

# Inside the Arctic Circle - Skiing the Kings Trail

Trip Code: SKS

Version:



WINTER



GUIDED GROUP



CHALLENGING



## HIGHLIGHTS

- Go in search of the spectacular Northern Lights in Abisko
- Sleep in cosy mountain huts and relax in traditional wood fired saunas
- Fully guided with snowmobile support and all meals and transfers included

- Nordic ski touring equipment can be hired locally

## AT A GLANCE

- 7 days ski touring
- Max altitude - 1140m
- Join at Kiruna

## ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

[VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE](#)

# Introduction

This Arctic winter wonderland adventure ski holiday will see you ski touring Nordic style along the famous King's Trail/Kungsleden of Sweden. With the winter sun resting on the horizon, the Arctic landscapes of northern Sweden, featuring majestic peaks and frozen waterfalls, are bathed in an ethereal light. Our fabulous ski touring holiday through this winter wonderland begins with 2 nights in Abisko - perhaps the best place in the world to experience the stunning Northern Lights. Then, after a day to hone your Nordic Skiing technique, we ski off into the wilderness, skiing across dramatic valleys and glorious viewpoint passes, as we follow the route of the King's Trail/Kungsleden. Snowmobiles will carry the group's equipment, so you'll only need to ski with a light back pack each day. We overnight in remote mountain huts, some of which have washrooms and wood fired saunas; the perfect place to relax after a full day cross country skiing in the cold, crisp air. Finally, from the Kebnekaise Mountain Station, beneath the highest peak in Sweden, we use snowmobiles to return to the roadhead. A memorable end to a fantastic ski touring holiday. Skiing the Kungsleden Trail demands a good level of fitness and, though cross-country ski experience is not essential, you need to have mastered the basics of down hill skiing.

## Is this holiday for you?

During the course of this ski touring holiday, you will cover more than 90km on your skis, averaging 15km per day. The terrain is undulating rather than mountainous and the maximum amount of ascent on any of the days is 400m. Since we have snowmobile support to carry our small bags of spare clothing, we can limit the amount that we carry in our day packs to the daily essentials plus a certain amount of group safety gear. It should be possible to keep our packs down to no more than 7 - 9kg. Regular cross-country skiers will find this tour to be reasonably straightforward, those with little cross-country skiing experience will find it more challenging. Coming to terms with the techniques and rhythm of moving on skis on level ground can be demanding and it will be a couple of days before you will start to see an improvement in your technique. Though we have included a familiarisation day at the beginning to give those with less experiences the chance to practise their ski touring techniques, we would only recommend this holiday to those who have previous cross country skiing experience or who are competent downhill skiers looking for a new challenge.

Because of the shortness of the day and cold temperatures during February, it is essential that all group members on early departures are competent cross-country skiers. We would recommend that those with less experience travel on later departures where days are longer and conditions warmer.

Note that you will be expected to take part in 'hut chores' including cooking, cleaning and fetching water; for many this is one of the best parts of experience!

# Itinerary

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Version:

## Holiday Information

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### What's Included

- A professional and qualified tour leader
- All land transport involved in the itinerary
- Accommodation as described
- All meals as described in the Meal Plan
- Single timed group Kiruna Airport transfers

### What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Tips for local staff
- Ski equipment and boots and/or associated hire costs
- Miscellaneous expenses souvenirs etc.

### Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The group will meet at the Abisko Mountain Station. On Day 1 of the itinerary there will be a single timed transfer from Kiruna airport to Abisko Mountain Station. This transfer will be timed to meet the SAS flight from Stockholm arriving in the early afternoon. The journey takes 1.5 hours.

On the last day of the Land Only itinerary there will be another single timed transfer from Nikkaluokta to Kiruna Airport timed to meet the check in of the SAS flight to Stockholm departing in the late morning.

Anyone may join the group transfers by prior arrangement. Travelling as a group or on public transport saves energy. If your flight schedule does not allow you to take advantage of the arrival transfer you should make your own way to the Abisko Mountain Station. There is a reliable airport bus service which will meet every flight.

Accommodation contact details and an emergency number will be provided with your booking confirmation.

### Meal Plan

All meals are included in the holiday price.

## Food & Water

Whilst staying at the Mountain Stations at Abisko and Kebnekaise, all meals will be taken in the restaurants. Meals whilst on tour will be prepared from preserved food via communal cooking, to be co-ordinated by the Guide. Everyone will be expected to assist with preparing meals. Breakfast will consist of bread, porridge or muesli with dehydrated milk, coffee, tea, hot chocolate and some jam. Lunch will be bread, sandwiches and soup, made up from hot water from a thermos. Dinner will be co-ordinated by the guide and will also be mainly dehydrated and processed food. Some fresh food items will be carried from Abisko.

Tap water is drinkable in Abisko. Whilst staying in the huts water will be collect from the lakes/wells and will be boiled to provide plentiful drinking water.

## Accommodation

We will spend 3 nights in "Mountain Stations", at Kebnekaise and Abisko, which are more like lodges and have great facilities. Here the group will sleep in 6 berth rooms, with shared toilet and shower facilities and communal seating areas. All bedding is provided. Each station has a separate male and female saunas, a good restaurant and a bar.

During our time on the trail we will stay each night in a different mountain hut. These are maintained by the Swedish Tourist Association (STF) and each has its own host in residence. The huts offer simple but comfortable accommodation and each has its own unique personality! There will be no electricity, running water or mobile phone coverage, this is all part of the special and unique experience of staying in the remote Swedish wilderness. For many staying in these cosy mountain huts is one of the highlights of the tour.

The biggest hut has spaces for around 90 people, split over several smaller individual cabins, others are much smaller. Our group will usually have exclusive use of one of the lodges, though at busy time we may be required to share. Inside each of the huts you will find a combined kitchen and cosy day room, bedroom and drying room.

At the huts we will sleep in mixed dorms of 4 -10 people. Pillows and blankets are provided and all rooms have a wood-burning stove or gas heater. For comfort we recommend taking your own pillow case and a sleeping bag liner.

Each hut has a shared outside toilet block. These are well maintained and have plenty of toilet paper and antibacterial hand wash available.

Most of the mountain huts also have their own wood-fired sauna. The saunas will have split session times in the evening: female only, male only and mixed. Towels are not provided at the huts so we recommend taking a travel towel that is large enough to wrap around you. Each of the saunas will have and a small basic wash room attached to it, where bowls and hot water (from the sauna) are provided for you to wash. It is possible to wash your hair here if there is enough water.

One of the most fun aspects of this ski tour is getting involved in the hut chores. Chores include fetching water from the wells (which are normally on the edges of frozen lakes), being responsible for the fires, cooking dinner, preparing breakfast and packed lunch items and clearing up. This will be coordinated by the guide and teams will rotate chores throughout the week. It is expected that you leave the hut in the condition you found it with fresh water and wood for the next travellers.

After an exciting day skiing, recuperating in the sauna and dinner, there will generally be time for relaxing where you can read your book by candlelight, chat to your fellow travellers or play card games. You will also of course be on the lookout for the Northern Lights, which can regularly be seen when the sky is clear.

Single rooms are not available.

## Group Leader & Support Staff

The group will be led by a professional and qualified tour leader.

## Altitude

This holiday does not involve any significant ascent to altitude and we would not expect any altitude issues with this trip.

## Spending Money

Approximately £150 (or equivalent in US dollars, Euros etc.) should be allowed for miscellaneous expenses, drinks (please note that alcoholic drinks in Sweden are expensive) and souvenir purchases. This amount will also allow you to pay reasonable tips to the local staff. Please also note that when you pick up main travel baggage, which has been transported separately to meet you in Nikkaluokta, you will be asked to pay a small fee (approximately £4 (40SEK) per bag) for storage. This money goes directly to the local Sami community in Nikkaluokta. We recommend that you carry your travel money in the form of currency (Swedish Krona) since there will be not be any opportunities to change it once you leave Stockholm. There is no ATM in Kiruna airport, but you can withdraw cash at ATM's at Stockholm/Arlanda airport when you change flights. For this reason you may want to acquire your Swedish Krona before you travel.

## Guidance on Tipping

Tipping is the accepted way of saying 'thank you' to your leader and local team. Tipping is entirely voluntary and should be dependent on good service. We recommend that you decide levels of tipping and give any tips as a group rather than from individual group members.

## Baggage Allowance

For this holiday you will require three different bags: your main luggage, a small additional bag and a rucksack of around 40 - 60 litres.

### Bag 1. Main Luggage

This is the bag in which you will transport all of your luggage to Abisko. A soft duffle bag or a wheeled suitcase is suitable. Please check your baggage allowance with your international airline. On the evening on Day 2 you will be asked to pack all the items you require on tour into your rucksack and your smaller bag ready for the following morning. On the morning of Day 3, when we set off on tour, the group's main luggage, including all items not required on tour, will be transported directly to Nikkaluokta where it will be stored for the coming days. You will be reunited with your main luggage on arrival in Nikkaluokta.

### Bag 2. Small Bag

A 20L dry bag or small lightweight rucksack is suitable. In this bag you will pack a few personal items / clothes that you require for the evenings in the huts. This might include your pyjamas, hut slippers, t-shirts, toothbrush and book. There is a strict weight limit of 7kg for this bag, as it travels on the snowmobiles each day.

### Bag 3. 40 - 60 litre rucksack, with hip belt

This is the bag you will carry with you each day during the ski tour. In this bag you will carry your sleeping bag, thermos flask, roll mat, med kit, warm clothing, lunch, water and a share of the group's safety equipment. The packed weight of the bag will be around 7-9kg. We recommend a rucksack of around 40- 60 litres, though a 60l rucksack will be easier to pack and will allow you to store all of your equipment inside the bag on cold days.

We also recommend a rucksack, with an outer attachment for storing your roll mat, and a hip belt.

\*NOTE\* If you are planning to travel with your own skis, please be aware that different airlines have differing policies with regard to baggage allowances and transporting ski equipment. The baggage section on your chosen airline's website will usually contain this information.

## Group Size & Holiday Status

For each holiday there is a minimum number of participants required to enable it to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to run'. You can check the trip status for each departure in the 'Dates and Prices' table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status so you are free to proceed with your international flight booking and other travel arrangements.



# General Information

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## Passport & Visas

### Europe

Your passport must meet 2 requirements. It must be:

- less than 10 years old on the day you enter (check the 'date of issue')
- valid for at least 3 months after the day you plan to leave (check the 'expiry date')

For the latest details on visiting countries within the EU or the European Economic Area (EEA), please check the UK Government website

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders. A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required, and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

**It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents and visas for your holiday.** Please ensure that you check for the latest advice before travel. For the most up to date information on entry requirements, please visit the [UK Government website](#).

## Health & Vaccinations

If you have a severe allergy please inform the KE office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on KE trips. You will need to carry your own treatment for the allergy with you, as 'adrenaline auto-injectors' are not carried as standard by KE leaders and staff. You should inform your leader on arrival of your allergy, and let them know where you keep your adrenaline pen.

## Vaccinations

You should contact your doctor or travel clinic to check whether you require any specific vaccinations.

## GHIC / Medical cover

UK residents should carry a free Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC). This entitles you to state provided medical treatment when you're visiting an EU country or Switzerland. This is not a substitute for medical travel insurance which is vital when travelling overseas.

## Currency

The unit of currency in Sweden is the Swedish Krona.

## Preparing for your Holiday

Getting some additional exercise before coming on an active holiday makes a lot of sense. The fitter you are, after all, the more enjoyable you will find the experience.

You should be aerobically fit and comfortable with walking for 6 hours for consecutive days. Hill walking, with a good amount of ascent and descent, is the best training. Running, cycling and swimming are also good for developing cardiovascular fitness and stamina.

## Climate

The ski-touring season in northern Sweden extends from February to May. By the beginning of March there is lots of daylight (sun rises at 0700 and sets at 1700 approx.) and the temperatures start to rise. The ambient daytime temperatures are still low - several degrees below freezing - though, because the air is so dry here, it does not seem so cold. Night time temperatures in February and early March can be as low as -30°C though -10 to -15 °C is the norm from mid March through April. Thanks to the influence of the Gulf Stream it is actually warmer here than its Arctic Circle location would suggest. During the day the sun warms the snow, causing a little softening and then at night it re-freezes to form a crust which is perfect for skiing. Long, sunny days are quite usual at this season, although it is also possible that we might encounter short-lived snow storms.

## Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's '[Travel Aware](#)' campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that before travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at [travelaware.campaign.gov.uk](http://travelaware.campaign.gov.uk) and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. North Americans can also check out the U.S. Department of State website: [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) for essential travel advice and tips.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates directly from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

## Single Use Plastic

KE do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our KE office by reducing our plastic use.

## Books

- The Rough Guide to Sweden. Proctor and Roland.
- Sweden - Lonely Planet Guide. Bain and Cornwallis.

## Maps

**Tourist & Hiking Map. 1:100 000. Sheet BD6 (Abisko - Kebnekaise) Piblisher: Lantmateriverket.**

A detailed topographic map in colour, at a smaller scale than most UK hikers' maps but with a useful 25m. contour interval. The map is in Swedish with an English legend.

## Travel Insurance

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our [Travel Insurance](#) page for further information and to get a quote.

# Equipment Information

## Equipment List

Please try to keep the weight of your baggage to a minimum. See the 'baggage allowance' section for further details.

### You **SHOULD** bring the following items:

- Ski touring boots - see Ski Equipment for more information
- Lightweight shoes or hard soled slippers (for use whilst staying in the huts/ideal for evening visits to the outdoor facilities! Crocs are ideal for this purpose)
- Woollen liner socks (2 pairs) - these great for preventing blisters.
- Woollen Knee length ski socks (2 pairs)

- Spare laces
- Socks and underwear (wool recommended)
- Travel clothes (for use before and after tour)
- Winter mountaineering trousers or salopettes (for use in evenings or for skiing in on cold days)
- Fleece lined thermal leggings (In good weather conditions you will ski-tour in these each day underneath your overtrousers. Running, cycling, or cross-country ski leggings are ideal)
- Waterproof/windproof overtrousers
- Thermal baselayer shirts (2 short sleeve, 2 long sleeve)
- T-shirt or casual shirt
- Fleece jacket
- Down jacket (essential for putting over your ski clothes during breaks)
- Waterproof/windproof jacket with hood or ski jacket
- Warm hat
- Lightweight balaclava or facemask
- Ski goggles
- Sunglasses (Category 4)
- Lightweight thermal gloves
- Warm and waterproof ski gloves and mittens
- Spare pair of warm gloves or mittens

- Backpack (40 - 60 litres) with hip belt and outside attachment for roll mat (see notes)
- A large travel bag and a separate small bag (see baggage allowance for more information)
- Full-Length foam roll mat (for sitting on at lunch stops/emergency use - see notes)
- 1 litre Thermos flask (with insulating carrier if possible)
- Camping mug
- Spoon (long handled to reach to bottom of thermos)
- Water bottle 1 Litre (plastic not metal) (we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic)
- Water purification tablets
- Sleeping bag (comfort rated to 0°C) for emergency use (see notes)
- Headtorch and spare batteries
- Basic First Aid Kit including: antiseptic cream, throat lozenges, diarrhoea treatment (Imodium), painkillers, plasters and blister treatment, and re-hydration salts (Dioralite)
- Sun protection (including total bloc for lips, nose etc.)
- Buff x 2
- Emergency whistle
- Sleeping bag liner or sheet sleeping bag (for whilst in the huts) (mandatory)
- Pillow case (mandatory)
- Washbag and toiletries (it is possible to wash hair at huts where there are saunas)
- Small Towel (big enough to wrap around you in the sauna)

- Antibacterial hand wash
- Small lunch box (a recycled take away box is ideal)

## **Ski Equipment**

- Ski-touring skis\* - see below
- Ski-touring boots \*
- Ski poles\*
- Gaiters \*
- Skins\*
- Windshelter (provided) One for every 2 persons
- Snow shovel (provided) One for every 2 persons

## **The following items are optional:**

- Binoculars
- Camera
- Ear plugs (especially if you are not the one snoring!)
- Pen-knife (remember to put all sharp objects in hold baggage)
- Book / playing cards / headphones and music (for evening entertainment)
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping (to avoid plastic bags)

## **Ski Equipment:**

The ideal skis to use for this trip are 'no-wax' cross-country skis with scales, together with appropriate ski

boots. Skis should have steel edges. If we encounter icy snow, crust or deep powder - the scales will not always provide sufficient traction and skins will be required. For inexperienced cross-country skiers, skins can also be used on long descents, slowing the rate of descent and providing a degree of control.

\* **Ski Hire Available:** Ski Touring Equipment, which includes skis (Make: Asnes Amundsen BC - Norwegian), boots (Crispi - Italian - leather, all sizes available), poles and climbing skins can be hired through KE, from the Abisko Mountain Station, at a cost of approx. GBP 295 (2024 price). Please note that equipment should be reserved and paid for through the KE office with at least 5-weeks advance notice, along with your boot size (please specify European size) and your height.

## Notes:

- It is requirement by the Swedish authorities that all participants on the Kungsleden must carry a
  - sleeping bag. We recommend taking a lightweight, small bag, which will sit easily inside your rucksack, ideally no heavier than 1-2kg.
  - We also ask you to bring a foam mat rather than a self-inflating thermarest because thermarests are not so easy to handle in very cold weather as they do not self-inflate.
  - At Abisko the group will be paired up and each couple will be asked to carry a snow shovel and emergency wind shelter, which will be provided.

## Cotswold Outdoor

Many of the equipment items listed above are available from [Cotswold Outdoor](#) - our '**Official Recommended Outdoor Retailer**'. When you book a holiday with KE you will receive a 12.5% discount with Cotswold Outdoor, Snow+Rock and Runners Need. The discount code can be downloaded from your MyKE account and you can use this code at the checkout, either in store or online.

## Land Only Information

The LAND ONLY dates and prices are for joining at the Abisko Mountain Station and ending in Kiruna. Single timed transfers are included from/to Kiruna Airport are provided.

## Flight Inclusive Information

The FLIGHT INCLUSIVE dates and prices are based on UK flights from London to Kiruna with SAS via Stockholm. Outbound flights will depart the UK in the morning arriving later the same day. Return flights will depart Kiruna airport in the early afternoon of the last day of the itinerary, arriving in the UK later the same evening.

# Why Choose KE

## Why KE

This classic ski tour offers great value for money; with all meals, timed airport transfers, and snowmobile support all included in the price of the holiday.

**Please Note** This document was downloaded on 23/11/2024 and the trip is subject to change