



Nature Travels

outdoor experiences in Sweden



THE BJORKFJALL TOUR - 8 DAYS

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The Björkfjäll Tour: 8 days

Experience Code: AI8ES1

Visit Sweden's largest nature reserve, stay in a beautiful mountain village and explore the surrounding mountains by Icelandic horse.

Vindelfjällen's Nature Reserve lies in remote north of Sweden and is one of Europe's largest protected natural areas covering an area of over half a million hectares. The mountain village is situated within the reserve on an old route to Norway.

In Vindelfjällen, nature displays not only its vastness and grandeur but also its small-scale wonders. The tiny drop of melt-water from a glacier that splashes onto the petal of a glacier crowfoot eventually forms part of a roaring national river - the Vindelälv.

This is an 8-day experience amid the majestic mountainscapes and endless horizons of Lapland, including 3-day mountain riding tour, guided canoeing, beaver safari and cultural visits. You will ride along the Vindelälven river, on mountain plains and to altitudes of 900m-1000m. Up on the bare mountain, Björkfjället, the view takes in both steep mountains and wide expanses.

You will be riding on Icelandic horses. Sure-footed, keen and good-natured, these horses are a joy to ride and very beautiful, with unusual colours and long, shaggy manes and thick coats. They are compact, yet powerful, growing to between 12.2 and 15 hands high. Icelandic horses are willing and spirited animals to ride. In addition to the usual walk, trot and canter that most breeds have, these horses possess two unique gaits - the tölt and the pace, a faster version of the tölt for more experienced riders.

You will also get to enjoy a hot bath in an outdoor wood-heated barrel with a magnificent view over the surrounding mountains. Relax and just take in the scenery, get to know an area rich in culture and history, and ride out on the mountain plains to experience the real wilderness of northern Sweden.

Sunday:

Arrive in Ammarnäs in the afternoon. Accommodation in the village with a choice of hotel, hostel or cabin (see options below).

Monday:

In the morning you will pay a visit to twin sisters Margareta Grah and Berit Nilsson, who are known worldwide for their exceptional handicrafts. Using birch tree roots, threads of tin, glass beads, textiles and hide, they produce crafts that have been exhibited all over the world from Russia to India. Their work can also be found in the Sami Museum, Attje, in Jokkmokk. The sisters will be pleased to tell you about their work and the cultural symbolism behind the patterns.

In the afternoon you will visit the Ammarnäs Naturrum for a guided tour to learn about the nature reserve of Vindelfjällen. Later in the afternoon you will be introduced to the horses for some instruction and a short riding tour. Accommodation in the village.

Tuesday:

At 9am you will meet to begin your mountain riding tour. After a short period of instruction you will begin riding along the unregulated waters of the River Vindelälv, with a chance to try out the special gait unique to Icelandic horses, the tölt. Up on the treeless mountain of Björkfjället (Birch Mountain) there are some stunning views over the surrounding area. The riding tempo varies from walk to canter and you will have lunch

outdoors. You will be riding about 900 metres above sea level with the chance to see reindeer, mountain skua, buzzards and golden eagles.

In the evening you have the opportunity to practise Sami lasso techniques. Accommodation in wooden wigwam on Thermarests and reindeer skins. Cooking is done outside over an open fire or gas stove. Dry wilderness-style toilet available. Distance: about 25km, 5-6 hours in the saddle.

Wednesday:

You will continue your ride along the crest of the mountain towards Vitnjultjärke and just above Framakselet a lovely view over the valley of Vindelälven. Lunch outdoors. You will then return to the wigwam, with a chance to perfect your lasso technique in the evening. Distance: about 15km, 4-4.5 hours in the saddle.

Thursday:

After a few hours riding on the mountain plateau you will go down into the valley of the River Vindeln and head home towards Ammarnäs for a hot bath in a wood-heated tub at Hedebo Gård. The riding tour ends with dinner and a good night's sleep in the village. Distance: about 30km, 6-7 hours in the saddle.

Friday:

At 10am you will meet for a half-day of canoeing on Lake Gautsträsk with lunch outdoors. If the weather is unsuitable, it is possible to do a guided hike in the surrounding forest. Accommodation in the village.

Saturday:

In the morning you are free to do your own exploring in and around the mountain village of Ammarnäs. In the afternoon you will be taken on a safari to Lake Tjulträsk to look for beaver. Accommodation in the village. Duration: 5-6 hours' guiding.

Sunday:

Departure. Please check out of your room before noon.

Fixed dates for 2008 summer season:

- 29th June – 6th July
- 13th July – 20th July
- 27th July – 3rd August

The price:

Basic experience price: £585

Alt 1 – accommodation in hotel while in Ammarnäs:
Add £206/person to basic experience price.

Alt 2 – accommodation in hostel while in Ammarnäs:
Add £101/person to basic experience price.

Alt 3 – accommodation in 4-person cabin while in Ammarnäs:
Add £250/group of 4 persons to basic experience price.

What The Price Includes:

Basic experience:

- Riding tour as per itinerary above
- 2 nights' accommodation in wooden wigwam
- Hot bath in wood-heated tub
- Guided tour at Ammarnäs Naturrum
- Guided beaver safari
- Visit to Sami handicraft centre
- Guided canoeing (or guided hiking depending on weather conditions)
- Horse with packing equipment
- Guide during riding tour
- Full board during activities

Alt 1 – accommodation in hotel while in Ammarnäs

- Half board during stay at hotel
- Bedding and end cleaning during stay at hotel
- 5 nights' accommodation in shared double room.

Alt 2 – accommodation in hostel while in Ammarnäs

- 5 nights' accommodation in shared 2-6 person room.

Alt 3 – accommodation in 4-person cabin while in Ammarnäs

- 5 nights' accommodation in cabin with four beds.

What The Price Does Not Include:

Alcoholic drinks. Warm sleeping bag for the mountain tour.

Equipment/clothes needed:

NB: We advise you not to buy equipment or clothes for your trip or to incur other non-refundable expenses such as flights until you have received confirmation of your booking from us in writing.

Please bear in mind that it can be cold on the mountain, even in the summer and that everything will be packed into packrolls measuring (40x30x30cm) + 1 pair of saddlebags, but they should also contain food. Also consider the weight as the horses must carry you, your belongings and food.

Packing list (recommended):**Toiletries:**

Soap, toothpaste, plasters, moisturiser, sun-cream, painkillers, blister tape, mosquito repellent (see the "About Sweden" page on our website for further information about mosquitoes). Personal pharmaceuticals.

Clothes:

Take clothes you are not afraid to damage. Quick-drying materials are best. Riding pants bear in mind that seams can rub. Pack windproof rainwear (jacket and trousers), boots (warm and waterproof), shoes, a pair of warm socks, something to cover your head in case of heat or rain, a pair of gloves/mittens, a warm sweater, sweatshirt, T-shirt, shirt, trousers, long underpants, a pair of shorts, beachwear, underwear, anorak (or similar) and something to sleep in.

Equipment:

Warm sleeping bag (-5 degrees C), towel, bed linen (for youth hostel accommodation), water bottle.

Additional:

Compass, sunglasses, matches, knife, camera, binoculars, extra food, a good book.

Health requirements/experience:

It is not necessary to be an experienced rider for this tour, but participants should feel that they would be willing to gallop.

Suitable for ages 12-55 or by arrangement.

Max: 95 kilos.

Good general health.

Group size

A minimum of total 4 participants is needed for the tour to run. Maximum group size 7 participants.

Information about the area:

Vindelfjällen is one of largest protected areas in Europe. It contains almost all types of regions that can be found in the Swedish mountains, from primeval forests with spruces and pines, to the moors, marshes and the alpine bare mountain regions. The area has many lakes, loved by a wide variety of birds. In the reserve there is extensive reindeer breeding. The main river in the reserve is Vindelälven, with many rapids and waterfalls. The main villages are Hemavan/Tärnaby, Ammarnäs, and Adolfsström.

Ammarnäs is located in a mountainous region of Swedish Lapland roughly 100 km south of the Arctic Circle, in the heart of the Vindelfjällen nature reserve on the Vindelälven river, one of the few undeveloped rivers in Sweden. The predominant forest type in the area is birch forest, but there is also some coniferous forest. It is an attractive mountain village with a mixture of new settlers and Sàmi culture.

Common Sense and the Right of Public Access

Do not disturb, do not destroy – that is the basic principle of Sweden's right of public access. It is not an unrestricted right. Here, you can read about the rules that apply.

The Swedish right of public access is not a law, nor is it an absolute right. It may rather be regarded as an opportunity, one that makes it possible for everyone to enjoy the countryside. But it is an opportunity that requires responsibility, consideration and good judgement. Rules describing the kinds of consideration that must be shown are incorporated into Sweden's environmental law, and apply to everyone who exercises the right of public access.

Respect others' privacy

You may travel through the countryside on foot, bicycle, horse or skis, and temporarily remain in one place, as long as there is no risk that your presence or activities will damage crops, tree plantations or other sensitive areas. But you must respect the privacy of others, and you may not cross or intrude upon private property.

Camping

It is permitted to set up a tent for a day or so on ground that is not used for agriculture and is far from the nearest dwelling. The closer to a residence and the greater the risk of disturbing others, the more important it is to ask the landowner for permission.

Do not litter

All sorts of littering are forbidden in the countryside. A cigarette butt in a dry summer forest can destroy resources worth millions. Glass, tins and bottle caps harm both humans and wildlife, and plastic bags cause great suffering to animals that ingest them. For this reason, bags full of litter should never be left beside rubbish bin if it happens to be full.

Blossoms and berries

You may not take such items as twigs, branches or bark from living trees, including birches. Obviously, you may not take entire shrubs or trees, either. But you are allowed to pick wild berries, flowers and mushrooms, as well twigs and branches that have fallen to the ground. Certain flower species are so rare that they risk becoming endangered. These species are protected and may not be picked. Information about them is available from county administrative boards. Orchids are protected throughout Sweden.

Protected natural areas

Protected natural areas, including nature reserves and national parks, usually have special rules that restrict the right of public access.

More information on the right of public access can be found on our website under About Sweden or on www.allemansratten.se

Getting there:

NB: We advise you not to buy equipment or clothes for your trip or to incur other non-refundable expenses such as flights until you have received confirmation of your booking from us in writing.

By Air:

You can choose to fly to:

- Stockholm Arlanda
- Stockholm Skavsta
- Copenhagen (Denmark) with onward flight to Arvidsjaur.

If you fly into Stockholm Skavsta you need to take the connecting airport bus into the centre of Stockholm and continue your journey as below.

For details of flight connections see our Travel Add-ons page at <http://www.naturetravels.co.uk/category-add-ons.htm>

Many airlines offer discounts on rental cars in connection with their flights.

Without flying

- **London-Stockholm by train via Cologne.** Lunchtime Eurostar to Brussels, train to Cologne, overnight sleeper to Copenhagen and connecting trains to Stockholm.
- **London-Stockholm by train via Hamburg.** Early evening Eurostar to Brussels, overnight sleeper to Hamburg and train on to Stockholm. The fastest option.
- **Harwich-Stockholm by ferry and train:** DFDS ferry Harwich to Esbjerg (Denmark), then onward train to Stockholm via Copenhagen.

Travel within Sweden:

First travel to Stockholm as shown above. You can get to this experience by going by air, train or bus from Stockholm.

As Ammarnäs is situated in the far north mountain region of Sweden, we recommend you to divide your journey in two. Both Stockholm and Östersund are pleasant towns to spend a night or two in.

By air:

You can fly from Stockholm Arlanda to Storuman, Arvidsjaur or Östersund. You can also fly to Arvidsjaur from Copenhagen.

Storuman: There is one bus a day from Storuman to Ammarnäs with a change in Sorsele. Travel time around 4-5 hours.

Östersund: You can also fly into Östersund and, the day after, travel by bus to Ammarnäs via Sorsele. Travel time from Östersund 9.5-10 hours.

Arvidsjaur: 170 km left to travel, either by rental car or by pre-booked taxi. (+46 952-10700)

Timetable information for buses from Storuman and Östersund can be viewed at www.sj.se (0046 771- 75 75 75). Tickets should be purchased on the bus.

By train and bus:

The easiest way to travel by train is to take the train from Stockholm Central or Arlanda Central. It is now possible to catch the trains directly under the airport building at Arlanda.

From Arlanda Central or Stockholm Central, travel by train to Östersund then bus to Sorsele then bus to Ammarnäs. Travel time with changes approx. 13-15 hours. If your journey includes a Saturday or Sunday, connections and changes may vary.

Trains and buses from Stockholm can be booked through national train operator SJ - see www.sj.se (0046 771- 75 75 75).

By car:

From Stockholm road 45 to Östersund / Storuman and on to Sorsele. Thereafter road 363 to Ammarnäs.

If you have any questions do not hesitate to contact us - we will be happy to advise you on suitable connections.

What to do next:

If you are interested in this experience, please make sure that you understand exactly what the experience entails and are confident that you will be able to take part fully in all activities included in the trip. If you have any doubts or questions, please discuss the matter with us and we will be happy to advise. Similarly, if you have any particular health or dietary requirements that we need to be aware of, please mention these at the time of booking.

If you feel confident that you will be able to take part, then download and read our TERMS AND CONDITIONS. Then, please contact us to make sure that your chosen dates are available, and feel free to ask us anything else you like: we are keen to ensure that your trip is an enjoyable and memorable experience for you – we love Sweden and we want you to too!

For more information on how to book this trip please visit our website www.naturetravels.co.uk/booking.htm or call us on 01929 463774.

Additional Notes

This tour has received a prestigious Swedish Ecotourism award for its commitment to high standards to cultural and environmental sensitivity.