



ARCTIC DREAMS: A September sunrise casts shadows on the final days of summer in Swedish Lapland.



## KING OF THE ARCTIC Kungsleden SWEDEN

In the extreme north of Sweden, a hundred miles inside the Arctic Circle, hides the last remote wilderness in Western Europe. This is Lapland, and through it runs Kungsleden, the "King of Trails," a 275-mile route through an expansive landscape of birch forests, hidden glaciers, powerful rivers, and the highest mountains in Sweden. The sheer scale of the Kungsleden hits home when, at the end of a 16-mile day, you realize you've only traversed half of the undulating, glacier-carved valley that you dropped into that morning.

Kungsleden runs through four national parks and a nature reserve. While hiking its entire length requires a month or more, you can appreciate the highlights of the trek by taking a week to cover its northernmost 65 miles. In addition to the Tjåkkjåvaggi, Lapland's most majestic valley, this week-long section also takes in the Kebnekaise range, which includes Sweden's highest peak, Mount Kebne (6,926 feet). But while the Arctic terrain is rugged, there's a certain civility to the Kungsleden. Sturdy suspension bridges span dangerous rivers, and comfortable huts welcome hikers at

the conclusion of each day. At both ends of this 65-mile route lie two of Sweden's mountain stations, where hot showers and limb-warming spirits will bookend your stay in the wilderness.

**INSIDER ADVICE:** There are no restrictions on camping along the route: Bring a stove and bivy bag to sleep out under the midnight sun.

**WHEN TO GO:** Mid-June to mid-September

**LOGISTICS:** The 65-mile sampler section starts at Abisko, the northern terminus of Kungsleden, and finishes at the Sami (ethnic Laplander) settlement of Nikkaluokta. Base your trek out of Kiruna, an old ore-mining town with excellent air connections to Stockholm (\$347; [www.scandinavian.net](http://www.scandinavian.net)). In Kiruna, collect information about the trail from the Swedish Tourist Association ([www.svenskaturistforeningen.se](http://www.svenskaturistforeningen.se)); they can also organize your bus transportation to either end of the route (\$26). While it is possible to hike in either direction, it's best to travel from north to south—that keeps the sun warming your face, no small consideration in the Arctic.

### STAGING AREA:

## Kiruna, Sweden

### RECOMMENDED DISTANCE:

**65**  
MILES  
(TOTAL LENGTH:  
275 MILES)

### TRAIL TIME:

**5-7**  
DAYS

### TOTAL TRIP:

**Ten Days**

**DIFFICULTY**  
(SCALE OF 1 TO 5,  
5 MOST DIFFICULT):

**3**

**DIY COST**  
(INCLUDING AIRFARE):  
**\$1,000-\$1,200**