkr189, two hours, twice a week).

**NORDKAPP**

Nordkapp, a high rugged coastal plateau at 71°10'21"N latitude, claims to be the northernmost point in Europe (Knivskjelodden is actually the northernmost point; see following), and it's the main destination for most visitors to the far north. The sun never drops below the horizon from mid-May to the end of July, and to many visitors Nordkapp's steep cliffs and stark scenery emanate a certain spiritual aura. Indeed, long before other Europeans took an interest in the area, Nordkapp was considered a power centre by the Sami people.

Nowadays there's a rip-off Nkr175 entrance fee and a touristy complex with exhibits, eateries, souvenir shops and a post office. The 180-degree theatre runs a rather

**SIDE TRIP: KIRKENES**

The former mining town of Kirkenes (population 4500) was Norway's most bombed place during WWII, with over 1000 air-raid alarms. The town is not a major tourist destination, but it does get some visitors, since it's the end of the line for the *Hurtigruten* coastal steamer and a jumping-off point into Russia. To find the small town centre, head west (make a right) from the dock and follow the signs. It's about 1.5km. Or just take the waiting shuttle bus.

The **tourist office** (☎ 78 99 25 44; www.kirkenesinfo.no, not in English; Presteveien 1; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri & 8.30am-5.30pm Sat & Sun Jun-mid-Aug, 8.30am-4pm Mon-Fri mid-Aug-May) can help you plan winter activities, such as king crab safaris (Nkr750), snowmobile trips along the border (Nkr950), and night-time dogsled rides (Nkr1075).

A good first stop is the **Sør-Varanger Grenselandmuseum** (☎ 78 99 48 80; Førstevannslia; adult/student/child Nkr30/15/free; ☎ 10am-6pm mid-Jun-Aug, 10am-3.30pm Sep-mid-Jun), which has displays on WWII history, local geography, culture, religion and Sami crafts. It details the history of the region as a border area, where Russian, Norwegian, Finnish and Sami culture collide. Another WWII interest is a cold **cave** (nr Presteveien & Tellef Dahls gate; tours adult/child Nkr100/50; ☎ mid-Jun-mid-Aug), which was used as an air-raid shelter. Tours are held at noon, 3pm, 6.15pm and 9pm. Up on a nearby hill, there's a **statue** dedicated to the Soviet soldiers who liberated the town.

**Barbara's B&B** (☎ 78 99 32 07; barbara@trollnet.no; Henrik Lunds gate 13; s/d Nkr300/450; 📍) has two rooms, free Internet and a friendly dog. **Rica Arctic Hotel** (☎ 78 99 29 29; Kongensgate 1-3; s Nkr705-1195, d Nkr895-1325; 📍) offers the usual amenities, but rooms are worn and contain ugly furniture.

Culinary delights aren't plentiful. Your best bet is the **Ritz** (☎ 78 99 34 81; Dr Wesselsgate 17; mains Nkr59-203; ☎ 3-11.30pm Mon & Tue, noon-12.30am Wed & Thu, noon-2.30am Fri & Sat, 1-11.30pm Sun) pizza restaurant and bar. The **Sentrum Kafé** (☎ 78 99 63 00; Dr Wesselsgate 18; sandwiches Nkr25-60; ☎ 9am-11pm) serves open-face sandwiches and marzipan cake to a roomful of people sitting on cheaply upholstered couches. Self-caterers should try the **Coop Mega** (☎ 78 97 06 66; Solheimsveien).

SAS, Braathens, Norwegian Air and Widerøe fly into Kirkenes' airport, a 20-minute drive from town; flying in and out of Ivalo, Finland, some 250km away, may be cheaper. The airport bus costs Nkr64/32 per adult/child, and a taxi is about Nkr275. Kirkenes is also the terminus of the *Hurtigruten* coastal steamer.

By land, buses serve Karasjok (Nkr452, 5½ hours), Hammerfest (Nkr744, 10¼ hours) and Alta (Nkr784, 12¾ hours) and many points in between.

**Visiting Russia**

Day and weekend bus tours from Kirkenes to Murmansk in summer are arranged by **Sovjetreiser** (☎ 78 99 25 01; polarscout@grenseland.no; Kongensgate 1-3). The guided bus tour, including lunch and sightseeing, costs Nkr1090/1290 per day/weekend but you'll have to add on the cost of a Russian visa, typically Nkr450 to Nkr1300, depending upon your nationality. For longer tours, try Pasvik Tours (p68). Travellers interested in visiting Russia on their own can take the bus to Murmansk (4½ hours, Nkr350/700 one way/return), and pay the visa fee, but you'll need an 'official invitation'. Contact the **Russian Consulate** (☎ 78 99 37 37; Kirkegata) for details. Visa processing takes around 16 days, so make sure you contact Sovjetreiser or the consulate well in advance.

**Visiting Ovre Pasvik National Park**

Even when the diabolical mosquito swarms make life hell for warm-blooded creatures, the lakes, tundra bogs and Norway's largest stand of virgin *taiga* forest lend a strange appeal to odd little Øvre Pasvik National Park. This is the last corner of Norway where wolves, wolverines, lynx and brown bears still roam freely, and it seems more like Finland or Siberia than anywhere else in Norway. The park is also home to moose and a host of birds that are rare elsewhere in Norway.

Hikers can douse themselves in repellent and follow the poor road that turns southwest 1.5km south of Vaggatem, where there's a coffee shop and camp site, and ends 9km later at the car park near the northeastern end of Lake Sortbrystjorna. There, a marked track leads southwest for 5km, passing scenic lakes, marshes and bogs to end at the Ellenvannskoia hikers' hut beside the large Lake Ellenvatn. The best map is Statens Kartverk's *Krokfjellet 2333-I*, which, conveniently, covers the entire park.

There is no public transport to the park.

repetitious short film, but if you want to really appreciate Nordkapp take a walk out along the cliffs. If the weather is fair you can perch yourself on the edge of the continent and watch the polar mist roll in.

The continent's real northernmost point, **Knivskjelodden** (71°11'08"N latitude) is inaccessible to vehicles, but you can hike 9km to this lovely promontory from a marked car park about 9km south of Nordkapp. It takes about five hours to walk there and back.

An asphalt road winds across a rocky plateau and past herds of grazing reindeer up to Nordkapp. Depending on snow conditions, it's usually open from May to mid-October; the **Road User Information Centre** (☎ 177) gives opening dates.

From mid-May to the end of August, local buses run daily at 12.15pm and 9pm between Honningsvåg and Nordkapp (Nkr66, one hour). There is an additional service at 8.20pm between 2 June and 16 August, and another at 10.55pm between 2 June and 9 August. Between 2 June and 9 August the last bus departs Nordkapp at 1.10am, allowing views of the midnight sun. Avoid so-called tours, which charge considerably more for similar services.

**HAMMERFEST**

pop 9200

Most visitors to Hammerfest arrive by the *Hurtigruten* coastal steamer and have an hour or two to poke around. Unless you have unusual interests, that's about as much time you'll need. The fishing town's oldest experience can be had at the Royal & Ancient Polar Bear Society (see Sights, following). Those who spend more time here usually have a car, though they should take heed that ongoing natural-gas exploration off the coast has brought a lot of energy types to town, which in turn has caused hotel rates to rise prohibitively.

The **tourist office** (☎ 78 41 21 85; Rådhuset) operates out of the Polar Bear Society.

**Sights**

The small, well-done **Gjenreisningsmuseet** (Reconstruction Museum; ☎ 78 42 26 30; Kirkegata 21; adult/child Nkr40/15; ☎ 10am-6pm mid-Jun-Aug, 11am-2pm Sep-mid-Jun) details the rebuilding of Hammerfest after WWII. Nearby, the bizarre **Royal & Ancient Polar Bear Society** (☎ 78 41 31 00; Rådhuset; admission Nkr20; ☎ 6am-5.30pm 24 Jun-10 Aug, shorter hrs

rest of year) is dedicated to preserving northern culture, and has exhibits on Arctic hunting and local history. Any visitor can take out membership (Nkr150); members get a certificate, a champagne toast and their admission fee waived for life. The bone they use to 'knight' you – something a male walrus misses dearly – is a real crowd-pleaser.

Just west of the Reconstruction Museum on Kirkegata is Hammerfest's contemporary **church**, where you can often find reindeer grazing in the graveyard. For lovely views of the town, coast and mountains, climb the 86m-high **Salen Hill**; the 10-minute trail begins behind the small park directly up from the town hall.

**Sleeping & Eating**

**AF Camping Storvannet** (☎ 78 41 10 10; Storravnsvæien; cabins Nkr320-340; ☎ late May-late Sep; 📍) Just 2km east of the town centre, this basic place offers simple rooms and cooking facilities.

**Quality Hotel Hammerfest** (☎ 78 42 96 00; hammerfest@quality.choice.no; Strandgata 2; s/d from Nkr645/795; 📍) Rooms at this chain hotel have loads of character – some resemble cabins on ocean liners.

**Kafé RettVest** (Sjøgata 10; mains Nkr65-130; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-3pm Sat) This bustling café sits a block from the coastal streamer's dock and serves lasagne, tortellini, reindeer and omelettes. It isn't pretty, but the crowds lend it a good feel.

**Sandberg bakery** (☎ 78 41 18 08; Strandgata 19; sandwiches Nkr36; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) Serving painfully good pastries and coffee, this town favourite will give you reason to return.

Self-caterers can find a big **Coop supermarket** (9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat) just east of the town hall.

**Getting There & Away**

The *Hurtigruten* coastal steamer stops here. Once or twice daily (four days weekly from mid-August to late June), buses run between Hammerfest and Alta (Nkr183, 2¾ hours). There's also a bus between Hammerfest and Kirkenes (Nkr744, 10¼ hours), via Karasjok (Nkr305, 4¾ hours).

**ALTA**

pop 17,350

If anything in Finnmark can be called cosmopolitan, Alta is it. It's easily Finnmark's

largest town and, thanks to the Finnmark Municipal University, it's home to 2000 students. It's a sprawling place, however, stretching for at least 15km along the E6. The town's two main centres, Sentrum and Bossekop, are 3km apart. The biggest attraction in town is a collection of Unesco-protected rock carvings, which date from 4000 BC. If this doesn't grab your fancy, wilderness surrounds the city, as do opportunities to go ice fishing or dogsledding. Inquire at the **tourist office** (☎ 78 45 50 00; Sandfallveien 1; ☎ 8am-3.30pm), 1km northwest of Sentrum off the E6.

### Sights & Activities

Alta's main sight is the impressive, World Heritage-protected, **prehistoric rock art** (☎ 78 45 63 30; www.alta.museum.no; Altaveien 19; adult/child Nkr70/free; ☎ 8am-11pm mid-Jun–mid-Aug, 8am-8pm early Jun & late Aug, 9am-6pm May & Sep) at Hjemmeluft, on the E6, 4km southwest of Bossekop. A 3km-long network of boardwalks

leads past many of the 3000 rock carvings of hunting scenes, boats, fertility symbols, bears and reindeer that date back as far as 4000 BC. Wait for the snow to melt before visiting, otherwise the rocks will be covered. The admission charge includes guiding, and admission to the adjacent **Alta Museum**, with regional exhibits.

The Altaelva River rushes through the scenic 400m-deep **Sautso**, northern Europe's grandest canyon. It's best seen as part of a tour, which includes access to the Alta Power Station dam and a snack in a traditional Sami *lavvo* (tent). Contact the tourist office for more information.

Alta is also renowned for its salmon run; several local companies provide fishing tours. Again, the tourist office has details.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Wisløff Camping** (☎ 78 43 43 03; www.wisloeff.no, in Norwegian; Øvre Alta; tent sites from Nkr70, cabins Nkr300-400; ☎) This award-winning place has happy

little beige and red cabins, 4km south of Bossekop on highway Rv93.

**Alta HI Hostel** (☎ 78 43 44 09; alta.hostel@vandrerhjem.no; Midtbakkveien 52; dm/s/d Nkr180/270/300; ☎ late Jun–late Aug; ☎) Just a short walk from the Sentrum bus stop, this bright-red place has simple, good-value accommodation.

**Hotel Aurora Borealis** (☎ 78 45 78 00; www.hotelaurora.no; Saga; s/d Nkr750/850; ☎) This cosy, art-filled place is tucked away about 6km east of Bossekop on the E6. Staff will help plan snowmobile trips (including the option of spending a night in a Sami tent), dogsledding excursions and fishing trips (the kitchen will even prepare what you catch).

**Vica Hotell** (☎ 78 43 47 11; www.vica.no; Fogdebakken 6; s Nkr1020-1285, d Nkr1120-1485; ☎) In a wooden former farmhouse in Bossekop, this place offers free sauna, Internet access, and outdoor hot tub (perfect in winter). The rooms have character, and the public spaces are filled with stuffed creatures. The attached Henrik Restaurant (mains Nkr167 to Nkr299) serves huge portions from an Arctic menu that includes reindeer, elk, cod, and a warm soup of cloudberry served with homemade ice cream.

**Omega** (☎ 78 44 54 00; Markedsgata 14-16; lunch Nkr64-104, dinner Nkr89-229; ☎ 11am-midnight Mon-Wed, 11am-1am Thu-Sat) This popular joint serves excellent tapas and salads. One of these involves a filling piece of salmon baked under a layer of chevre and accompanied with fried onions, mushrooms and greens (Nkr89). Head next door to Alpha, a small red bar, for drinks with the Nordland cool crowd.

### Getting There & Away

Norwegian Air and Braathens service the Alta airport, 3.5km east of Sentrum. A Nor-Way Bussekspress service runs between Tromsø and Alta (Nkr380, 6½ hours, once daily). FFR buses run to and from Kautokeino (Nkr193, 2½ hours), Hammerfest (Nkr180, 2¾ hours), and Nordkapp (Nkr290, 5¾ hours) once or twice a day.

### TROMSØ

pop 47,100

In contrast to some of the more sober communities dotting the north coast of Norway, Tromsø is a spirited place with street music, cultural happenings and more pubs per capita than any other Norwegian town – it even has its own brewery.

A backdrop of snowcapped peaks provides spectacular scenery, excellent hiking in summer, and great skiing and dogsledding from September to April. Many polar expeditions have departed from Tromsø, earning the city the nickname 'Gateway to the Arctic'. A statue of explorer Roald Amundsen (see p20 and p22), who headed some of the expeditions, stands in a little square down by the harbour.

### Information

**Main post office** (Strandgata 41)

**Tourist office** (☎ 77 61 00 00; www.destinasjon tromsø.no; Storgata 61; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri & 10.30am-5pm Sat & Sun Jun–mid-Aug, 8.30am-10pm Mon-Fri mid-Aug–Jun)

### Sights & Activities

The city centre has many period buildings, including the old cathedral, **Tromsø Domkirke** (Storgata 25) – one of Norway's largest wooden churches – and a **Catholic church** (Storgata 94), both built in 1861. Tromsø's most striking church, however, is the **Arctic Cathedral** (☎ 77 64 76 11; Hans Nilssensvei 41; adult/child Nkr22/free; ☎ 10am-8pm Jun-Aug, shorter hrs rest of year), on the mainland over the bridge. It's a freaky '60s building that looks like a lot of triangles stuck together.

Also worth a visit is the **Tromsø Museum** (☎ 77 64 50 00; www.imv.uit.no; Lars Thøringssvei 10; adult/child Nkr30/15; ☎ 9am-8pm Jun-Aug, shorter hrs Sep-May), at the southern end of Tromsøya. It's northern Norway's largest museum and has some well-presented displays on Arctic wildlife, Sami culture and regional history. Take bus No 28 from Stortorget. Nearby, the restored WWII fort at the **Tromsø Military Museum** (☎ 77 62 88 36; Solstrandveien; adult/child Nkr30/15; ☎ noon-5pm Wed-Sun Jun-Aug, noon-5pm Sun May & Sep) includes a former ammunition store with an exhibition on the 52,600-tonne German battleship *Tirpitz*, which was sunk by British air forces at Tromsø on 12 November 1944.

Modern and well executed, **Polaria** (☎ 77 75 01 00; Hjalmar Johansens gate 12; adult/child Nkr75/40; ☎ 10am-7pm mid-May–mid-Aug, noon-5pm mid-Aug–mid-Jun) features extensive displays on polar topics ranging from exploration to natural history, a 180-degree cinema showing an interesting film about Svalbard, and an aquarium with Arctic fish and four bearded seals.

The **Polar Museum** (☎ 77 68 43 73; www.polar museum.no; Søndre Tollbugata 11; adult/child Nkr43/10; ☎ 10am-7pm mid-June–mid-Aug, shorter hrs mid-Aug–mid-Jun) has exhibits on the Arctic frontier.

### SIDE TRIP: KAUTOKEINO

Kautokeino remains emphatically Sami, and it resembles no other town in Norway. Around 85% of the townspeople have Sami as their first language, and it's not uncommon to see locals in traditional dress. Around one third of the population earn their living working in some aspect of reindeer herding.

Because the tourist industry isn't as developed (or as plastic) as that in Karasjok, there isn't as much to do. While this is problematic for some, others seek out the more authentic culture that can be enjoyed here.

The **tourist office** (☎ 78 48 65 00; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri May-Aug) is in a kiosk by the main road through town. It's best to call ahead to make sure someone is there.

The best time to visit is during the **Easter Festival** (www.saami-easterfestival.org), when thousands of costumed Sami participate in championship reindeer racing, theatre and cultural events, and the little town busts at the seams.

The **Kautokeino Hamlet & Museum** (☎ 78 48 71 00; Boavonjarga 23; adult/child Nkr20/free; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat & noon-7pm Sun mid-Jun–mid-Aug, 9am-3pm Mon-Fri mid-Aug–mid-Jun) presents a traditional Sami settlement, complete with an early home, temporary dwellings, a trapping exhibit, and several agricultural and pastoral outbuildings.

The very friendly **Kautokeino Camping** (☎ 78 48 54 00; Suomalvodda 16; tent sites Nkr100, cabins Nkr280-1000, motel rooms Nkr480-850; ☎) south of the river, has a Sami *lavvo* with an open fire.

**Alfred's Kro** (☎ 78 48 61; 18 Hannoluohkka 4; mains Nkr60-135; ☎ 11am-6pm Mon-Fri, noon-6pm Sat & Sun) offers traditional dishes involving reindeer. For an unusual experience, visit **Madam Bongos** (☎ 78 48 61 60; dinner Nkr160) in the middle of nowhere, about 11km out of town. The dinner, always the same, features coffee, *bidus* (a vegetable and reindeer soup), reindeer steak, and berries with cream. You must call first to make an appointment and to get directions.

The town's bar, **Mara's Pub** (☎) from 8pm Tue-Fri, from 1pm Sat & Sun) occasionally books small bands. Its rough wooden floors, booths and benches mark a town institution (it's the main nightlife spot), and costumed revellers shoehorn themselves in whenever a wedding occurs. It's beneath Alfred's Kro.

Buses connect Kautokeino with Alta (Nkr193, 2½ hours).

Some are interesting, while others – such as those on hunting furry Arctic creatures – are of less universal appeal.

Established in 1877, the **Mack Brewery** (☎ 77 62 45 00; www.mack.no, in Norwegian; Storgata 5; tours Nkr100; ☞ tours noon-4pm Mon-Thu) produces Mack's Pilsner, Isbjørn, Haakon and several dark beers; the tour fee includes beer, beer and souvenir. You can smell the brewery from a block away.

On sleepless nights you can stroll by the light of the midnight sun through the 1.6-hectare **botanical garden** (☎ 77 64 50 78; Breivika; admission free; ☞ 24 hrs), which blooms brightly despite its northern locale. Take bus No 20. You can get a fine city view by taking the **cable car** (☎ 77 63 87 37; Solliveien 12; return adult/child Nkr70/30; ☞ 10am-5pm Apr-Sep, to 1am clear nights when midnight sun in view) 420m

up Mt Storsteinen. Take bus No 26 from Stortorget harbour.

### Festivals & Events

**Tromsø International Film Festival** (☎ 77 75 30 90; www.tiff.no) is held in mid-January. Perhaps the most exciting of Norway's film festivals, it shows forgotten classics, weird shorts, American independents and films from Northern Norway, the Baltic States, and elsewhere.

### Sleeping

**Tromsø Camping** (☎ 77 63 80 37; www.tromsøcamping.no; tent sites/cabins Nkr150/400-900; (P)) This place on the mainland, 2km east of the Arctic Cathedral, has some spots next to a small river; others are less spectacular. Cabins have cooking facilities. Take bus 26.

**Tromsø HI Hostel** (☎ 77 65 76 28; tromsø.hostel@vandrerhjem.no; Åsgårdveien 9; dm/s/d Nkr175/275/405; ☞ mid-Jun-mid-Aug; (P)) This clean and tidy basic hostel sits 1.5km west of the city centre. Phone for directions.

**Hotell Nord** (☎ 77 68 31 59; www.hotellnord.no; Parkgata 4; s Nkr450-540, d Nkr590-695; (P)) This friendly place, up on the hillside just west of the centre, feels like an informal guesthouse. The cosy rooms are available with or without private bathroom, and rates include breakfast.

**Comfort Hotel With** (☎ 77 68 70 00; www.with.no; Sjøgata 35-37; s/d Nkr1290/1490, summer & weekend Nkr805/970; (P)) Waterside, amenity-filled rooms along with fine (and complimentary) dinner buffets make this place a good option for a more upmarket experience.

The tourist office books rooms in private homes for around Nkr250/450 for a single/

double. Most are within a 10-minute walk of the centre.

### Eating

**Meieriet** (☎ 77 61 36 39; Grønnegata 37; mains Nkr56-136; ☞ 8am-1.30am Mon-Thu, 8am-3am Fri, noon-3am Sat, noon-1.30am Sun) This characterful place adorned with red leather sofas, antique radios and a pool table serves mostly stir-fried dishes. There's also a weekend DJ.

**Amtmandens Datter** (☎ 77 68 49 06; Grønnegata 81; mains Nkr88-135; ☞ noon-2.30am Mon-Sat, 3pm-3am Sun) Pub-like and student-friendly, this place serves beer, salads and vegetarian sandwiches. It's a great place to hang out, with Internet access and plenty of newspapers and board games.

**Svertshuset Skarven** (☎ 77 60 07 25; Strandtorget 1; mains Nkr125-250; ☞ from 4pm) Near the harbour

## SVALBARD

Svalbard is *the* destination for an unforgettable holiday. This wondrous archipelago is the world's most readily accessible piece of the polar north and one of the most spectacular places imaginable. Vast icebergs and floes choke the seas, and ice fields and glaciers frost the lonely heights, but Svalbard also hosts a surprising variety of flora and fauna, including seals, walrus, Arctic foxes and polar bears.

Trips to Svalbard are best planned. When you arrive you'll almost certainly want to participate in some kind of organised trek or tour, and many need to be booked early. To learn more, visit the tourist board's excellent website, www.svalbard.net.

Longyearbyen, the largest settlement on Svalbard, has an airport with flights to and from Tromsø. You'll find all the usual facilities, including a post office, a bank (with an ATM), and a library. Barentsburg, the Russian settlement, is about 40km west, while Ny Ålesund, a Norwegian research station with an airstrip, is about 100km northwest. Apart from in the immediate vicinity of the settlements, there are no roads.

Dozens of exciting tour options are listed on the tourist board website. Accommodation, transport and meals are usually included in longer tours, but day tours are also available (see under Longyearbyen, following). The most popular tour operators:

- **Spitsbergen Travel** (☎ 79 02 61 00; www.spitsbergentravel.no) Offers week-long cruises, multi-day snowmobile safaris, five-day dogsledding trips (Nkr10,300) and 12-day trekking tours (Nkr16,600).
- **Basecamp Spitsbergen** (☎ 79 02 46 00; www.basecampexplorer.com) Offers unique lodging options, including rooms on an ice-locked ship. It arranges short ski trips, five-day dogsled and snowmobile expeditions (Nkr9000), and more.
- **Svalbard Wildlife Service** (☎ 79 02 56 60; www.wildlife.no) Offers varied tours, including camping, kayaking, glacier exploration and seven-day summer ski trips to Ny Åesund (Nkr10,950).

### Longyearbyen

This frontier-like community with a population of 1700 is strewn with coal-mining detritus and enjoys a superb backdrop, including two glacier tongues: Longyearbreen and Lars Hjertabreen.

At the **Svalbard Museum** (☎ 79 02 13 84; Skjæringa; admission Nkr30; ☞ 11am-7pm Mon-Fri, noon-4pm Sat, 1-7pm Sun Jul & Aug, shorter hrs rest of year), west of the centre, exhibits cover mining, 17th-century whaling, and the history, climate, geology, wildlife and exploration of the archipelago.

Many short trips and day tours that vary with the season are on offer, including fossil hunting (Nkr290), mine tours (Nkr590), boat trips to Barentsburg and Pyramidien (Nkr920), dogsledding (from Nkr750), dogsledding on *wheels* (Nkr550), diving trips (Nkr1200), glacier hiking (Nkr490), ice-caving (from Nkr520), kayaking (from Nkr550), mountain biking (Nkr420), horse-riding (Nkr420), and snowmobiling (from Nkr1250). Contact the tourist board for more details.

Accommodation options include the popular **Longyearbyen Camping** (☎ 79 02 10 68; info@terrappolaris.com; per person Nkr80; ☞ late Jun-early Sep), next to the airport and about an hour's walk from town; **Mary-Ann's Polar Rigg** (☎ 79 02 37 02; riggen@longyearbyen.net; s/d Nkr395/550), a simple guesthouse with kitchenette and hot tub (linen is Nkr100 extra and breakfast is Nkr95); **Spitsbergen Nybyen Gjestehus** (☎ 79 02 63 00; spitsbergen.guesthouse@spitsbergentravel.no; s Nkr495-650, d Nkr840-990), a large, functional building south of the centre; and **Basecamp Spitsbergen** (☎ 79 02 46 00; www.basecampexplorer.com; s Nkr800-1550, d Nkr950-1750), a top-notch establishment featuring rooms with a seal hunter's cabin look and a common space with a glass roof for polar night viewing.

For food, **Huset** (☎ 79 02 25 00; mains Nkr195-255), west of the centre, remains a popular choice for both Arctic- and French-style meals. The good food becomes even more impressive if you remember where exactly you are eating it. In the central shopping mall you'll find the Svalbard-butikken supermarket and **Kafé Busen** (mains under Nkr100), which serves daily specials as well as typical cafeteria fare.

SAS and Braathens fly regularly from Tromsø to Longyearbyen. A taxi to town costs Nkr100 to Nkr120. The airport bus (Nkr35) serves the various accommodation options.

### Around Svalbard

Independent travel around Svalbard is heavily regulated in order to protect both the virgin landscape and you. Because of this, travel to the very few settlements is usually done as part of a tour. One of these settlements is **Barentsburg** (population 900), a Soviet-era relic. Simultaneously depressing and fascinating, this tiny Russian town still mines and exports coal. A statue of Lenin stares over the bleak human-made landscape and the impressive natural landscape that surrounds it.

Tourist cruises might also bring you to **Ny Ålesund** which, at latitude 79°N, is a wild place with none-too-friendly scientists and downright hostile Arctic terns (you may have to beat the latter off with a stick). Remnants of past glories include a **stranded locomotive**, previously used for transporting coal, and an **airship pylon**, used by Amundsen and Nobile on their successful crossing of the North Pole in 1926.

and festooned with nautical instruments, this local favourite serves an Arctic menu that includes a delicious whale soup (Nkr79), fish burgers and reindeer steaks.

You can buy fresh boiled shrimp from fishing boats at Stortorget harbour. The harbourside **Coop Mega supermarket** (Stortorget 1) has a cheap 2nd-floor cafeteria and a nice view over the water.

### Entertainment

Tromsø enjoys a thriving nightlife. On Friday and Saturday most nightspots stay open past 4am. Many also serve light meals. The following recommendations merely scratch the surface.

**Blå Rock Café** (☎ 77 61 00 20; Strandgata 14; ☎ 11.30am-2am Sun-Thu, 11.30am-3am Fri & Sat) This place attracts a young, cool crowd. Instruments and pictures hang from the rafters, 75 types of beer spill on the ground, and live bands and DJs (playing rock, naturally) rattle the rafters.

**Strøket** (☎ 77 68 44 00; Storgata 46; ☎ 4pm-1.30am Tue-Thu, 4pm-3am Fri, noon-3am Sat, 7pm-midnight Sun) The three floors of restaurant, bar, and disco pull in the hipsters like pollen to insects.

### Getting There & Away

Tromsø is the main airport hub for northern Norway, with direct flights to Oslo, Bergen, Bodø, Trondheim, Alta, Hammerfest, Kirkenes and Longyearbyen. Airport buses (Nkr40) depart from the Radisson SAS Hotel Tromsø. A taxi costs Nkr100 to Nkr200.

There are two or three daily express buses between Tromsø and Narvik (Nkr315, four to five hours). Buses to and from Alta (Nkr355, 6¾ hours) run once daily.

The *Hurtigruten* coastal steamer stops here and is the best route south to Bodø, where you can get a train back to Mo i Rana.

## ITINERARY 2: NORTHWEST FINLAND

**A trip through the wilds of northwest Finland from Rovaniemi, the gateway to Lapland, though some of Scandinavia's remotest national parks and across the border into Norway.**

Northwestern Lapland is best known for its downhill ski resorts, superb summer hiking, and rafting and canoeing on the mighty



### FAST FACTS

- **Access for independent travellers**  
Excellent
- **Best time to travel** May to September
- **Difficulty level** Easy to moderate
- **Don't forget** Camera, film, binoculars, insect repellent, head-net and, if driving, spare tyres, basic tools, plenty of food and water, blankets, and first-aid kit
- **Don't miss** Skiing in Levi, hiking in Pallas-Ounastunturi National Park
- **Gateway city** Rovaniemi, Finland
- **Length of route** Approximately 580km
- **Modes of travel** Car, bus
- **Recommended map** Eurokarte Finland 1:750,000
- **Time needed** Three to 10 days

Muoionjoki and Tornionjoki Rivers, which form the border between Finland and Sweden. The region is sparsely populated and offers some of the best-preserved wilderness in Europe. Whether you just pass through on a road trip or set off on an extensive trek, allow enough time to get a real sense of this wide-open wilderness country.

### Getting Around

See p298 for details on travel options in the Scandinavian far north.

### ROVANIEMI

For details on Rovaniemi, see p314.

### KITTIÄ

☎ 016 / pop 3000

According to legend, Kittilä was named after Kitti, daughter of the mighty witch Päiviö, who appears in local fairytales. Although the town is the main service centre for north-western Lapland, Kittilä has little to recommend it to travellers except as a jumping-off point for ski resort Levi, 20km to the north.

The few sights include the old wooden **church**, designed by CL Engel and completed in 1831, and the **Taidemuseo Einari Junttila** (☎ Mon-Sat), which commemorates a local artist who once lived in the building.

The **Kittilä open-air museum** (☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Sun Jun-Aug), 3km south of the village, features a collection of traditional buildings. In early July, Kittilä hosts a traditional **market** that attracts folks from all over Lapland.

If you do decide to stay, **Hotelli Kittilä** (☎ 643 201; www.levi.fi/hotellikittila, in Finnish; Valtatie 49; s/d €75/110; ☎ ☒ ☒ ☒), at the northern end of the village, is the town's only real hotel. The restaurant serves a decent buffet lunch (€8 to €14).

There are daily flights between Helsinki and Kittilä. The airport is 4km north of town. There are seven buses a day from Rovaniemi to Kittilä (€22, 2½ hours) and on to Levi (€25, three hours).

### SIDE TRIP: HETTA & PALLAS-OUNASTUNTURI NATIONAL PARK

The village of Hetta is a good base for treks into the surrounding area. There's a municipal **tourist office** (☎ 556 211) at the junction of the Hetta main road and the route toward Karasjok (Norway).

The nearby **Pallas-Ounastunturi National Park** (www.metsa.fi/natural/nationalparks/pallas-ounastunturi/index.htm) protects the area surrounding **Pallastunturi Fell**. The main summer attraction is the excellent 60km trekking route from Hetta to **Hotel Pallastunturi** (☎ 016-532 441) inside the park, but the area also offers excellent winter skiing. The route is one of the easiest long-distance walks in Lapland and can easily be completed in four days. There are seven free wilderness huts, but they can be packed with people in summer, so it's wise to carry a tent.

The **Fell Lapland Nature Centre** (☎ 647950; www.enontekio.fi; Peuratie) is the local tourist office and a visitor centre for the Pallas-Ounastunturi National Park. Hetta has lots of accommodation, including summer camping and cabins. **Hetan Majatalo** (☎ 554 0400; hetan-majatalo@co.inet.fi; s/d €57/76; ☎ year-round) is a fine guesthouse with country-style rooms, all with TV and bathroom.

The long Ounasjoki, one of the best canoeing rivers in Lapland, runs from Hetta in the north to Rovaniemi in the south, and passes Sirkka and Kittilä. Canoes and equipment can be hired at **Pole Star Safaris** (☎ 641 688, 049-391 090) at the Levin Portti tourist centre in Levi. Companies in Kittilä also offer equipment hire.

There is one bus a week direct from Rovaniemi to Pallas. Buses to Hetta run daily from Rovaniemi (€36.60, five hours) via Kittilä.

### LEVI & SIRKKA

☎ 016

Levi is a major skiing centre built around the village of Sirkka, and is one of the most popular ski resorts in Lapland, particularly with the party crowd. The ski season usually runs from November to May. In summer and autumn, trekking and mountain biking are the main outdoor activities.

The **tourist office** (☎ 639 3300; www.levi.fi; Myllyojentie 2; ☎ 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5.30pm Sat & Sun) handles accommodation bookings as well as snowmobile safaris, dogsledding treks and reindeer rides.

The ski resort has 45 downhill slopes and 19 lifts. Two lifts operate in summer, and mountain bikes can be hired from the ski-hire shop. Ice-fishing on the frozen lake is popular in spring.

Accommodation prices go through the roof in the peak seasons: February to May, and December. From May to September, though, you can get a comfortable cabin sleeping up to five people for as little as €45 a night, and hotel prices drop to rates comparable to those anywhere else in Finland.

The best budget choice in Levi is **Levin Matkailumaja** (☎ 641 126; www.levi.fi/matkailumaja, in Finnish; Levintie 1625; cottages €50-135), which has a group of cosy, self-contained cottages in the middle of the village.

There are seven buses a day from Rovaniemi to Levi (€25, three hours) via Kittilä.



## KILPISJÄRVI

☎ 016

The remote 'left arm' of Finland is home to some of Finland's highest mountains (which aren't very high), but this scenic outpost on the shores of Lake Kilpisjärvi is really the preserve of serious trekkers or travellers with private transport.

The area offers fantastic trekking. Most people climb **Saana Fell** (1029m), or walk (or take a boat taxi, €13) to the **Malla Nature Park**, where you can stand on the joint border of Sweden, Norway and Finland. Serious hikers can walk to **Halti Fell** (1328m), the highest in Finland. There are wilderness huts en route, but a map is essential. Information and accommodation are available at the hiking centre, **Kilpisjärven Retkeilykeskus** (☎ 537 771; retkeilykeskus@sunpoint.net; ☞ early Aug–late Sep), also the best place to find advice on routes.

There's a daily bus between Rovaniemi and Kilpisjärvi (€47.50, eight hours) via Kittilä. From early June to mid-September **Eskelesen** (www.eskelesen-lapinlinjat.com) runs daily buses to Tromsø (€27.60, 3½ hours).

## ESSENTIAL FACTS

### DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

For information on dangers posed by insects and wildlife, see p264. For information on how to prevent and deal with hypothermia, see p332.

### FURTHER READING

For more in-depth coverage, Lonely Planet publishes individual guides to Finland, Norway and Sweden. Another useful publication is Lonely Planet's *Scandinavian Phrasebook* (with language background and phrases in Danish, Finnish, Icelandic, Norwegian and Swedish).

The Svalbard boxed text (p324) in this chapter is intended to provide information for tourists and casual independent travellers only. Those who want more background information or wish to mount a longer expedition should look for *Svalbard: Spitsbergen, Franz Josef Land, Jan Mayen*, by long-time Svalbard resident Andreas Umbreit.

If you're planning any multiday hikes *Walking in Norway*, by Connie Roos, includes several routes in Arctic Norway that are accessible by public transport.

## MONEY

Finland is the only Nordic country to adopt the euro. In Norway the currency is the Norwegian krone (Nkr); in Sweden it is the Swedish krona (Skr). ATMs are available in the larger Arctic towns and accept Visa, Plus, EC, Cirrus, Eurocard or MasterCard.

Most currencies can be easily exchanged in Scandinavia, but US dollars, pounds sterling and euros are the best to carry. *Bureaux de change* such as Forex and post offices tend to offer better rates, and they charge lower fees or commissions than banks.

For the most part, tipping isn't required in Scandinavia, although if you round up the bill or leave a little something in recognition of good service, it won't be refused.

## TELEPHONE

You can ring abroad from almost any phone box in Scandinavia, though with the popularity of mobile phones there are fewer and fewer of them. Often they accept phonecards or credit cards only. Reverse-charge (collect) calls are usually possible, and communicating with the local operator in English should not be much of a problem. Local libraries almost always have Internet access.

### Mobile Phones

Most populated parts of Scandinavia use GSM 900/1800, compatible with the system in the rest of Europe and Australasia but not with the North American GSM 1900 or the totally different system in Japan. You can hire mobile phones everywhere except Norway, and it's particularly easy in mobile-centric Finland. Another option is to buy a local SIM card with a rechargeable account. This is particularly good value in Sweden and Finland.

Coverage across the north is patchy, though, and may not be worth the cost. Local telephone companies and national tourist offices can advise on coverage.

### Phone Codes

Norway has no domestic telephone codes.

**Country code** Norway ☎ 47, Sweden ☎ 46, Finland ☎ 358

**Directory assistance** ☎ 411

**Emergency** ☎ 112

**International access code** ☎ 00

**National/international operator** Norway

☎ 180/181, Sweden ☎ 118118/118119, Finland

☎ 020202/020208

## Phonecards

Public telephones that accept stored-value phonecards are the norm, and in some places coin-operated phones are almost impossible to find. Phonecards are available from post offices and shops. More and more public telephone kiosks are giving callers the opportunity to pay by credit card.

## TIME

Time in Norway and Sweden is one hour ahead of GMT/UTC, the same as most of Western Europe. Finland is two hours ahead of GMT/UTC. When it's noon in Tromsø or Kiruna, it's 1pm in Finland, 11am in London, 6am in New York and 9pm in Sydney.

Norway, Sweden and Finland all observe daylight-saving time. Clocks are set ahead one hour on the last Sunday in March and are set back one hour on the last Sunday in October.

## TOURIST INFORMATION

All larger Arctic communities have a tourist office with English brochures, free maps and helpful multilingual staff. Most are open long hours in summer and short hours (or not at all) in winter. They will book hotels and make reservations for transport and tours; a small charge may apply. In smaller villages information for travellers is generally available from the town council.

Some useful contacts for pre-departure planning:

**Finnish Tourist Board** (www.visitfinland.com)

**Finnmark Tourist Board** (www.visitnorthcape.com)

**Norwegian Tourist Board** (www.visitnorway.com)

**Swedish Tourism Associated** (www.turism.se) Lists Sweden's tourist information offices and their contact details.

**Swedish Travel and Tourism Council** (www.visit-sweden.com)

**Virtual Finland** (virtual.finland.fi)

## VISAS

Citizens of the UK, the USA, Canada, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand don't need visas if visiting a Scandinavian country for less than three months; the same is true for citizens of EU and European Economic Area countries and most Commonwealth countries (except South Africa and several other African and Pacific countries). Citizens of South Africa and other African, Asian and some Eastern European coun-

## GATEWAY CITIES

### Getting to Mo i Rana

If you want to fly to Mo i Rana you'll have to fly with **SAS** (☎ 81 52 04 00; www.scandinavian.net) to Trondheim and then hop on a **Braathens** (☎ 81 52 00 00; www.braathens.no) or **Widerøe** (☎ 81 00 12 00; www.wideroe.no) flight to Mo i Rana.

Alternatively, **NSB** (Norges Statsbaner or Norwegian State Railways; ☎ 81 50 08 88; www.nsb.no) runs trains from Oslo, and **Nor-Way Bussekspress** (☎ 82 02 13 00; www.nor-way.no) runs buses on the same route.

### Getting to Tromsø

Tromsø is the main airport hub for northern Norway, with direct flights to Oslo, Bergen and Trondheim with SAS, Braathens, Widerøe and discount airline **Norwegian Air** (☎ 81 52 18 15; www.norwegian.no).

Tromsø is also served by **Hurtigruten ferries** (☎ 81 03 00 00; www.hurtigruten.no) and Nor-Way Bussekspress coaches.

### Getting to Rovaniemi

**Finnair** (☎ 600-140 140; www.finnair.com) has daily flights to Rovaniemi from Helsinki, Kemi and Oulu.

**VR Ltd Finnish Railways** (☎ 600-4192; www.vr.fi) trains are the best way to travel overland between Helsinki and Rovaniemi as they're quicker and cheaper than the bus. There are eight daily trains (via Oulu), including four overnight services.

tries need tourist visas for entry to Scandinavian countries; these are only available in advance.

With a valid passport most travellers will be able to visit Scandinavian countries for up to three (sometimes even six) months, provided they have some sort of onward or return ticket and/or 'sufficient means of support' (money). Except at international airports, it's unlikely that immigration officials will give you and your passport more than a cursory glance – if that.

Websites with useful information for visitors with visa questions:

**Finnish Directorate of Immigration** (www.uvi.fi)

**Norwegian Directorate of Immigration** (www.udi.no)

**Swedish Migration Board** (www.migrationsverket.se)

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