

Travel summary

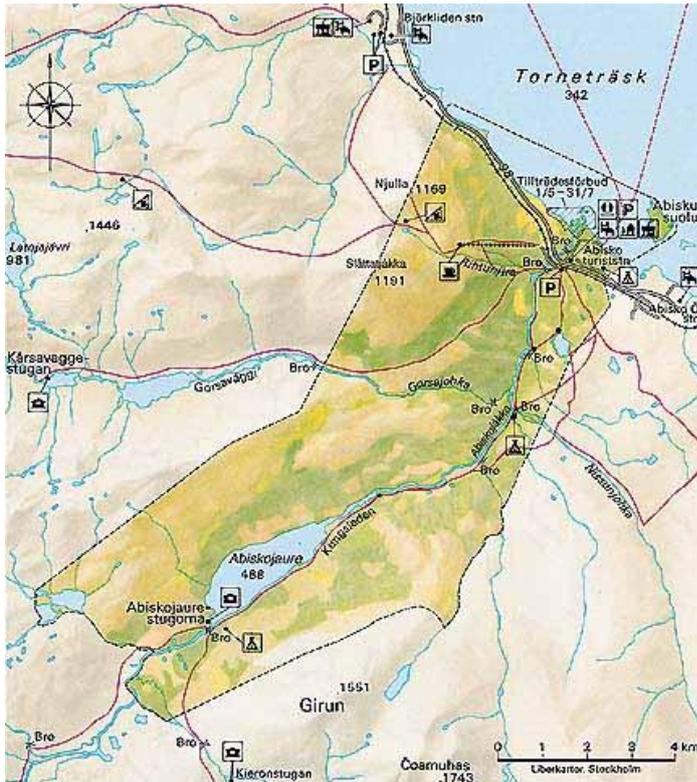
07/06/2012 (Day 1)	Flight from Gdansk, Poland to Stockholm, Sweden Flight from Stockholm, Sweden to Kiruna, Sweden Sleeping on a camping in Kiruna
08/06/2012 (Day 2)	Train from Kiruna to Abisko Turiststation Start of walking on Kungsleden
09/06/2012 (Day 3)	Reaching Abiskojaure and walking further behind Tent damage
10/06/2012 (Day 4)	Walking back to Abisko Turiststation to repair the tent
11/06/2012 (Day 5)	Bus to Narvik Bus from Narvik to Tysfjorden
12/06/2012 (Day 6)	Exploring Tysfjorden
13/06/2012 (Day 7)	Bus from Tysfjorden to Narvik Bus from Narvik to Svolar in Lofoten
14/06/2012 (Day 8)	Hiking in the mountains in Lofoten Evening bus to Narvik
15/06/2012 (Day 9)	Hiking in Narvik Getting from Narvik to Kiruna in the evening
16/06/2012 (Day 10)	Plane from Kiruna to Stockholm. Flight from Stockholm to London.

Alterations of the route of the journey as compared to the one in the proposal

The first 4 days of my travel went according to the plan from the travel grant application. I was walking on Kungsleden trail. Behind Abiskojaure, unfortunately, my tent got severely damaged. This prevented me from continuing my hike on the trail, as there were no alternative shelters I could stay in during the nights. I had to return to Abisko Station to repair the tent.

After I managed to fix the tent, it was impossible to continue the Kungsleden trail. It would take me 2 days to get to the same point I finished before the tent got damaged and if I decided to go further behind that point, I would not be able to return to Abisko to make it to Kiruna airport on time. In addition to this the water level on the trail was very high, and I met some people returning after failing to walk further down Kungsleden due to harsh conditions. My plans were therefore modified after day 4, but the journey was still in the similar geographic location (Lapland), within close distance from Kungsleden and Abisko. For more details, please read the diary below.

However, I would like to point out that I managed to walk the segment of the Kungsleden crossing the whole Abisko National Park, which was sketched on the map in the Travel Grant Application (see the map on the next page)



Source: <http://www.naturvardsverket.se/en/In-English/Start/Enjoying-nature/National-parks-and-other-places-worth-visiting/National-Parks-in-Sweden/Abisko-National-Park/>

Travel diary

03/06/2012

Meeting with my aunt and uncle, who have been to Abisko National Park and walked through Kungsleden trail. They give me useful tips on what equipment/clothes I should take for the trip. Importantly, they advise me to take wellingtons (as the ground may have high level of water due to melting snow) and anti-mosquito spray.

04-06/2012

Checking weather conditions in Abisko, calling the Abisko Tourist station to inquire about the conditions on the trail. Sending an e-mail to a Polish traveller who has visited many places in Northern Sweden, about conditions on the trail in June and alternative walking routes. Checking all necessary bus connections and marking routes on a detailed map of Sweden.

07/06/2012 (Day 1)

After checking multiple times that I have everything necessary for the journey, I leave my house and set off for the Gdansk airport. Flight to Stockholm 11am. Taking off from Stockholm to Kiruna 7pm.

Arriving to Kiruna around 11pm, only 2 Celcius degrees, and... total brightness! First night on a camping in Kiruna. Wearing a number of layers, including thermostatic tights and skitrousers, I manage to fall asleep despite the rather unwelcoming temperatures. I am woken up at 4am by the sun shining intensively through the tent. I am absolutely sure it's midday.



Kiruna Airport



Swimming suits don't seem necessary in this climate...

08/06/2012 (Day 2)

Unfortunately when the time to wake up and leave for Abisko comes, it starts to rain. Breakfast in the tent. Train from Kiruna to Abisko. Through the window I can see beautiful mountains covered with snow and a huge frozen lake Torne Trausk – the largest Sweden's lake. The absolute wilderness and lack of any buildings whatsoever is astonishing. Abisko Train station resembles a small town's 20th century station, similar to the one I saw in the film "Anne from Green Gables".



Tornetrask lake

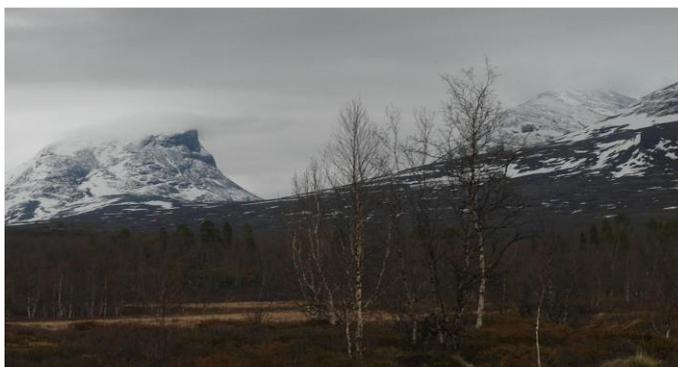


Abisko train station

I collect all the necessary maps and bus information from Abisko Turiststation, enter the gate of Kungsleden and walk till midnight on the trail, still surprised that the sun doesn't go down. I pass a waterfall, see reindeers from one of the peaks, and stroll along the river. I still haven't reached Abiskojaure. Walking uphill, with a bag full of food, with all clothes and equipment in it, is harder than I expected. I find a beautiful site next to a large lake surrounded by mountains with traditional Sami huts on tiny hills (Sami are the indigenous people of Scandinavia). I set up a fire to warm myself up and sleep well, tired after the whole day of walking. First night in total wilderness.



Kungsleden gate



Lapland gate



1st night on Kungsleden trail

Walking along the river

09/06/2012 (Day 3)

It is raining again. Goal for today: Abiskojaure or even further. Covered in waterproof poncho I set off. The journey is definitely a survival camp taking into consideration the harsh weather conditions couples with living in a tent away from any sort of civilisation. When getting the tent ready for sleeping I break the metal rod of the tent into two. It seems impossible that I will be able to glue or tape the two parts together, especially that it is broken at the curving part of the metal. I'm thinking that this is the end of my journey, sitting and crying. I manage to sleep under the sheets of the tent. Fortunately, it doesn't rain this time.

10/06/2012 (Day 4)

I start my day early to go the whole way back to Abisko Turiststation to repair the tent. I reach the station at 8 pm. I am lucky to meet two tourists - engineers, who exactly know how to fix my tent using just a metal ski stick found in one of the storage rooms of the station, a saw, and a hammer. I change my plans to leave the Kungsleden trail, because it wouldn't be impossible to walk much further behind the point where I finished last time and make it on time for the plane in Kiruna. Besides, the route behind Abiskojaure had very high water levels, and I met some tourists that decided to return due to very difficult conditions

11/06/2012 (Day 5)



Tysfjorden



Leaving for Narvik. It's amazing how fast the scenery is changing as I'm staring through the window in a bus. From severe looking mountain peaks raising from the frozen lakes with barely any leaves on the trees into hills literally all covered in various shades of green, where only the peaks are covered with snow. In Narvik, for the first time during the journey I can take away my winter jacket. After a couple of hours of waiting and enjoying Narvik, with the view on the sea and white peaks raising up from behind the town, I take a bus to Tysfjorden. The way to Tysfjorden is even more beautiful! I can't wait to get out and take pictures. Sadly, this is the day when the battery of my camera runs out, and I'm forced to use my smartphone for taking pictures with much worse quality.

I reach the camping and its owner, probably feeling sympathy for me as a lonely traveller, charges me only a third of the price stated in the brochure. I go for a walk along the shore. Another calm, beautiful,

tourist-free place. A lovely sunny evening... and a sunny night.

12/06/2012 (Day 6)

I talk to the owner of the camping and he advises me to go hitchhiking along the whole Tysfjorden. I decide to take the last bus at 3pm (the bus only goes here twice per day!), because this way of travelling seems safer to me. I am left on my own, in a place with no cars and no people at all. I walk around amazed by the views of mountain peaks, small sea bays, and the colour of the clouds and sky. I start to get scared how I will manage to get back from this beautiful but remote place. Fortunately I see one car on the road and its driver takes me to the camping on Tysfjorden. The person comes from a family of Sami – the only indigenous people of Scandinavia. He can speak the Sami language, and his family lives from herding reindeers. It is surprising to me that he is driving a modern BMW car.



Tysfjorden



13/06/2012-14/06/2012 (Day 7)

I travel back to Narvik, and I make a quick decision there to visit Lofoten archipelago. Bus to Svolvær. 4 hours of stunning, sunny views. When I arrive to Svolvær, it turns out that the camping is more than 10 km away and it is already 8pm. I see a girl walking with a huge rucksack with a tent sticking out from her bag. We decide to sleep in nature and find a lake surrounded by mountain peaks just for ourselves. We set our tents there and cook a quick supper. I learn that she has just started her one year journey, for which she has been saving money for a long time. I cannot sleep due to birds flying around the lake and making terrible squeaking noises. I decide to go for a night visit of the local town.



Our camping site

I realise that my travelling has been quite intensive. I have seen so much, walked long distances. I think it's the constant day light turning me into an active and restless mode. With normal day light pattern, I would probably feel tired at the time of the sunset, and would never be able to be on foot till midnight.



Midnight in Svolvær

14/06/2012 (Day 8)



Mountain climbing in Lofoten



Hiking in the mountains the whole day. Later in the evening, I collect massive shells thrown out by the sea in the place where we have set up our tents. It turns out that the place we have chosen is quite gloomy, with bones of birds lying here and there, and massive pincers of a crab in front of my tent. In the evening I run to catch the bus that takes me back to Narvik. I find a camping 5 km away from Narvik, and I set up the tent on a scarp with an amazing view on the sea. The strong wind almost takes my tent away into the sea, I catch it in the last moment. I make friends with a Finnish girl, who studies forestry Northern part of Norway. She tells me interesting stories about local animals and the culture of Scandinavian countries.

15/06/2012 (Day 9)

I go hiking with my new Finnish friend in the forests outside of Narvik.



Narvik

In the evening she gives me a lift to Kiruna, because she is driving back to her hometown in Finland. We have to stop for 10 minutes, because the reindeers are crossing the road back and forth! Apparently they are eating the fresh grass that is growing at the edge of the road. In other places, the ground of Swedish Lapland is still frozen in many parts. It's the first time I manage to see these animals from so close, what a nice end of the journey!



16/06/2012 (Day 10)

Flight back to London.