

BACKPACKER

THE OUTDOORS AT YOUR DOORSTEP

75 LIFE-LIST TRIPS AND TIPS

HOW TO
NAVIGATE A NEW
ROUTE IN
CANYONLANDS

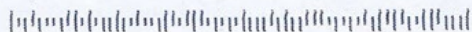
HIKE THE BEST OF
TASMANIA

TREK
PATAGONIA
ON A BUDGET

PACK (A LOT) LIGHTER
SEE MORE WILDLIFE
SAVE MONEY ON GEAR & TRAVEL

EDITORS'
CHOICE
AWARDS

FALL'S
LIGHTEST,
TOUGHEST,
WARMEST
NEW GEAR



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NOVEMBER 2013



HIKERS CROSS THE FIRST BRIDGE BETWEEN KEBNEKAISE AND SIINGI CHECKPOINTS (TYPICALLY DAY TWO).

to be in the varying throes of wilderness rapture. Yes, we seek vast outdoor spaces for their power to quiet our modern lives, but they also bond us together when we share hard work and awe under the open sky. The Classic offers bonding, and a sense of calm. On the last night, I sleep in a tent with a young Dutchman who tells me, to the sound of a stranger's harmonica, that he's fallen in love with the mountains and can't wait for his next trip. This is not a proving ground. I use a portable adult summer camp, a portable Lollapalooza.

#6 DON'T DIET

At the start, volunteers hand out free rolls of Polarbröd (long, flat wheat rolls). I allotted three freeze-dried meals per day and canisters of fuel. But that's just the gear you get with registration. In the mid-100s of the wilderness, somewhere around 100 degrees north and miles from the nearest road, I stop along the eastern shore of the azure lake Ladtojaure and stand in line for 20 minutes at a shed called Lapland's to buy a reindeer burger from a local Sami for about \$17.50. Totally worth it. You also get plenty of complimentary treats along the way. Come checkpoint 21, at mile 21, I inhale *suovas*—fantastic bread folded around mashed potatoes, lingonberry jam, and grilled reindeer. At the ultimate checkpoint, mile 57, I eat as many pancakes—topped with lingonberry and whipped cream—as I can, then sit out under a birch tree with fourscore of my new best friends.

#7 TRY THE SAUNA

At mile 29, I see a dozen naked men running from a pine cabin down to the banks of the bubbling, icy Tjaktjajäkka to roll in water, refill buckets, and grab armfuls of chilled Norrlands Guid beer. I hesitate. I'm a Puritan ancestor. But the sauna is a traditional Finnic tradition. I leave my clothes on the porch and enter a steamy, dimly lit room with 15 others. I stay until the heat drives

me out; I feel both loose and vibrant, like my circulation is in happy overdrive, my muscles relaxed, my mind cleansed. I feel alive.

Rule #8 SLEEP CAN WAIT

→At the latitude of the vast, ice-cream-scooped Tjaktjajavagge (valley is valley) in late summer, the sun rises before 4 a.m. and sets well after 10 p.m. How can you waste all that daylight? More weight savings: Leave the headlamp behind.

Rule #9 CELEBRATE PAST THE FINISH

→When I cross under the final banner at the Abisko Tourist Station, mile 70, people cheer for me, and an official stamps my passport, and another one pins the gold medal on my five-days-gone wicking baselayer. Still another someone hands me a pita stuffed with freshly cooked moose meat and a plastic bottle of cold Norrlands Guid.

As more hikers cross the line, I join the cheers and reflect on an experience most American backpackers could hardly imagine. In our vast wilderness areas, we feel entitled to our solitude and peeved when it's intruded upon. We limit permits to our most spectacular parks in order to preserve some ideal of nature without people. It's the opposite of this "the more the merrier" approach. I wonder if in Sweden, and in wider Europe, people are more accustomed to sharing spaces both urban and wild—and that by sharing the trail, literally, they build a special kind of camaraderie. *Aren't we all lucky to have this together?* It's like they're able to connect with wilderness and each other at the same time.

Would this work in the U.S.? A giant hiking party might be just the way to inspire more people to enjoy the outdoors (and bond with their brethren without quitting work to take a five-month thru-hike). Sure, there will always be fastpackers and peakbaggers and record-setting distance hikers. But why shouldn't there also be a venue for funpackers?

At Abisko, the celebration continues into the night at the Trekkers Inn. I crowd-surf to an astonishingly bad cover of Green Day's "Know Your Enemy." Doesn't matter. Happy people always trump bad music. The Polish team, of course, yells. The Swedes chew tobacco and offer a final *Hej-Hej*. The Danes get wasted.

Wilderness solitude? Start to finish, not for a moment. And I wouldn't have it any other way.

Do It The Fjällräven Classic occurs in mid-August each year. The King's Trail is best in summer. Fee About \$270, includes transportation to/from Kiruna, luggage transfer, fuel canisters, and three freeze-dried meals per day. Info fjallraven.com

TRAVEL SMART C.Y.A.

→Check your health insurance for exclusions. Coverage not adequate abroad, or for the activities you're after? Get travel-specific insurance from Global Rescue (globalrescue.com) or Adventure Advocates (adventureadvocates.com). Carry the policy.

fastest miles

COSTA BRAVA WAY

SPAIN



NO PACK, NO PROBLEM: MORNING MILES IN CADAQUÈS, ON THE COSTA BRAVA WAY

● WOULD YOU RATHER

cover 100 sweet miles of singletrack and dirt and paved roads that wind through pine forests, dunes, and along craggy cliffs hanging over the Mediterranean, or indulge in fresh seafood and local wine while touring Spain's historic Costa Brava? If you run (or hike pretty fast), you can do both. That's the theory behind Running and Trekking Costa Brava's new trip. With support from a local outfitter who's intimately familiar with this region of northern Catalonia, you can knock out up to about 15 miles a day (trail running or hiking, whichever you prefer, but either way you carry no gear) and still have plenty of time to be a tourist. The payoff is equal parts scenery, glut-tony, and history (you'll visit medieval villages, as well as Dalí's hometown). Each participant is given a GPS, so you can customize your daily pickup to suit your pace and interests. Prices start at \$660/person for a four-day trip for groups of four or more (includes lodging and meals.) Info runningcostabrava.com —Rachel Stutz