

# Special Feature

## Lapland



A view from the mountain Galtispouda in Arjeplog, Sweden.

By Borbála Vízkelety

Lapland is the northernmost part of the Scandinavian Peninsula, stretching across four countries: Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. It is approximately 388,350 km<sup>2</sup> in size, roughly the size of Norway. Most of Lapland lies north of the Arctic Circle and its landscape is extremely diverse. The western part has fjords, deep valleys, glaciers, and mountains, while other parts of Lapland are characterised by great rivers or several marshes and lakes.

Lapland has areas of large forests, mostly consisting of pine and birch trees. Approximately 50 varieties of wild berries grow under the trees of the forests and in the boglands, such as blueberries, lingonberries or a special delicacy – the cloudberry. Several moss and lichen species also grow throughout Lapland. Further northward the trees of the forests become shorter, thinner and rarer because of the low temperature and short summer. This area is called the tundra.



### Wildlife

Lapland's fauna does not include many species of mammals as the area is cold and the weather conditions are often rough. The most important species are reindeer and moose, which are the largest of all. Bears and wolves are also common in the region. Smaller mammals are the lynx and arctic fox, both of which are protected. Lapland is also home to several bird species, some of which cannot be seen anywhere else in Europe. Important bird species in the region include the Great Grey Owl and the Siberian Jay.

### Aurora Borealis

An interesting phenomenon in Lapland's sky is the Aurora Borealis or Northern Lights. These beautiful and colourful effects are due to collisions between particles released from the Sun's atmosphere and particles in the Earth's atmosphere.



Image courtesy of Robbie Murphy

Lapland stretches across Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia.



### The Sami People

Inhabitants of Lapland are the Sami people, or Lapps in English. The Sami people call their homeland Sápmi and there are approximately 70,000 Sami people living there.

Ten different languages and dialects make up the Sami languages. Gákti is their traditional clothing and it is originally made of reindeer leather. The colours and patterns of the clothing indicates where the person is from, if the person is single or married, and sometimes even indicates the specific family to which they belong.



### Climate and Weather in Lapland

There are climatic differences from south to north in Lapland but mild, fairly short summers and long, cold, snowy winters are dominant in the whole region. Winter starts around October or November and lasts until March or April, during which the average temperature ranges between -16 °C to 3 °C depending on location; with occasional lows of about -30 °C or colder with wind chill. Thanks to the dry air the temperatures feel warmer than they actually are.

Due to the northern location, daylight is limited to a few hours during winter, usually from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., while in the summer there is the polar phenomenon of the midnight sun. From approximately mid-May to late July the sun does not completely drop below the horizon, so the nights are bright. The summer is 1.5 - 3.5 months long depending on location and the temperature varies between 10 °C and 20 °C.

