

Travel Story of the Globalrunners Lappland Skitouring – march/april 2022

The Arctic Winter Mountains offered wind, snow, sunshine, and the best of companionship. Below you can join us thru our week, that introduced the participants to the wintry conditions. No roads, no internet no CO2-emissions, just silence, just nature at it's best.

Saturday:

Gathering at STF Mountain Station in Abisko, where the participants arrived by various trains from all over Sweden. One couple stayed an extra night in the mining town of Kiruna and got a chance to try out their winter equipment on the slopes of Abisko. Others chose the latter train and checked in at the cosy rooms of STF youth hostel Giron.



2022 års group ready to take off at Abisko STF mountain station

Curious and expectant, the group met in the restaurant to enjoy a magic three-course dinner, first a little reserved, searching for common discussion topics. We later continued with a walk-thru of the week itinerary, house-rules and requirements of a tour member, finishing with a long and deep presentation of each participant. Well, sure, now we know a little bit more of everyone already after one evening together. This will be big fun! Heading for the rooms, re-pack the backpack, bring forward tomorrows skiing clothes, teeth-brushing and then goodnight.

Sunday

Luxury breakfast at the mountain lodge, where a few took the chance to cook waffles with jummy cloudberry jam, and then prepare for take-off. Cloudy skies, minus 14 degrees Celsius and the perfectly from North. The winter trail on the Kings Trail starts from the parking lot with a smooth climb along the canyon/creek. Our backpacks un-friendly weight gives us a nice and slow start, where we ski in one line thru the birch tree forest.

We mix with a team of French youngsters who merrily plays around with their pulkas.

Suddenly we hear four explosions on our right side, they're shooting avalanches on the Njulla Fjäll, where venturous youngsters enjoy off-pist skiing. We catch up two ladies from Örebro, unconfy fights their pulka/sledge that doesn't match their speed, we shout out a "hey" and continue along the creek that gurgles ever so. Snow mobiles aren't allowed on the cross-marked trail so we need to take some turns around the crooked mountain birches setting our own ski trails. The trail continues in smooth waves up-hills, where we try out to fall and get back on our feet again. (haha).



Bring forward seat pads, thermoses, and packed-lunch boxes for an outdoor meal leeward from the strong wind. So nice to lift off our heavy backpacks and get some rest. We catch up a young couple who pulls two pulkas each? *"yes, we bring like everything, planning to do some kiting, when and where it'll be possible"* Well, wow, two pulkas each, looks extremely tough.

Half ways we reach the snow mobile track and we soon get a smoother and kinder skiing. We go along the creek and soon reach the lake of Abiskojaure, now covered with polished blue ice after last weeks rains and warm degrees. Our pathfinder, Erik, chooses to go along the lake shores where the new snow hasn't yet blown away. And behind us we see the two double pulkas are packing up their sailing gear. We still have four easy kilometres to go to reach the Abiskojaure huts, easy skiing, wind on our

backs and soon we reach today's finish line. The freshwater hole in the lake, the sauna and just a few meters from the shore the kiting couple hovers up to us, looks delightful. Maybe still worth-while to drag the heavy pulks if you get this kind of reward? First 14 K:s accomplished.



First hut, Abiskojaure, soon the snowstorm hits us.

We are handed our night shelter, which we share with the French, we congratulate each other on today's achievements and get our work assignments from the slightly stressed hut keeper, Ola from Örebro. We bathe in saunas, make our beds, some of us doze off and enjoy the warmth of the hut.

We have split ourselves into food teams for this week's dinners, and tonight Gerd and Uffe offered their own shot wild boar and deer. Oh, they really set the bar at the highest level and the other guests of the hut look at us enviously as we munch and talk through the day's experiences.

Monday

Early wake up today when we have the week's longest stage (21 km) ahead of us. The snowfall has stopped, and we get a nice and flat ride in the birch forest, and check, down to the left is a moose cow with a calf that we follow for about half an hour. Some in the group have spied on a mighty golden eagle that hovers majestically in search of something eatable. Wondering what it lives on during the winter? Maybe mountain grouses, we scared a



bunch of people who persistently flapped away from us.

We mount the climbing skins on our skis for the first time to challenge the 300 meters of uphill to the lakes and valley that will take us to Alesjaure huts. We still have the strong wind to our backs and we march on light new snow, but for sure, the wind sheltered break fits well with the sun bathing slopes catching our eyes. The trail runs flat along the valley and our eyes take in the never ending views of snow-white

mountain tops with their deep valleys. We compare the soft winter mountains with the summer rough stony ground that tires out the trekker's legs. The wind pushes our backs,



helping us crossing the Alesjaure lake and at the lakes end the huts awaits us with heated up sauna and this evening's magical mushroom soup for starters and steak stew with roots for main course, that Birgitta and Anders put their hearts into with home-dried vegetables.



Alesjaure's nice huts await us with heated sauna.

Cool night in Alesjaure, where we spot our first Aurora Borealis (Northern Light) in minus 20 degrees, brrr, but worth every cold shiver.

Tuesday

Lie in, so good to be able to re-pack in peaceful tempo and to prepare for the climbing stage. Today, the lovely, tiny Tjåktja Hut waits for us, with a short but demanding 13 km climb in strong wind conditions. In front of us are the Örebro ladies, the two energetic Belgians, who for the very first time stand on skis. Soon we catch them up as they drag

and snorts their heavy loaded pulkas." *Never again, pulka*" says Eva slightly given up as we easily pass them. The wind accelerates and we praise the Gods for giving us tailwind on our trip. We soon reach the climb up to the today long-awaited cottage, so on with skins, one step at a time. We see the energetic Frenchmen who with their 160 cm short skis leave their sledges and clamber up the mountain sides for a little slalom in the storm winds. Great to take in their energy. Today we are not so eager to go out again for the cottage condition to fetch water or cut and split wood, so it fixes the lively French gang with maximum energy and joy. Thank you - thank you! Tonight's dinner was a delightful reindeer chaff with mushrooms and puree, which Christina and Mats hosted. Early to bed, where we fell asleep to the howl of the storm in all the corners of the cottage.

Wednesday

Today we will climb the Tjåktja Pass, at an altitude of 1,150 meters. First a few kilometers of climbing up to the rest cabin and then a hazardous descent on the west side of Tjåktja mountain. Cloudy weather minus 12 degrees and still strong wind from the north. Strangely enough, and thankfully the fresh snow has stuck to the hard crowd, so the climb will be easier than we planned.



Well-earned break from winds and climb at the Tjåktja shelter

We rest, breathe, have lunch, and plan the descent on Tjåktja's lee side down to the 30 km long valley Tjåktjavagge, although we will spend the night in Sälka. The lucky and unusually strong north wind has dragged the fresh snow to the leeward side, and we all figure out how to get down the precipice. The visibility is strange today, you can see far, we count the number of trail sign posts, which sometimes disappear in the steeper parts. Most of the group try to get down without skis and sink to the waist in the snow pockets. Some try to get down on skis but fall forward when the crowd breaks or the skis break

into a snow pocket. We have a hard time and fun before we all go skiing again and enjoy the tailwind and the high mountain peaks around us.



Easy and comfy down-hill skiing to the Sälka Huts

The valley is lovely, the wind in the back and the view clears more and more. We count 40 path signs visible in the long run, and enjoy the valley's countless ridges, both up and down, and there in front of us are Sälka Huts waiting with shop, sauna, and rest.

Our weekly friends, the Orebro's, the Belgians, the French are also soon in place, and we share a sauna with even more new acquaintances. Tonight's dinner is served by Erik and Anders who offers "fresh" cabbage salad (yes, from dried vegetables),



Long, long way to the loo at Sälka.

sausage stroganoff and chocolate pudding. The dinner conversations varied greatly between "*the best ski day so far*" to "*hu, it was hard to fall and slug in the deep snow*", I think we all got something to remember. Our spirited innkeeper promised the Northern Lights at midnight, so we watched it and marvelled at the wonders of nature.

Thursday

Today comes the promised propaganda day for cross-country skiing. Light skiing in Tjåktjavagge with the peaks and glaciers of the Kebnekaise massif to the left, and Sälka's round mountains to the right of us. Another morning of sleep, where those who wanted to run without a tour guide had to stick at their own pace.



The kite-surfers enjoy hard icy snow and lights winds.

The sun "roasts" from a clear-blue-sky, the wind has calmed down considerably, and it certainly became the best weather day of the trip. Many photo breaks, outdoor lunch and extra nice stops led down the 11 kilometres to Singi huts, where no one wanted to enter. The book you had not read so far was produced, and the sun set on pale winter cheeks that were coloured beautifully red.

Singi is a real junction where the Kings Trail runs east towards Kebnekaise, south towards Kaitumjaure and north towards Sälka. Few choose to spend the night here, so we "finally" got room for our packing and for ourselves.



Five lovely kilometres to go before we reach Singi Huts.

Well, the kitchen is small, so little conversation was required with the cottage guests so that we would all get hotplates for our first and only "own" dinner.

The gourmet dishes were now replaced with "backpack cleaning" which we happily shared at the table after the perfect ski day. The clear blue sky should give us another northern light, right? Oh yes, it was coming at midnight, some of us stayed awake and soaked in the magical skye.

Friday

The last planned ski day would take us to Kebnekaise Mountain station, 11 easy rides and breath-taking kilometres through Ladtjovagge's valley. But first a few kilometres of ascent, before the plateau and the long, beautiful descent.



Singistugan at the bottom of the picture, but soon it carries downhill towards the Mountain Station.

The group is enthusiastic, energetic, yester-day's sun and the cottage's warmth have given new strength to our last ski day. Unbelievably, our northern tailwind has changed direction to the west, so again we have the wind behind us!



The second last ascent completed; we gather at the foot of the triangular Liddubakti Mountain.





Down, down, and soon we'll reach the sun again!



Gerd och Anders approaching the mountain station.

With the westerly wind behind us, with a Finnish school group of future mountain guides, we reach the finish line at the mountain station and are met as heroes together with the competitors in this year's Keb Classic (they have today climbed the north and south peaks and much more).



Keb Classic finishing line for the "crazy guys" and for us!

We are offered sports drinks, coffee, sandwiches and buns, 90 km's of skiing in roadless and disconnected landscape, we're happy, we're done!



Housing, sauna, dinner, nice words (Birgitta turned one today), a good night's sleep and then snowmobile transport to the waiting bus in Nikkaluokta, towards Kiruna and home.

Thanks team, for the wonderful week we shared!

Anders / tour leader

Inspiring? Curious? Want to join next year?

Read all about the tour 2023 at:
<https://www.globalrunners.se/ski-touring-lapland-44885829>



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