

Southern Lapland

Contributed by Administrator

Short facts about southern Lapland and Vasterbotten

The location of the county provides a clue about the severe climate. Winters can be harsh with a great deal of snow and sub-zero temperatures. On the other hand, it has been known for the temperature to exceed 30°C in the summer.

The county is one-eighth the size of Sweden, or the same size as Denmark (55 400 sq. km). There are 260 000 inhabitants, of which more than two-thirds live in the coastal cities of Umeå and Skellefteå. This makes the interior region sparsely populated with as low as one person per sq. km.

The landscape is widely varied. The county extends from the mountains in the west, along the great rivers Vindelälven and Umeälven and through the vast forests and farming areas, to the coast and the Gulf of Bothnia in the east. It is 500 km from east to west, and half the distance from north to south.

Wildlife

Västerbotten County stretches from the sea to the mountains. In between there are vast forests and lots of streams and lakes. There are many wild animals in the county, both common and more rare. There is a zoo in Lycksele where you can see, among other things, wolves, musk-oxen, wolverines and other exciting animals.

Sweden's largest predator, the bear, can be seen in both the forests and mountains. They can be 2 metres tall and weigh 350 kg. Bears travel across large areas and live mostly alone. They go into hibernation when the first snow falls in the autumn and come out again in April or May. Bears live off of plants, roots and berries. As with all predators, they avoid humans and are not dangerous unless they feel threatened. That is why you should be careful if you see a mother bear with her cubs.

There are plenty of elk in the forests of Västerbotten. The elk is Sweden's largest wild mammal. Fully grown, they can weigh up to 800 kg. Only the bulls have horns and these are shed in the winter. Elk cows give birth to one or two calves in the spring.

The wolverine is Europe's largest marten. They are sturdy animals with short legs and large paws. They can vary in colour from one animal to another: some are dark brown - almost black - while others are much lighter. They move in a rhythmic gallop and leave behind them large two or three paw tracks. Wolverines live spread out in Sweden from northern Lapland to Härjedalen.

If you are lucky, you might see a lynx in Västerbotten. A large proportion of the approximately 200 lynx in Sweden live in the county. They are skilled hunters who always catch their own dinner. Reindeer, roe deer, hare and other small animals are out of luck if a lynx finds them when it is hungry.

The arctic fox lives on the tundra and above the tree line. They are found throughout Sweden's mountains, but are rare. This is because they are dependent on areas with hills or slopes made of sand or clay so that they can dig their dens. Mountain lemmings and other types of voles dominate their food. They are sometimes forced to eat birds, berries and dead animals in years when there is a shortage of their main prey. There are between 100 and 150 arctic fox dens in the mountains of Västerbotten. Of these, only a small proportion are occupied in years when there are plenty of smaller animals for the foxes to eat.

Reindeer are common in the inland and mountain areas of Västerbotten. Reindeer have been a very important animal for the Sami for centuries. They get their meat, milk, hides for clothes, and bones for crafts from reindeer. Both the male and female reindeer have horns. The reindeer are related to deer and grow to be about 1 metre tall and to weight nearly 100 kg.

source - county administration

