

# SKELLEFTEÅ

magasin

## LISALOVE

*Dreamlike surrealism*

#1

### RURAL ROMANCE

*There's love for her home county*

### THE RIVER

*The dirty water that became an oasis*

### THE MUSIC

*Raised fists and a DIY spirit*

## SWEDEN'S TWIN PEAKS

*There are similarities and many connecting threads*

EXTREME SWIMMER CHRISTOF WANDRATSCH | BEST CHEESE IN SWEDEN | A DIFFERENT WORLD | PHOTO AS INTERIOR DECORATION

# AN UNABASHED HOMAGE

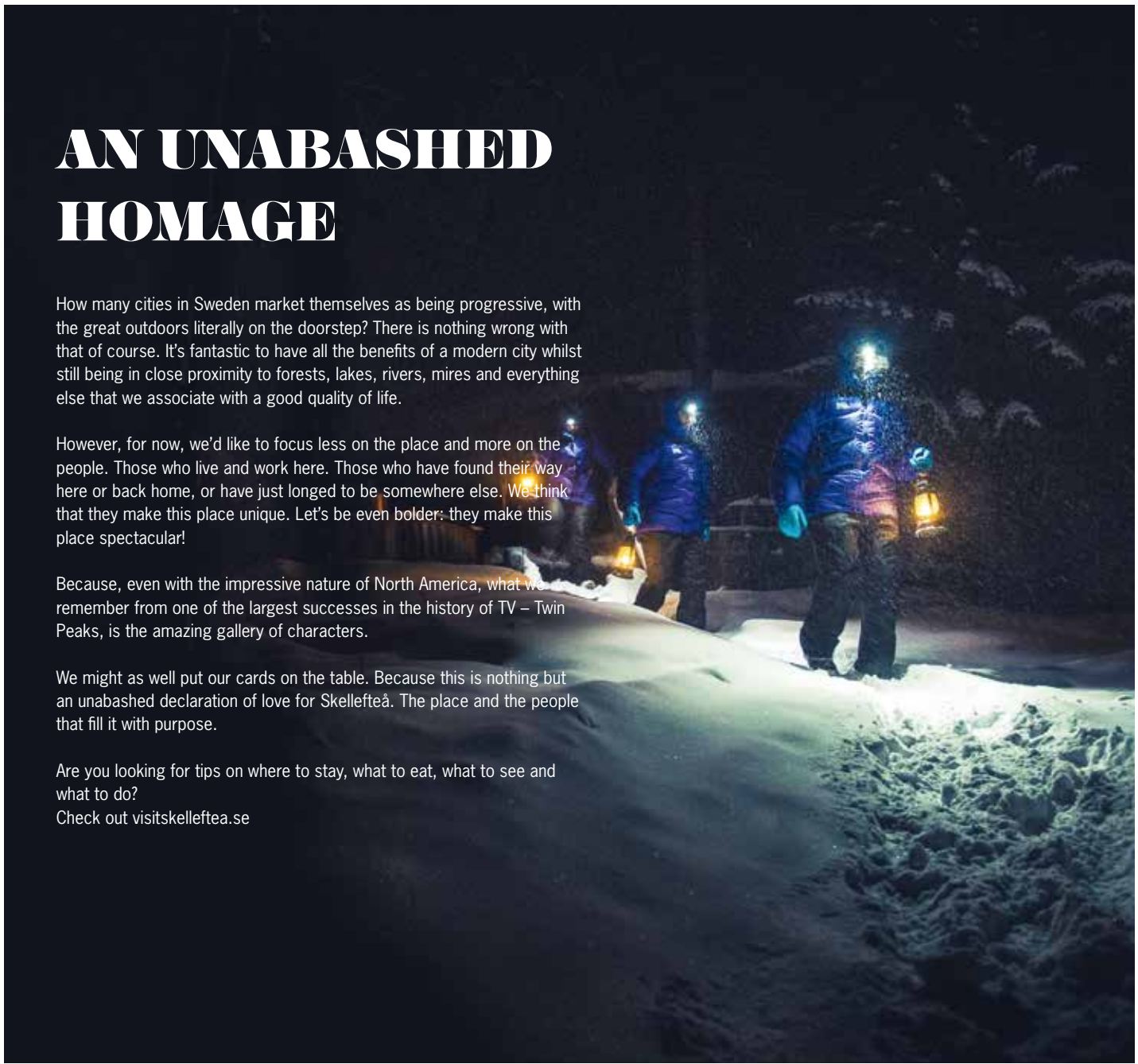
How many cities in Sweden market themselves as being progressive, with the great outdoors literally on the doorstep? There is nothing wrong with that of course. It's fantastic to have all the benefits of a modern city whilst still being in close proximity to forests, lakes, rivers, mires and everything else that we associate with a good quality of life.

However, for now, we'd like to focus less on the place and more on the people. Those who live and work here. Those who have found their way here or back home, or have just longed to be somewhere else. We think that they make this place unique. Let's be even bolder: they make this place spectacular!

Because, even with the impressive nature of North America, what we remember from one of the largest successes in the history of TV – Twin Peaks, is the amazing gallery of characters.

We might as well put our cards on the table. Because this is nothing but an unabashed declaration of love for Skellefteå. The place and the people that fill it with purpose.

Are you looking for tips on where to stay, what to eat, what to see and what to do?  
Check out [visitskelleftea.se](http://visitskelleftea.se)



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## TWIN PEAKS

*Skellefteå - Sweden's Twin Peaks?*

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# POST-GLACIAL LAND ELEVATION

The coast up north is pretty remarkable. It actually grows, year by year due to the Ice Age which ended around 10,000 years ago. Post-glacial land elevation is the academic name for it and it means that the land strives to return to its original level. The uplift is greatest in West Bothnia and the land in Furuögrund rises the most. Almost 10 millimetres per year.



## SWIMS FOR DAREDEVILS

On average it takes a swimmer about 20 seconds to swim the 25 metre lane surrounded by ice in central Skellefteå. We know this because the Winter swim, in temperatures just above zero, has been organised here since 2012.



## THE WORLDS OLDEST SKI

In 1924, three men – Josef, Hugo and Tyko, were out digging ditches to drain a marsh in a wetland near Lake Fäbodträsket. They happened upon the oldest ski in the world, the Kalvträsk ski, 5,200 years old. That's older than the pyramids of Egypt.

# EVENTS CONFERENCES GROUPS

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## SKELLEFTEÅ ADVENTUREPARK

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## Homelike secret

Freshly baked bread. Local home cooking on your plate. And a countryside feeling, only 2 km from the center of Skellefteå. We are a well kept secret for those planning a holiday or conference that is a little bit different and much more like home. Choose Medlefors when you visit Skellefteå.

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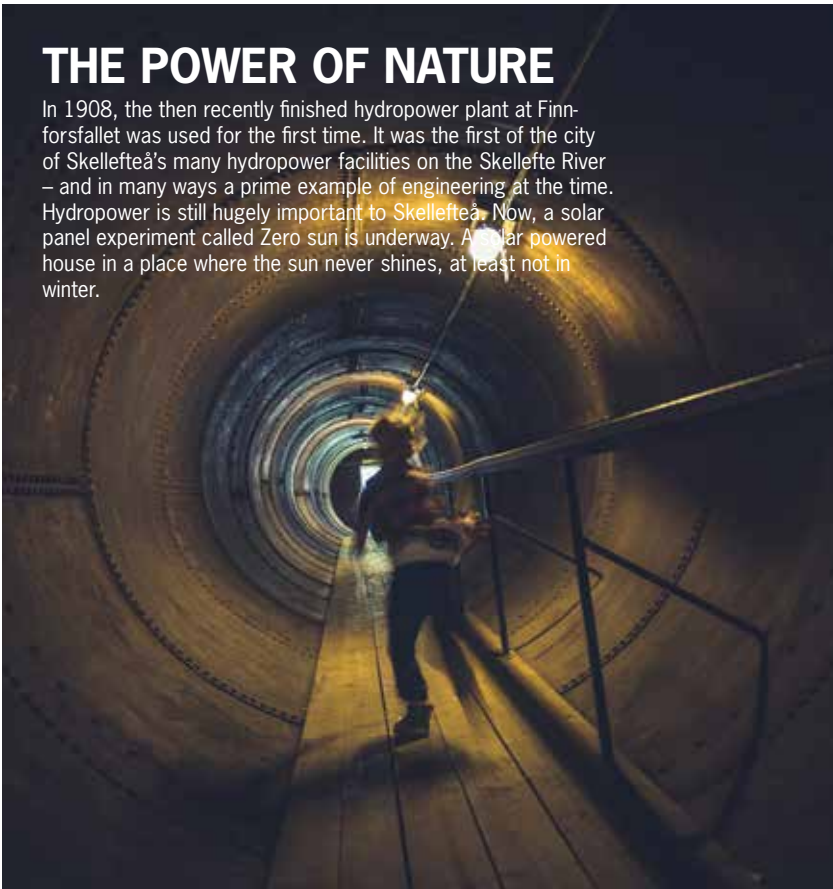
# THE CITY OF STORYTELLERS

Skellefteå is known as the City of Storytellers and hosts the annual Berättarfestivalen (the Storytellers' Festival). This has as a lot to do with all the authors who were inspired by this region. However, history goes much further back than that. Read Åke Lundgren's account online.



## THE POWER OF NATURE

In 1908, the then recently finished hydropower plant at Finnorsfallet was used for the first time. It was the first of the city of Skellefteå's many hydropower facilities on the Skellefte River – and in many ways a prime example of engineering at the time. Hydropower is still hugely important to Skellefteå. Now, a solar panel experiment called Zero sun is underway. A solar powered house in a place where the sun never shines, at least not in winter.



Photography: Jonas Westling

## FROM THE BEGINNING

Skellefteå was founded in 1845 by vicar Nils Nordlander. He lived at Stiftsgården and is considered by many to be the founder of Skellefteå. In 1879, Miss Anna Huss moved in to Sittsgården. She brought one of Skellefteå's first bathtubs.

## FREEDOM TO ROAM

The freedom to roam is a huge part of everyday life in the Swedish Lapland. Stated in Swedish law. But it works both ways. You have to pay respect to the environment. Being humble and keep distance. Don't disturb. Don't destroy. When practiced with respect, it's up to everybody to explore. This makes Sweden unique and Skellefteå the perfect place to get down with nature.



## Bättersia oppo Skelet\*

Welcome to Nordanå!  
Just five minutes walk  
from anywhere...  
almost.

\*The better side of Skellefteå



SKELLEFTEÅ  
MUSEUM



# Welcome to Skellefteå tourist center

You are always welcome at Skellefteå Tourist Center. Here you'll get personal service while picking up brochures, buying tickets and finding inspiration for your stay.

[visitskelleftea.se](http://visitskelleftea.se)

SKELLEFTEÅ



# NORTHVOLT ONE

*The energy of the future will be created here.*

IN SKELLEFTEÅ, CONSTRUCTION OF WHAT MAY BECOME THE LARGEST FACILITY IN NORTHERN EUROPE FOR PRODUCTION OF LITHIUM ION BATTERIES, HAS JUST BEGUN. A JOURNEY THAT MANY WOULD LIKE TO BE A PART OF – AND SKELLEFTEÅ HAS THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING THE CENTRE OF ATTENTION.

**N**orthvolt, a company aiming to produce the world's greenest batteries with minimal carbon emissions, is the driving force. Their goals are achievable thanks to renewable electricity, locally sourced metals and battery recycling – and their products will contribute to Europe's shift towards renewable energy..

## TOGETHER

Skellefteå Council, Skellefteå Kraft, local enterprise, the university, country representatives, locals and associations have all worked together to make the establishment in Skellefteå happen. Because of this enthusiasm, Skellefteå, initially not on the list of candidates, ended up being the location of choice.

Northvolt estimate that they will be employing 2,000-2,500 people, something which will transform Skellefteå completely. The construction work

alone creates thousands of jobs, subsequently giving a boost to shops, restaurants, hotels, transportation and construction companies etc.

## THE NORTHVOLT ONE CONSTRUCTION PROJECT

Northvolt, Skellefteå Council and Skellefteå Kraft have established a joint project organisation for future collaboration within the Northvolt One project. Development of the industrial site will be carried out in stages and Northvolt will have the right to purchase the site once it has been completed.

A first step was taken in the summer of 2018, for the first quarter of the facility, expected to be complete in 2020. The facility will be fully built by 2023. This large-scale factory in Skellefteå will, once fully operational, be capable of producing batteries with a total capacity of 32 GWh per year.





## IT'S GOOD TO BE CURIOUS

Skellefteå is home to Sweden's newest Science center - Exploratoriet. It's located at Nordanå and lets visitors play, experiment and experience to gain new insights how our amazing world works.



## ADVENTURE PARK

Here you will find everything from an 80 metre zip line, guaranteed to send thrilling chill down your spine, to adventures for children close to the ground. True challenges for both big and small.



## BONNSTAN

Only a few other places have history so clearly written in the buildings as Bonnstan, an old church town with a history dating back to the 1600's. But Bonnstans history has so much more to it than meets the eye. Stories and tales tell about the supernatural events and tragedies. Read some of them at [visitskelleftea.se](http://visitskelleftea.se)

## INTRO

# KULTURHUSET

The vision for the new, all in wood, culture center in Skellefteås is to a place that drives ideas and creativity. The centre is scheduled to be finished in 2021.



Illustration: White Arkitekter

## STCC & GOCART

Fällfors is home to Sweden's northernmost STCC racecourse. In 2019, the first midnight race will be held on the newly built course at the Skellefteå Drivecenter. You will also find one of Europe's most state of the art go kart facilities in Furunäs.



Photography: Jonas Westling

## SKELLEFTEÅ AND THE WHITE GUIDE

White guide selects some of the best places to eat in Sweden. In Skellefteå you will find four of those. The restaurants Bryggargatan, Nygatan 57 and Stadskällaren and the café Skrämräsk Kvarn.

## INTRO



# NORDSKEN

The largest gaming and gaming culture event in the Nordic countries is known as Nordsken. Nordsken's rapid growth is a great thing, but it's hardly unexpected. There are a lot of enthusiasts here, passionate about games and gaming culture, forming the foundation of Nordsken together with the ever-expanding local game development industry.



## GET A GREETER

A greeter will take you around town for a couple of hours, telling you about this and that and giving you a personal introduction to the place. At no cost. That's a fine example of local hospitality.



## BIGGEST LEGO EXHIBITION

One might think LEGO is only for children. But that's not quite true. Skellefteå is home to Sweden's biggest collection of LEGO. Of course, children are welcome at Bureå Camping, but an adult perspective is at least as important.

The love affair between Farao Groth and Skellefteå started for more than 4 years ago.



*"... when things were settled with Northvolt and the new battery factory, I cried tears of joy."*

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# FARAO

– AND HIS RECIPROCATED LOVE FOR SKELLEFTEÅ

*How does a storyteller from the big city, with no roots or connections here, fall head over heels for a place like Skellefteå – only to be welcomed unconditionally, with open arms, by the city? This is one way it could happen.*

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: TED LOGARDT

He sits comfortably in a large armchair in a Skellefteå hotel lobby. It's becoming something of a habit for Farao Groth. Hanging out in Skellefteå. Known from morning radio shows amongst other things, originally from Stockholm. "What do I do?", he says, adjusting his posture. "God, that's difficult. I don't know? Am I a media personality? Nah, sounds too pretentious. I don't see myself as a radio host either. Show host, maybe. But still not quite right. Storyteller? Yeah, that's probably what I am. A storyteller." He lets out a warm laugh. "You know, don't you", I interject, "that Skellefteå is the city of storytellers?" "You're joking? When I thought I couldn't love this town more!"

## SUN SOAKED AND CAREFREE

The love affair, yes that's just what it is, between Farao and Skellefteå is now about as well-known as it is mutual. And like many things in life it happened completely by chance. "My best friend Gustav spent a summer working at the accident and emergency ward in Skellefteå. He thought that I should come and visit. Back then, I hardly knew where Skellefteå was." Farao enters storytelling mode. He is transported back to the summer of 2014. To a sun soaked, care-free Skellefteå. "It was one of those wonderful summers. We were young, we partied, went swimming and go-karting. I remember it was hot, almost oppressively so. Yes, everything was just amazing and I fell for the place right away." The stay made a great impression on Farao. Back in the studio he spoke very warmly about Skellefteå and shortly thereafter, he received an invitation.

## UNBRIDLED AND UNCONDITIONAL

He pauses in his story. Leans forward and says: "This is important. There is no, and I mean no, irony in the way I describe my relationship with Skellefteå. It might of course seem strange that a media personality with no roots or connections so willingly

embraces this part of rural northern Sweden, and that in turn rural northern Sweden unconditionally embraces a loudmouthed gay man from the big city. But that's the way it is." He leans back and continues telling the story. Skellefteå AIK, the hockey team, picked up on the love that Farao expressed for the city and invited him to a game. Farao's first ever ice hockey game. "And if they won, I'd get to meet the guys, in the locker room." AIK did win. "That was enough to make every fag in Stockholm growl with jealousy", he laughs, adding that his visit to the locker room had of course been cleared with all the players beforehand.

## THE BIRTH OF POSEIDON

When Skellefteå toyed with the idea of naming honorary citizens, Farao was suggested as the first recipient. "Well, nothing has been settled yet", he says with a laugh, explaining that the question he's most often asked by Skellefteå's locals is actually why he likes Skellefteå.

"I think Skellefteå stands out. This myth about the north being a bit grumpy and backward, there's nothing of that here. I see a strong entrepreneurial spirit and everyone is friendly and positive. Also, the guys in Skellefteå are like the hottest in the world." Farao bursts out laughing, recounting a

perfectly normal summer day at the Boviken sea bath. "I'm lying on the beach and suddenly four typical Skellefteå guys come out of the water. It was like the 'Birth of Poseidon'. Completely unbelievable. No posing, just an incredibly attractive unawareness of their own beauty." No, Farao has no straightforward explanation as to why things went the way they did. Then again, love finds its own ways. Giving the finger to logic and the things we take for granted. "You know, when things were settled with Northvolt and the new battery factory, I cried tears of joy. It's weird. This feels like home even though it really shouldn't. But that's just the way it is. ●



# DREAMLIKE SURREALISM

LISALOVE'S ART IS LIKE NOTHING ELSE YOU'VE SEEN. LIMITLESS, FANTASTICAL AND MILDLY FEVERISH. SHE CREATES WITH HERSELF SIMULTANEOUSLY AT THE CENTRE AND ON THE PERIPHERY. WELCOME DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE.

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: TED LOGARDT

"I don't know if you're going to like this", I say, looking over at Lisalove a bit anxiously. A couple of yellowed birch leaves descend softly to the ground as I scroll through her Instagram feed. "I can't help but think of Alice in Wonderland", I say, "and maybe most of all Tim Burton's filmatisation with Johnny Depp as the Mad Hatter."

"I don't know", she says, in a cursory tone, "people say that every now and then."

"And what do you think about it?"

"That I should read the book or see the film so that I can relate to the reference. As it is, I don't really know what it means."

## A PERFECT FEVER DREAM

Yes, I know that it might be considered rude to compare artists and their works to that of others, but I can't get around the fact that Lisalove's art makes me feel a bit like I've tumbled down a rabbit hole. Aesthetically, I can see a number of connections to Lewis Carroll's 1865 fairy-tale. Not least in its seemingly limitless fantastical surrealism. You know that tingling sensation, suggesting that anything can happen and that the things that do happen are not undividedly positive. A bit like a perfectly balanced fever dream. "I think it's important not to impose one's own point of view upon the viewer", explains LisaLove. That creates an edge in LisaLove Bäckman's photographic art. You linger within her images, leisurely losing yourself in layers, nuances and moods.

## LET YOUR MIND SOAR

In 2014, LisaLove began finding the mode of expression that she is currently using to describe the world today. "I have never had a plan or vision of what I'm doing. I have been involved in photography on and off since I was a child. I've tried both corporate portraits and wedding photography but never really felt at home." She created the first collage that she was happy with in 2014. "It pictured me, next to a grand piano at Stiftsgården in Skellefteå." She describes her creative process and how it has changed over the years. How it was first rapid. Haphazard. Borderline sloppy. "That was what I needed then. I had such a great need to be in a perpetual state of creativity. All the time. New images. Constant ideas. There was something manic about it."

"Like a state of intoxication?"

"Well, maybe, but it was also a way to manage anxiety. I felt incomplete when that creative drive faded away. Now I know that's how it is and I feel comfortable knowing that the will to create comes and goes."

## FLY FREE

"Where do you get your ideas?"

"My best tip is to stay in bed in the morning, keep your eyes closed and let your thoughts soar freely. Then, anything can happen. Just remember to have something to sketch with close to hand. Thoughts are fleeting and easily lost."



## **PROFESSIONAL DREAMER**

The first collage came into being in 2014, in the dining hall at Stiftsgården in Skellefteå.



## **INNER ESSENCE**

Along forest roads, there grows a nuance  
Entangling the body and leading the dance  
Flower bells erupting, in a fragrance of inner essence  
And then arrives the calm and the belief in balance



## SAVIOUR OF IMPROVEMENT



Far from all ideas materialise. Most are discarded, often because their message becomes too obvious.

“Who are the people in the images?”, I ask.

“Good question. They are not alter egos or characters. Although in a way, I guess all the motifs are part of me but I don’t like it when my everyday self becomes too obvious. That makes it boring. I see my body as a tool. Whenever it turns out well, there is always some kind of distance between the work and my exterior.”

She then pauses and says:

“Yeah, that dog has become kind of a character. And my rabbit Gudrun also appears in several pictures.”

“Like a certain white rabbit, in a waistcoat, with a watch”, I point out, googling a picture from Alice in Wonderland.

She laughs.

“If you say so.”

### THE PROCESS

Lisalove explains that she still builds a lot of her creativity around not feeling very

well. “That’s not to say that I have to feel bad whilst I create, but I enjoy exploring the darker sides of myself. Nowadays, I don’t have the same urge for things to move quickly. I am happy doing more thought-out pictures.”

“How does it work?”, I wonder, “the process itself?”

She pauses. Thinks for a moment.

“It has different forms. Nature is truly inspiring. Deserted houses are really interesting. There is already so much in the walls. Stories. Destinies and events. Then, it is up to me to take in and interpret what I experience. I can return to places like that time and time again. A white wall is something entirely different. Like a blank paper that I can fill with content. Simpler pictures, I often take on impulse. I wake with an emotion, dive into my wardrobe and see where my intuition takes me. Other ideas, I work with for a long time.”

“You also use quite a lot of unconventional props.”

“I love flea markets and the plumbing sections of DIY centres like Bilema. Jula

can be incredibly inspiring too, or the supermarket produce aisles for that matter. I like building whatever I think I may need, myself. Large swathes of cloth are great. More extravagant items such as wedding dresses, I tend to find on Ebay.

### FROM IDEA TO PRINT

Lisalove emphasises that she creates for herself. No one else. Not for want of others’ appreciation however. In 2015 she was named Photographer of the Year in a competition run by Swedish photo magazine Kamera & Bild. In the autumn of 2017, 14 of her images were shown at Fotografiska in Stockholm and her Instagram account has nearly 10,000 followers. But recognition and attention, she says, is not unproblematic.

“Being the centre of attention is not what I crave. Yeah, I’m active on Instagram, but the social media attention feels empty.” Instead what leaves her with a warm feeling is when someone buys a piece and hangs it on their wall. “When someone finds themselves in a situation where they can relate to



## **THINK TANK**

I sit in the dusky light and squint  
I look inwards at the thoughts that are now in print  
I turn the page to relieve all that I have sensed  
I puff out all the chapters that I finally have burned  
The ashes feed the embers that have now returned  
I brace myself for every page that is as yet unturned



## DOUBLE HEARTBEATS

In the midst of a room is a gaping hole, in happiness's peculiar sphere. Careful steps across decaying boards, one misstep and pain cuts through your mind. Balancing against the facade, the one that is slowly falling apart. Small openings towards the fresh air, holding both distress and faith. Double heartbeats then see the light, the arena nourished by the power of thought.

my work and also take the time to tell me about it. That is a huge thing. But the true satisfaction lies in completing the process from idea to a finished print.”

### A WEALTH OF FREEDOM

Two years ago, Lisalove moved back to Skellefteå. One reason was the creative freedom here. “A larger area with fewer people provides a lot of opportunities, especially when it comes to creating outdoors. Here, I am almost always left alone. That is a major reason why I moved back here. I didn't have the same kind of space elsewhere.” The creative process means that Lisalove sometimes finds herself in uncomfortable situations. Little adventures, as she calls them. “If I am to make that idea in my head come true, there is no other way.” She explains how she, just a few days before this interview, found herself half-naked, wrapped in a climbing plant, whilst occupants of passing cars looked on with great curiosity.

“You just have to soldier through it”, she says with a laugh.

Another time, Lisalove had decided on a winter bathing setting in Baggböle, outside

Umeå. Things went the way they sometimes do and after balancing her camera and tripod on an ice floe, she immediately dropped her shutter remote in the water.

“I also got my car stuck so I ended up having to walk four kilometres home, cold and wet.”

### TICK, TOCK

She looks up at the sky. The sun is steadily sinking lower. Lisalove doesn't have time to stay much longer. She discovered a root on the outskirts of town. The kind of root that makes your mind soar. “It is dark and dusky”, she smiles. “I also found a bunch of flowers growing atop a rubbish heap near where I live. I think the root, the flowers and me are just what I need right now. You know, I'm happy that I live here.”

Myself, I tap my way onto Instagram. Tick, tock, tick, tock. Time goes by. I think of the white rabbit. The one always in such a hurry. And what we choose to do with the time we have been given. I find the account lisalove.se. “Follow the white rabbit.” I tumble down the rabbit hole once more. ●

### FIVE PLACES FOR STUNNING PORTRAITS

**The ice wall in Klutmark** – especially in spring when you start to see the rocks through the ice.

**Bonnstan** – the wooden walls in the old church town are amazing as backgrounds.

**The park of Medlefors** – green and moody. What's there not to like.

**Byske, south side** – beaches, the sea, forests and above all, solitude!

**A forest** – pick any random forest to explore and be creative in. Loads of space to create magic.

En Flotte – a hugely popular event with beloved artist performing on a raft in the river, was held three summers in a row in the city centre.



# THE DIRTY WATER THAT BECAME AN OASIS

IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THERE AND ITS HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE TO INDUSTRY CAN NOT BE OVERSTATED. HOWEVER, REGARDLESS OF THE RIVER'S SCENIC VIEWS AND ITS LOCATION IN THE CITY CENTRE, IT HAS HARDLY BEEN CONSIDERED A MAGNET IN MODERN TIMES. UNTIL NOW, THAT IS. WHAT HAPPENED? WHAT MADE US TURN AWAY FROM THE SKELLEFTE RIVER AND THEN EMBRACE IT ONCE AGAIN?

WORDS: PÅR STRÖMBRO PHOTOGRAPHY: TED LOGARDT



In the midst of a show Miss Li decided, against better judgment, to climb up on the piano on the cramped raft, bellowing out ‘Stupid Girl’. But the laws of physics, balance and gravity were not working with her this time. The piano trembled and she fell straight down into the Skellefte River. The crowd of thousands, standing on the river bank to listen, let out a collective gasp. They will be talking about this for a long time to come. Another memory has been created by the Skellefte River.

For many, this very location down by the river is something of a recent discovery. The river has of course always been there, steadily flowing straight through the city, but it has been considered more of nuisance. It has created division – most recently in a drawn-out, agitated discussion about the so-called Centrumbron Bridge that will be built across it in a few years time. According to many, its potential as a recreation area has not been put to good use.

#### FROM BARRIERE TO CENTRE OF ATTENTION

But then things started happening. In the early 2010’s, spacious stands overlooking the river were built, as well as an inviting wooden deck where small boats could moor. The premium restaurant, Bryggargatan, was lured from Piteå to Skellefteå and entirely new facilities were built for their operations. Suddenly, the people of Skellefteå had access to a kitchen with French and Icelandic influences, adding variety to a culinary landscape dominated by burger joints and pizzerias. Around the same time, the local council approved development of the slope below the city hall, allowing it to become an ‘urban living room’ for the locals, with various meeting places and activity spaces.

“The river was a barrier in the city centre, difficult to cross. City planning had long been guided by an approach where we avoided the river, however, we could see a

large untapped potential in it, connected to city life and recreation. It became our goal to change the view of the river, from being a barrier to becoming an artery”, explains Council Architect Harriet Wistemar.

Whilst working on a new, more detailed general plan for the city centre, the council began collaborating with well-renowned Danish architects, Gehl and a plan began taking shape through dialogue with both residents and local enterprise. “We used to build houses to meet one particular function but now we have turned our attention more to social aspects, looking at life between the buildings. In that process, turning to the river became important”, says Harriet.

#### EVENTS BEFORE THE WINTER SWIM

Yet another restaurant, Brygg CC, was established and in almost the exact spot where the Skellefteå Steam Brewery was located and in operation for over 100 years, a new brewery was built. At the same time, the adjacent city park underwent a complete transformation and became a more natural part of the area by the river.

The collaborative efforts of the council and local enterprise have been a success. The people of Skellefteå have come to enjoy their ‘new living room’ and the area is lively, most of the time. In summer, people flock to outdoor restaurants for lunch, sit in the stands or on the wooden decking. Events such as En Flotte (A Raft) and the Scandinavian winter swimming championship attract many visitors to the river. “The fact is that there used to be quite a few events on the ice in the past too. In summer, the river was occupied by the needs of industry, log driving first and foremost, but in winter the ice was a good place for events. Up until the 1950’s, horse races were actually held on the ice, as well as car races and skiing competitions. The ice also served as an occasional landing strip for aircraft, offering the locals a tour”, explains Rolf Granlund, Chairman of Skefo, Skellefteå’s local history association.



From the archive of Skellefteå museum.

*"Up until the 1950's, horse races were actually held on the ice, as well as car races and skiing competitions."*



From the archive of Skellefteå museum.





He came to Skellefteå in 1970.

“Back then, the river was hardly the focus of much interest, but 100 years ago steam boats with names such as Lovisa, Karl XV and Enigheten serviced this area regularly. Before the railroad arrived in 1912, the river was the main goods route to the city”, says Rolf, explaining how the river bank running alongside the current city hall used to serve as a loading and unloading dock.

The river was important for passenger travel as well and there were several piers for that purpose downstream. Some travelled far and up until WW2, the Sveabolagen boats ferried passengers and goods from the Skellefteå harbour to Stockholm.

#### **AN IMPRESSIVE SIGHT**

For a long time, the river was at the centre of work and industry and not necessarily

*"Making the most of riverside locations has become a global trend. The London Docklands, Hammarby Sjöstad in Stockholm, and now the Skellefte River."*

connected to recreation or leisure activities. From the 1700's onwards, industrial uses have dominated the river. "At the time, tar making was an incredibly important industry in Skellefteå. The tar was shipped in barrels down the river and exported around the world, to be used for shipbuilding. One raft had room for 270 barrels and it must have been an impressive sight", says Rolf, adding that shipbuilding was common along the Skellefte River. "Production peaked in the 19th century and we had shipyards at Sunnanå, Karlsgård and Strömsör, as well as in Bergsbyn and at Alderholmen.

Around this time, large sawmills were established in the area, heralding an era of log driving, which continued up until the 1970's, when for logistic purposes, trucks finally outcompeted the river.



## SUSPECTED SOURCE

Lorentz Andersson, former Skellefteå council leader, played a central role in the region's development from the 1960's onwards. He grew up in Ursviken in the 1940's and 50's and has always felt closely connected to the river.

"Yes, of course we went fishing – that was a big thing – and swimming there too", Lorentz reminisces, describing a period of major modernisation in the history of Skellefteå. "New houses were built and one change brought about by this was the introduction of flushing toilets, replacing outhouses. However, no one had considered sewage management, meaning that all sewage just ran out into the river. There was no wastewater treatment. The worst thing was probably all the untreated sewage from the hospital. Environmental concerns were not on the agenda back then and people didn't understand the dangers", Lorentz concludes, adding that swimming in the river was prohibited when he was 10 years old. "There were reports of paralysed children, polio and the river was suspected to be the source. From a tourism perspective, the river was completely ignored. Collector canals, transporting waste to the wastewater treatment plant were not completed until 1969.

So, for quite some time, the Skellefte River suffered a bad reputation and was known as dirty, an image that many of those who lived nearby back then found difficult to forget. In the meantime, the riverside sawmills had disappeared one by one. The establishment of the Rönnskär smelter caused the industrial workforce to gravitate to the south, meaning that the river was no longer the industrial artery that it had once been. People looked away from the river, towards the city centre and the northern districts where there was construction like never before. "However, the river bank was not uninteresting. There was a lot of talk about placing a city library there, or a community centre", says Lorentz, who was the chairman of the Council Planning Board in the 1970's.

## DIFFICULTIES ATTRACTING GUESTS

Nothing came of that. However, Skellefteå's city hall was built in that location in the mid-1980's. The Skellefteå Steam Brewery, located nearby, was demolished at the same time. "The steam brewery was torn down because we considered it an

obstacle to future development of the city centre. I of course envisioned restaurants and office buildings but there was not enough demand. The river didn't have the same power of attraction and people's habits were entirely different from what they are today. The idea of dining at a restaurant for any event other than a birthday is a fairly recent one. No one thought we would have today's standard of living", Lorentz explains, saying that the restaurant in



the new city hall had difficulties attracting guests – despite offering the lowest prices in the city. "People complained that it was too expensive. I also think part of the explanation could be found in very restrictive alcohol policies. For a long time, very few liquor licences were granted in Skellefteå, which made it hard for pub owners to invest in such operations."

## LIFE BETWEEN THE BUILDINGS

Today, things are looking different, not just in Skellefteå.

"Making the most of riverside locations has become a global trend. The London Docklands, Hammarby Sjöstad in Stockholm, and now the Skellefte River. Leisure and luxury in areas that were once industrial estates. I suppose it has to do with old industry disappearing and creating room for other things", says Rolf Granstrand.

Sofia Andersson Lundberg, proprietor of the events company, For Events, organises events with some of the nation's most popular artists. She is one of many who

have found a new livelihood connected to the river, far away from the tar making and forestry industries. Her concept En Flotte (A Raft) has attracted tens of thousands of visitors over the last three summers, by offering free concerts with top Swedish artists, on a small raft by the river bank.

"I was actually inspired by a letter to our local newspaper, Norran, saying that the river was boring and not put to good use. My job is to find quality, exciting locations for music events, so I made it my goal to make it happen by the river. I wanted people to discover what an amazing place it is. And I made that happen by offering shows on a raft", Sofia says with a laugh.

According to Sofia, this would never have happened if not for the fact that the area was remodelled. "Coming up with the idea was no challenge, but without infrastructure we could never have made it happen. I'm glad that we have an actively involved council that wants to make things happen, that probably hasn't always been the case. Skellefteå was once built around traditional industry, now times are different and city planning is highly impacted by the tourism industry and the importance of being attractive to people."

Life between the buildings, that is.

And the river keeps on running straight through the city. No matter what we think of it. ●

## FIVE THINGS BY THE SKELLEFTE RIVER

- **The Health Trail** - walk the Health Trail and circle a microcosm of this lovely riverside environment in five kilometres.
- **Bryggbacken** - a great place to hang out in summer with both a nightclub and a restaurant.
- **Kyrkholmen** - the summer café.
- **Rovön** - shallow, lush and just generally delightful.
- **Winter swimming** - a crazy event attracting the attention of the world.

Curious about the history of Skellefteå? Learn more about how Skellefteå became Skellefteå [visitskelleftea.se/stiftsgarden-skellefteas-vagga](http://visitskelleftea.se/stiftsgarden-skellefteas-vagga)

# PHOTO- GRAPHY AS INTERIOR DECORATION

WHEN A PHOTOGRAPHER AND OUTDOOR LIVING ENTHUSIAST LOOKED AT QUICK AND EASY OPTIONS FOR SELLING HIS OWN PHOTO ART, THE IDEA OF PRINTLER WAS BORN. NOW, HE WANTS TO CHANGE HOW PEOPLE BUY AND SELL PHOTO ART IN THE GLOBAL MARKET.

WORDS: TED LOGARDT PHOTOGRAPHY: SVEN BURMAN

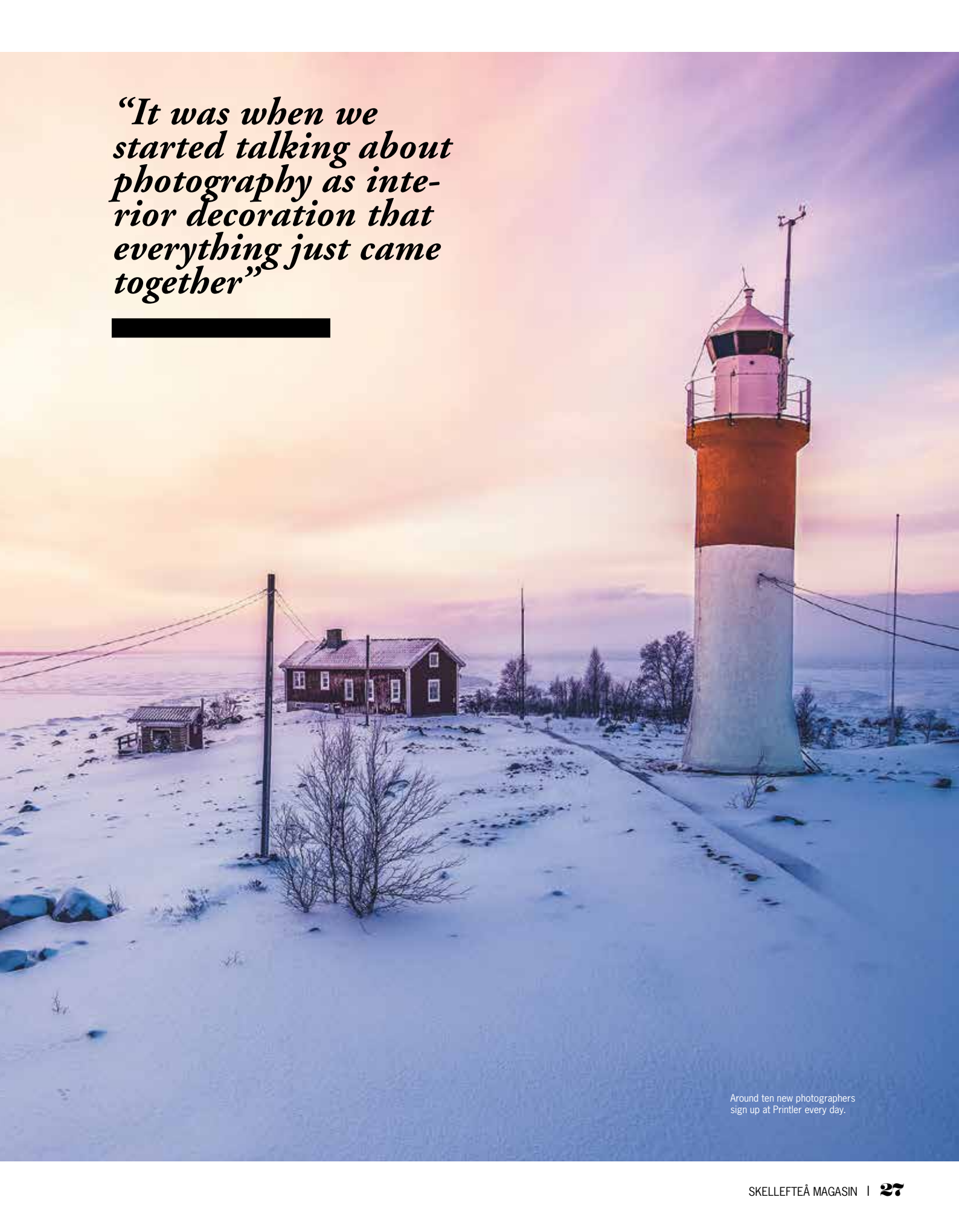
“Could you wait just a sec?” says Sven as we meet somewhere between here and there in central Skellefteå. He has been putting something off for too long and now he’s in a hurry to finish it on time. In his defence, his company, Printler, is in the midst of their high season. “Interior decoration is more seasonal than many people think”, he says, browsing emails on his phone. “Procrastination”, I reply with a grin. Then I proceed to give an unsolicited lecture on man’s unparalleled ability to hold off from doing important but oh so dreary things. “I don’t know”, Sven says with a smile, “it’s just so easy to say ‘of course we’ll sort that out’ for some special event, but then as it draws closer, the time just isn’t there.”

## FOR THOSE WHO LOVE INTERIOR DESIGN

Sven’s last name is Burman and he is the founder of Printler. A digital platform where local art with a spirit, a message, is sold primarily to people interested in interior decoration. “It was when we started talking about photography as interior decoration that everything just came together”, says Sven. At one end there are decoration aficionados, at the other, Printler’s photographers. Today, they have about 3,000 photographers on their books. “Around ten new photographers sign up every day”, explains Sven, emphasising that the title of



*“It was when we started talking about photography as interior decoration that everything just came together”*



Around ten new photographers sign up at Printler every day.



Sven, Nandini, children and dog enjoying a frozen lake.



Sven wants to change the way people buy and sell photo art in a globalised market.

‘photographer’ may not be entirely correct. “The majority of our photographers are not professional in the traditional sense of the word, but can instead be found on social media, with swathes of followers and a high digital presence. Many of them are incredibly skilled at what they do and their work does in many ways go beyond the ‘photographer’ epithet. I prefer to talk about them as artists.”

### ARTIST OR PHOTOGRAPHER

Sven’s phone buzzes, confirming that the aforementioned emergency has been dealt with. “3,000 artists, do you have to deal with many people’s different expectations?”

“I often draw parallels to the music service Spotify. As a small, new artist, you can’t expect to go gold just because people can find you on Spotify. You will need a bit of luck. Maybe you’ll end up on a playlist, or in a gallery in our case, but it’s also a matter of you working proactively to achieve success. We are constantly developing the site, to make it even better for artists and customers alike.” The idea of artistry ahead of photography also relates to the fact that what many think of as a nice picture will not necessarily be an obvious hit on Printler. “That really is the way it is”, explains Sven. “Take nature photography for instance. There, a picture of a rare owl is by all means a good picture, but that doesn’t mean that it automatically has a place in someone’s living room.”

### IN NATURE

Even though nature may not be the hottest category on Printler, it plays a major role in Sven’s life. He explains that enjoys spending time outdoors, with his family. “Both me and my wife Nandini enjoy kayaking. We often spend our summers by the sea.”

Many years ago, Sven used to travel with the kayak on the roof of his car. Preferably north. To the Piteå or Luleå archipelago. Or to some inland river or lake where he would stay for days. Nowadays, everyday life is a



A good picture doesn't always mean that it has a place in someone's living room.

bit different of course, as he is a CEO and father of two. “The Skellefteå archipelago is amazingly beautiful”, he says. “15 minutes of paddling just before work can be very rewarding, but I do of course stay out for longer given the opportunity.”

“What’s the big deal about kayaking?”, I ask.

“You can paddle to places where almost no one else goes. The open coast is pretty majestic. You get to battle the waves, feeling comparatively small. But of course, the outdoor experience second to none is the mirror-like sea. You are completely alone. There is total silence. You can travel quite a long way. Several kilometres of open waters. Only the horizon is there. That is hard to beat.” In winter, Sven goes skiing. Cross-country, preferably, straight out into the forest. “But if the children get to choose, there’s some alpine skiing too. The mountains are only a few hours away.”

### THE SEED THAT GREW INTO PRINTLER

Sven started out as a designer. After leaving the rat race, spent in that role at a

Skellefteå communication agency, he studied to be an occupational therapist in the late 2010’s. “I guess I had enough of sitting still.” But he never became an occupational therapist. “Well, I did, it’s just that I’ve never worked as one.” The idea of Printler started growing when Sven looked for a way to sell his own photo art. “I took pictures of local scenery around northern Sweden and thought that someone might want it at home. At first, I saw it as a small thing, for myself and maybe a few friends and acquaintances, like-minded people. However, it quickly grew beyond that.

### AMBITIOUS GOALS

The idea developed into a company with major ambitions. “We want to change the way people buy and sell photo art in a globalised market. Sure, the road to this won’t always be straight or simple. It has resulted in a whole lot of challenges, not least the fact that we have many competitors, who may not be doing exactly what we’re doing but are still offering products you can hang on your walls.” Then, his

phone buzzes again. He has to get back to work. The winter months make up the high season in the interior decoration business. “But if you ask me, I think all the goals on the horizon are attainable ones.” Sven’s phone rings, he answers and says: “Of course we’ll make that happen. No problem.” And that was that. ●

### SVEN’S TOP OUTDOOR HANGOUTS

- **Kayaking** in the Skellefteå archipelago.
- **Bjuröklubb**, with a picnic basket
- **Go cross-country skiing**. Either in the forest, or why not at Tallbergsheden. In a nature reserve. Or out on the sea. The frozen sea is awesome.
- **Long-distance ice skating** wherever the autumn ice is best that day. Could be anywhere. Sometimes out on the sea, sometimes on a lake.
- **Just hang out outdoors**, on the ski or toboggan slopes, or just the nearest pile of snow. Hot beverages and just the right snacks.



# LIKE A FISH IN THE WATER

Skellefteå has a 300 kilometre long coastline, more than 1500 lakes and five rivers leading to the sea, three of which have wild salmon populations - such a concentration of wild salmon rivers cannot be found anywhere else in Sweden. The Byske river is also one of the most well-renowned in Sweden. So, why wouldn't a sportfisher feel like a fish in the water here?

[visitskelleftea.se/fishing](https://visitskelleftea.se/fishing)





# SOME OF THE BEST CHEESES IN SWEDEN

ON THE SLOPE LEADING DOWN TO THE LAKE, 37 COWS ARE GRAZING. SOME ARE DRINKING WATER ON THE SHORE. THE GRASS IS GREEN AND IF YOU ARE STANDING OUT IN THE YARD, THE VIEW OF LAKE STORKÅGETRÄSKET IS SECOND TO NONE. NO, THE RURAL ROMANTICISM CANNOT BE IGNORED. THEN AGAIN, THIS IS WHERE THE LIFE OF ONE OF SWEDEN'S MOST WELL RENOWNED CHEESES BEGINS.

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: TED LOGARDT

**T**he facade of the farmhouse dairy is a plastered white. The front door is deep red with a stainless steel plate displaying the company name. Pär and Johanna live in the nearby house. They would have it no other way. They also make some of the best cheeses in Sweden. All the awards that the couple and their cheeses have won, attest to that. Gold medal upon gold medal

in the Swedish Championship. Silver and bronze. Farming entrepreneurs of the year. The People's Choice Award. Words of praise from several other fashionable outlets. However, more than anything, you realise upon meeting Pär and Johanna that cheese making is about love. Love of the place, of the process and of the product. "You could say that we have condensed our lives – everything we know and

stand for; the beautiful life at a farm in the northern forestland, into a cheese.

## THREE CHEESES

"But we don't make just one cheese, we make three", says Johanna, welcoming us inside the dairy. The Svejdan Gårdsost (Farm Cheese) is described as a hard cheese with small holes, inspired by Swedish cheesema-





king traditions. The Svedjan Rustik (Rustic) is a blue cheese with a full, pleasant taste and soft texture, whilst the Smedjan Blå (Blue) is a rich blue cheese with a creamy texture.

### A JOURNEY OF INSPIRATION

The story of Svedjan Ost began in 2009. Back then, Pär and Johanna were involved in a different kind of farming. But the world around them changed so did the conditions for life on the farm. “We were not really sure which way to go”, says Johanna. “We had briefly looked into cheesemaking, but it wasn’t more than that.” The couple still decided to go on a journey of inspiration together with Eldrimner — the national centre for artisan foods.

“And then, on a farm in southern France, the penny dropped. That’s exactly how we wanted to live. The French way of supporting their cheese tradition felt natural and was also directly transferable to our natural conditions up in the far north.”

### CHEMICAL PROCESSES

With the support of French master cheesemaker, Michel Lepage and Eldrimner,

led by Bodil Cornell, Pär and Johanna began their journey towards becoming cheesemakers. “We immediately decided that we wanted to make a long-term investment and grow slowly. At our own pace. Making cheese is actually quite complicated and a lot of it is about chemical processes”, explains Pär. “It took us about two years to fully understand how things are connected. What happens to the taste at various stages and how that affects the final product.” “The milk is of course highly important”, Johanna continues. We use morning milk and 500 litres is made into three hard cheeses.” “And it’s all interconnected actually. The animals. The dairy. The care. The farm. The history. The buildings. The cultural landscape. All of this affects your experience of the flavour, which is why you couldn’t make Svedjan cheese anywhere but here.”

### CULTURAL EVENTS IN THE BARN

There is also a barn in the yard, Göte’s hay barn. There, Johanna and Pär have been organising cultural events every summer since the early 2010’s. Sometimes, there has been theatre, other times music. “Every year

we hold an art event called ‘KONstHAGEN’ with an open house, an arts and crafts exhibition and of course Swedish fika.”

### ENJOY SVEDJAN CHEESE IN SKELLEFTEÅ

Svedjan Cheese is on the menus of several restaurants in Sweden. If you would like to buy some to take home with you, you can find Svedjan Cheese in several ICA supermarkets, at the Burträsk market hall, as well as at Nygatan 57’s Skafferi and Stadskällaren in central Skellefteå. The best place to get it, however, may well be the country store in Storkågeträsk, a stone’s throw from the farmhouse dairy. ●

#### ARTISAN FOOD

– Skellefteå is good at making artisan food. The most famous brand is Västerbottens Ost, from Burträsk. But there are more. In summer you can participate in Matturen (food tour) and visit several farms in the region. You also find market halls in Burträsk and at Stadskällaren in Skellefteå.

[visitskelleftea.se/artisanfood](http://visitskelleftea.se/artisanfood)





# MUSICAL MAGIC

## RAISED FISTS AND A DIY SPIRIT

JOURNALIST MARIA BROBERG REMEMBERS A MAGICAL MUSIC EXPERIENCE FROM SKELLEFTEÅ AND DAYS GONE BY, AS SHE DIGS DEEP INTO THE MUSIC MYSTERY OF THE REGION.

WORDS: **MARIA BROBERG** PHOTOGRAPHY: **TED LOGARDT**

The setting is the late 90's, on one of the bright, magical summer nights that you can probably only experience whilst visiting a festival and still feeling young. The time is somewhere between midnight and the early hours of morning. The man on stage has just performed an entire concert, seemingly on his own, but that's just how we in the audience experienced it – he does of course have a backing band. However, there and then we don't see anything but him; a shirtless, leather-trousered fury, and nothing else matters. We walk away without saying a word to each other. We have experienced magic. The man on stage calls himself Iggy Pop and six years later he would return to Skellefteå and the City Festival for a show with his band, The Stooges – their only show in Sweden. It might seem strange that an international star, the Godfather of Punk, chose to return to a small, coastal city in Swedish Lapland, but on second thoughts it isn't. He probably experienced magic on that night too. The same year, the Wannadies – already established as darlings of the pop world – released their anthology Skelleftea. "I'm dossing up and down these streets, where nothing ever seems to change", Pär Wiksten sang softly of his hometown. Let's ignore, for the moment, the fact that My Home Town is about long-distance love and the home being where the heart is. Let us instead conclude that there is something special about the connection between Skellefteå and pop music.

#### WHY IS IT LIKE THIS?

There are differing opinions on how to explain this 'something'. When it comes to famous authors with their roots in the area, it is not difficult to find explanations in the landscape, the villages and the history that have all shaped the Västerbotten mentality. On the subject of music, however, a field just as strong as that of literature in Skellefteå, the explanations are different. Some say that people make music because there is nothing else to do, apart from playing ice hockey, working in industry or making pop music and that the pop city of Skellefteå has its roots in boredom rather than fertile, musical soil. We are talking about a quite extraordinary place: the home of Sweden's largest free city festival for more than 25 years, also home to a lively, popular street festival for almost as long. Last but not least it is the birthplace of large swathes of

northern Swedish music since the 1980's. Maybe boredom isn't the motivating factor, but rather a raised fist, a DIY spirit running like nerve through the city. "I really cannot



explain why Skellefteå is such a strong city for music. Part of it has to do with the fact that we have a free, public music school. But more than anything else I think it comes down to the fact that we have had a handful of people in Skellefteå who were always really passionate about it", explains Gunnar Karlsson who has been working with the city festival since 1994, when the festival was planned for Skellefteå's 150th anniversary.

#### CITY OF MUSIC

Gunnar Karlsson stresses that Skellefteå owes its status as a city of music primarily to associations with particular bands and artists, especially those of the 90's and early 00's. Examples include: This Perfect Day, Backfish, Popundret, Hardy Nilsson and Totalt Jävla Mörker. Karlsson also points out that bands such as Sahara Hotnights have a connection with Skellefteå - "they practically lived here." One reason being the Rumble Road studio, Skellefteå's counterpart to the legendary Abbey Road, founded in 1977 by musician and engineer Kjell Nästén, one of the city's most fervent enthusiasts. He produced Sahara Hotnights' debut album C'mon Let's Pretend and has been involved, directly or indirectly, in a wide range of other productions and recordings.

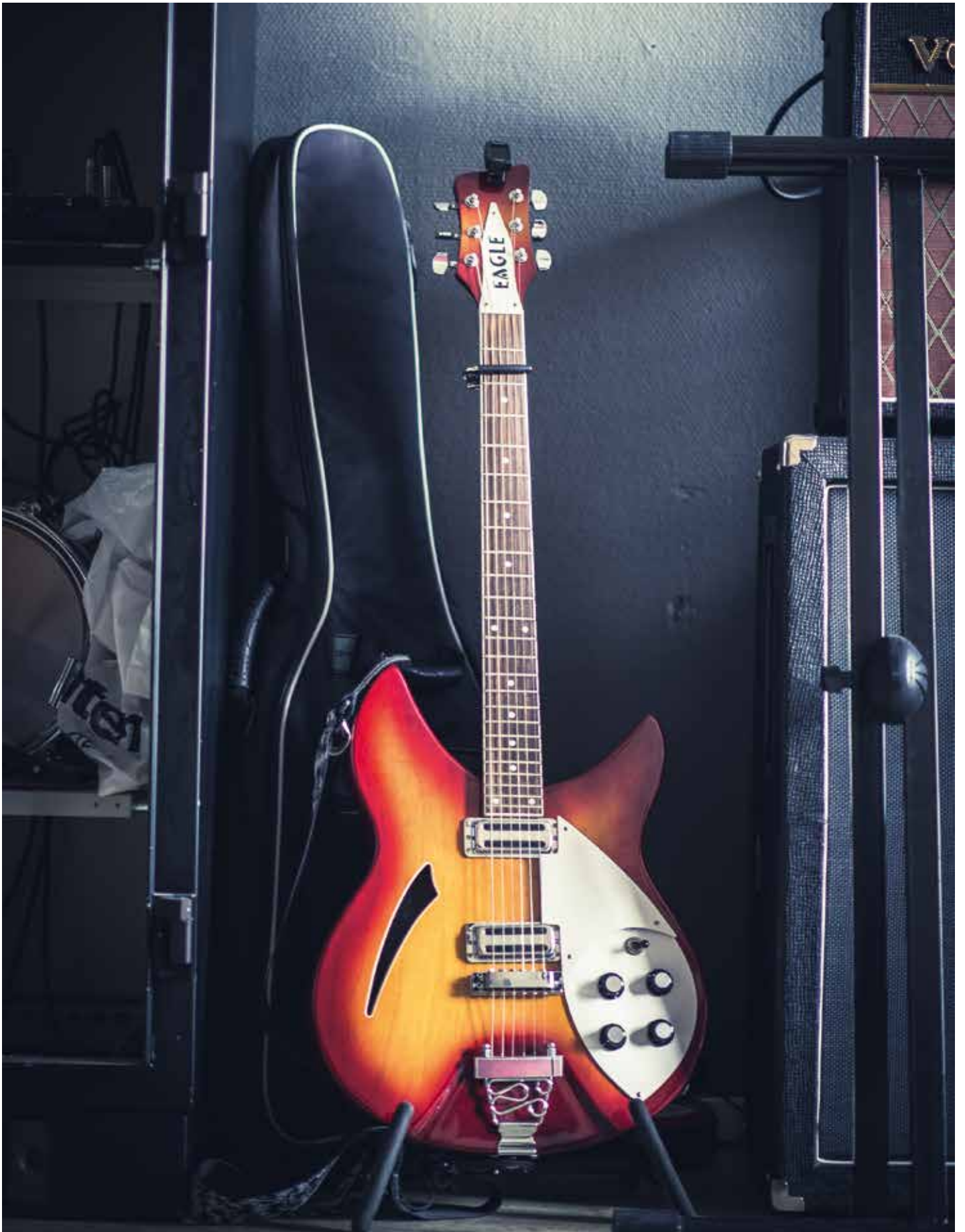
Fireside's debut Fantastic Four. Most of what the Wannadies did in the nineties. And of course The Bear Quartet, Aviga and the amazing, slammering, pop-shimmering Bear Quartet. The Bear Quartet will always be associated with Skellefteå, even though they are not from here. The reason for that is known as A West Side Fabrication, the record company located in Skellefteå, publishers of all Bear Quartet albums, incomparable to any other record company. Just as groundbreaking as Rough Trade, as creative as Sarah Records and as rebellious as Postcard. Publishers of the first single by The Go-Betweens, the Australian band said to have inspired northern Swedish indie pop, lauded by the Wannadies' Pär Wiksten when he sold records in the Record Line shop.

#### DO-IT-YOURSELF

A West Side Fabrication was founded in 1987 by Jörgen Dahlqvist and Joakim Wallström. They helped promote the bands that are closely associated with northern Swedish indie pop rising to fame in the mid-90's – Popsicle is yet another example. But more than anything else, A West Side Fabrication have always been passionate about music on the fringe, those who do not just go with the flow. They are record rebels. However, even though yesterday's famous artists have established the image of Skellefteå as a city of music in the eyes of the world, the DIY spirit is what made it all possible. A West Side Fabrication and the fire in their heart,



Gunnar Karlsson.



Agnes Lundmark, head of Trästockfestivalen.





burning for pop, is a testament to this. Agnes Lundmark, working with Trästocksfestivalen for the Mullberget culture association says that this free festival has hardly changed in any way during its 30-year existence. In the early 90's it was a smaller festival with a lot of heart and soul and less focus on pleasing crowds – “acts practically fresh out of the rehearsal rooms”, says Agnes Lundmark. Today, Trästocksfestivalen is more commercial than it used to be – back then, there were no resources to book established artists – but Trästocksfestivalen still is something run and performed by the youth of Skellefteå, providing stages on which they can perform. “Trästocksfestivalen is more or less a volunteer run operation, it always has been”, explains Agnes Lundmark. She describes the festival as one-of-a-kind in Sweden.

“Trästocksfestivalen has always been a platform for enthusiasts wishing to create something for Skellefteå, whilst also creating something for themselves. The fact that it is accessible to everyone, has always been important.” Like Trästocksfestivalen, Stadsfesten also traces its roots to local associations

and volunteers. The festival has appeared in many different forms throughout the years. “It has had its ups and downs”, says Gunnar Karlsson, as with all Swedish street festivals. But Stadsfesten has stuck around. One reason for this is that they aim for renewal, they don't have the same artists returning year after year. Well, unless you're Iggy Pop, of course. “Rita Ora was really moved by Skellefteå, the light and the environment. International artists coming here do not initially really understand where they have come and on arrival, they are impressed. “I don't think we'd have any trouble booking her again”, says Gunnar Karlsson.

#### WHAT ABOUT NOW, THEN?

In a few years, Trästocksfestivalen will be celebrating its 30th anniversary. Stadsfesten has been going for a long time and is well-renowned amongst both audiences and artists. And Skellefteå is still strongly positioned as a pop city, with four years of Melodifestivalen events to look back on. Yes, if you come to Skellefteå, chances are you may have one of the light, magical summer nights that you will probably only experien-

ce whilst visiting a festival and still feeling young. Because this is the home of raised fists and DIY spirit, running through the city like a nerve. My home town. ●

#### FOUR MUSIC MEMORIES FROM SKELLEFTEÅ.

– **Robin**, 2011 at Stadsfesten. The city square was filled to the rim as more than 11000 people enjoyed the memorable show.

– **Miss Li**, 2017, at En Flotte. During the gig, on a raft in the river, Miss Li fell overboard. Soaking wet, but still happy she kept going through the gig.

– **Ray Charles**, 1997. His only gig in Sweden where to be in Skellefteå. People thought it were such an absurd idea and didn't believe it, resulting in practically no one in the audience when the legendary Mr Charles performed in Skellefteå.

– **Laleh**, 2016, When she sold out the ice hockey arena and magic happened during her song Bjuröklubb.

# A DIFFERENT WORLD

THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HERE AND THERE. AT LEAST IF “HERE” IS DEFINED AS SKELLEFTEÅ’S FORESTS, OUR ALLURING COUNTRYSIDE AND ARCHIPELAGO – AND “THERE” REFERS TO THE BIG CITY BUZZ OF BERLIN OR POSSIBLY LONDON. IF YOU DON’T TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT, TRUST ANNE AND DOREEN.

WORDS: **TED LOGARDT** PHOTOGRAPHY: **DOREEN REUCHSEL**

The view from the forest fire lookout, towering  
17 meters above the mountains peak.





**T**he mosquitoes are delighted. They buzz loudly. In ecstasy, probably. They frenetically search for bare skin and if they find a gap in your clothing, they strike. Like ninjas on a mission. Ruthless. Saleta grins and throws Anne a stick of mosquito repellent.

“Put some on. It keeps them away.” Anne gracefully catches the stick, opens it and applies it on hands, neck, cheeks and forehead. Canoeing across the lake raised their body temperatures and made them

convenient targets for the mosquitoes. “Save some for me too”, says Doreen, waving her arms in the air to shoo away the insects.

#### **A GETAWAY**

There is an explanation for fact that Saleta, Anne and Doreen are in the porch of an old log driver’s cabin on a peninsula, somewhere in the vicinity of the village of Kalvträsk.

Saleta has invited the other two to Skellefteå. Or, in her own words, “provided them

sanctuary from the bustling life of the city.” For four days. “It’s a different world”, Saleta told them. “It will do you good, I promise.” Anne lives in Berlin and Doreen in London. And well, yes, most things there are different in comparison to here.

#### **MEETINGS**

They have an ambitious plan. A journey from forest to coast. Canoeing, hiking, staying on islands and in the beautiful countryside. Footbridges and bilberry sprigs.



Most things are different on an island in Kalvträsk.



Midnight light and sea breezes. But perhaps most importantly, Saleta has promised them that they will get to hang out with people who have no other place they would rather be, doing their own thing because they can. 100 metres ahead on the trail, Conny sits crouched, on a footbridge across the wetland. Cupping his hand, he drinks water straight from the cold spring. “Come and have a taste”, he calls.

Conny is one of all these people. He is a nature photographer. The small village of Kalvträsk is his base and he spends a large part of his life in the forests surrounding the Vitbergen nature reserve, in summer as well as in winter. For anyone familiar with the Lord of the Rings trilogy, it’s hard not to think of Treebeard, the ent, when you see him.

#### A WORLD AWAKENING

The clock is about to strike midnight. The sun has just set but it is light as day, with a small difference, in that the light of the summer night is soft and magical. “Almost there”, says Conny. “We should be at the summit just in time for the sunrise.” The first rays of sunlight cross the horizon. They are weak, but enough to illuminate the forest and lakes and to disperse the morning mist. The view from the forest fire lookout, towering 17 metres above the mountain peak, is awe inspiring. They sit in silence, all four of them, watching, listening. The mosquitoes haven’t found their way up here. “It is so tranquil”, says Doreen. A cuckoo calls somewhere in the distance. A Siberian jay, close by looking like it wonders whether it will get a snack. The sun rises in the sky. “This is how the world awakens”, says Anne.

#### JUST THE BEGINNING

By the campfire, down by the water, they have supper. Or breakfast, depending on how you look at it. Smoked perch from the neighbouring lake, served on ljusugnsbröd, crisp flatbread, with almond potatoes and Kalvträsk cheese. A much-needed energy boost after the hike up and down the hill. Saleta has lit the stove inside the log driver’s cabin as well, more for the cosy atmosphere than for the warmth. The morning brings a light wind. Soft waves nudge the canoes. Terns hunt across the water. There really is nothing to say that it’s time for bed.

“The beds are made”, says Saleta. “It’s time to sleep.” Doreen sits on the edge of the pier, brushing her teeth. “You were right”, she says. “This really is something else.” “You know”, says Saleta, swatting a mosquito on her forehead, “this is just the beginning”. ●

#### THE TRIP

During their visit, Anne and Doreen also hang out with Björn and Linnea and make a stop at Pär and Johanna’s place in Svedjan to try their cheese and fall in love with country life. They have lunch at the Kåge harbour café, afternoon fika at Lorens in Lillkågeträsk, a good night’s sleep at Stiftsgården and some island hopping in the Skellefteå archipelago together with Mats – and much, much more.

#### WATCH THE FILM

See Anne and Doreen’s journey at [www.visitskelleftea.se/arctic-lifestyle](http://www.visitskelleftea.se/arctic-lifestyle)

# STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND

*What can people in the world's largest nation, with the world's highest levels of growth, learn from their counterparts in northern Sweden? Quite a lot, if you ask Chloris.*

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: TED LOGARDT

**C**hloris takes a deep breath, laughs and buries her nose in the beard lichen, hanging in clumps from one of the tens of thousands of trees now separating her from civilisation. She does that often. Laughing, she is brimming with energy and never misses an opportunity to share the warmth with those close to her. Chloris spends her everyday life in Beijing, together with nearly 22 million others, in an area the size of Kiruna. Nowadays, however, she is spending more and more time in northern Sweden.

“There is no place I would rather be”, she says with a smile. It might seem unctuous, but it is true that Chloris’ everyday life in China is very different to what she experiences in Skellefteå. “Take the air for example. In Beijing, smog and particle density in the air we breathe is constantly monitored. Here, air quality is nothing to worry about, quite the contrary.” She gently hugs the beard lichen, explaining that it cannot survive air pollution, which makes it an indicator of clean air. “Maybe you can only truly appreciate air this clean if you normally live in a place where clean air cannot be taken for granted.

## MOOSE AND GOOSE

Today, Chloris is working to help more people from China experience the virtues of Swedish Lapland. “In China, there is a lot of talk about ‘passion people’. My passion is to help people achieve wellness, whilst also enjoying experiences and personal growth.” Through the company Moose and Goose, she is making her vision come true. “The moose is the King of the Forest and a symbol of Swedish Lapland, also associated with freedom and a balanced life”. She goes on to explain, how many who grew up in China in the 1970’s feel a strong connection to Selma Lagerlöf’s story “The Wonderful Adventures of Nils”.

“The story is a beautiful allegory. I think sustainable, responsible travel lets you grow as a human being. ‘Transformative travel’ is a bit of a buzzword in the travel industry, but that’s exactly what all of this is about. And people in China have a lot to learn from Sweden.”

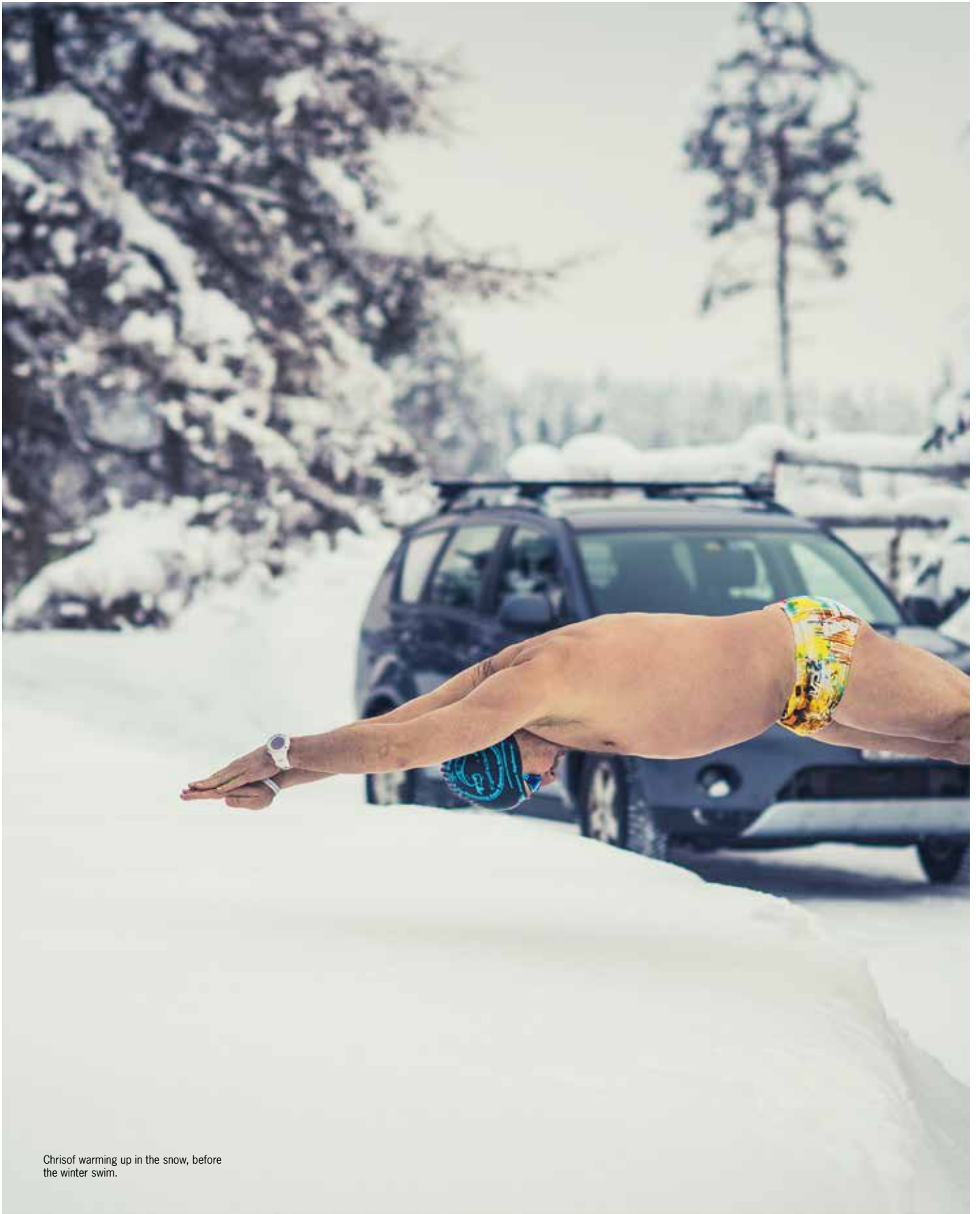
## JUST BE A HUMAN BEING

Spending time outdoors, in the natural environment, is something many modern

people no longer do – especially in China. “Of course, China has forests, particularly in the northern parts of the country but we don’t have the tradition of experiencing and spending time in them. To us, forests are a source of raw materials, nothing more.” “In northern Sweden”, she says, “the forests, the mountains and the sea are people’s actual back yards. It feels like reconnecting to something primal. People here are much better at balancing their lives. They give time to work and family life, but also to everything else that contributes to wellbeing.” China is growing at a breakneck pace. Careers are hugely important. The competitiveness is crushing. “Almost everything revolves around performance. It is difficult to wind down and reflect. I often talk about ‘workaholics.’” According to Chloris, when people see the Swedish Lapland way of life, many of them gain insights and new experiences. “At the end of the day, it’s pretty simple”, she says. “Just be a human being”, she scribbles in charcoal on a windthrown tree. “And that, you can be right here.” ●

Chloris loves Swedish Lapland and is devoted to make more people discover this place.





Chrisof warming up in the snow, before the winter swim.

# WINTER SWIM WITH - CHRISTOF WANDRATSCH

WHEN EXTREME SWIMMER CHRISTOF WANDRACHT BECAME THE FIRST PERSON TO CROSS LAKE BODEN AND BROKE THE WORLD RECORD ACROSS THE ENGLISH CHANNEL, HE FOUND HIMSELF LOOKING FOR NEW CHALLENGES. HE FOUND WINTER SWIMMING AND THE REST, AS THEY SAY, IS HISTORY.

WORDS: HÅKAN STENLUND PHOTOGRAPHY: SALETA BEIRO

**T**German Christof Wandratsch, born in 1966, is an extreme swimmer and international long-distance star. Amongst other things, he was the first to cross Lake Boden, Germany's largest lake. Swimming the 64 kilometres took him 20 hours. In 2007 he crossed the English Channel faster than anyone else at just over seven hours, the same year he also broke the Gibraltar Strait world record and in 2016 he broke his own record for 1000 m winter swimming. Well, you get the picture. He has swum all over the world, more than anything else he likes long, and in recent years also cold, swims.

## WINTER SWIMMING

Let's first have a look at winter swimming and cold bathing. It takes on average 20 seconds to swim 25 metres in an opening in the ice in central Skellefteå. Winter swimming is supposed to be good for your general health and a true boost to your confidence. We know this because competitive winter swimming events, in water temperatures just above freezing, have been held here since 2012. The or-

ganisers, Dark and Cold have caught the eyes of the world and established winter swimming in Skellefteå as a natural part of winter in Swedish Lapland. "We had an idea to do something to celebrate winter", says Jarkko Enquist, one of the people behind the events. "Something spectacular that attracted attention to our place on this earth." And that's what happened. Rooted in an unconditional love for the cold and dark.

## SHINTO PRIESTS AND REGULAR NORTHERNERS

There is also research to support the idea that an occasional winter swim is good for the body. British athletes such as tennis player Andy Murray, heptathlete Jessica Ennis-Hill, runners Paula Radcliff and Mo Farah all go for an ice bath after tough events to recover more quickly. Ice bathing seems to have an anti-inflammatory effect. Australia's cricket captain said: "We used to put the beer on ice, now we do it with the athletes." However, research has also shown that if you are trying to build more muscle, the anti-inflammatory effects of the ice bath may be counter-



Christof Wandratsch has a thing for the cold.

productive. Its benefits have been known to Shinto priests and regular northerners for hundreds of years though. A hot sauna and then out into the snow.

### A LOVE OF WINTER SWIMMING

Christof Wandratsch's reason for being here right now, is of course winter swimming and the world cup event held in Skellefteå. "After crossing Lake Boden in 2013 I was looking for a new challenge. I quickly fell in love with winter swimming

and it becomes impossible to recover. In regular swimming, you can just slow down a bit and the body will eventually have more energy but in cold, that is not possible." Christof also explains that your muscles become stiffer and you use up a lot more energy when winter swimming. "I tend to say you use about as much energy swimming in near-freezing water for 10 minutes as you do swimming in more normal water temperatures for two hours."

and longer swims as the temperature drops further. Other than that, you don't need a lot. It is of course very exerting, physically, but a lot of it is in your head. Swimwear, swimming goggles and a swimming cap is about all you need. Maybe a bathrobe too. "An alternative to a proper winter swim is of course a snow dive straight off your snowmobile, down into the soft, freshly fallen snow", Christof says with a smile.

"The climate in which you find winter swimmers may be cold and harsh, but it is

Enjoying winter in Swedish Lapland.



and the following year I participated in a championship for the first time." That was the World Championship in Rovaniemi, Finland. Christof competed in the 450-metre race and, of course, he won. He has competed many times in Skellefteå. Last time around he competed in all distances. Six of them. "The competitions in Skellefteå are always good", he says, explaining that everything went well. "It was so quiet, on the dog sled and the sky was clear and starry. I was so happy. Almost as happy as the dogs", he says with a laugh and explains that he and the dogs quickly became friends. "Maybe because we all like pushing ourselves to the max", he laughs, "not least, in winter."

### A SCREECHING HALT

According to Christof, winter swimming is very different to traditional swimming competitions. "If you start out too hard, it's like your body comes to a screeching halt

### A DIFFERENT KIND OF WINTER

Christof travels and competes together with his daughter Stella Krutenat and German long-distance swimmer Birgit Becher. In addition to participating in this championship, they are taking the opportunity to experience real winter. Christof says they have been dog sledding and snowmobiling. "It was so quiet, on the dog sled and the sky was clear and starry. I was so happy. Almost as happy as the dogs", he says with a laugh and explains that he and the dogs quickly became friends. "Maybe because we all like pushing ourselves to the max", he laughs, "not least, in winter."

### PREPARING FOR WINTER

Christof shares his preparation tips for a season of winter swimming. "Start in the autumn, short dips at first. Then go for longer

my experience that winter swimmers tend to be remarkably warm-hearted people." ●

You can read everything about winter swimming at [visitskelleftea.se/winter-swim](https://visitskelleftea.se/winter-swim)

### REASONS TO LOVE WINTER

- Build an igloo.
- Go downhill skiing.
- Winter swimming with the locals.
- Enjoy the northern lights
- Go ice skating to classical music and colourful lights.
- Ice fishing.
- Snowshoe walks.

[visitskelleftea.se/iceandsnow](https://visitskelleftea.se/iceandsnow)



# GALLERY

*Things you might didn't know about Skellefteå*



## **OUTDOOR SUMMER THEATRE**

Västerbottensteatern (the Västerbotten County Theatre) have hosted their outdoor summer theatre for 30 years. This makes it the longest-running summer theatre in Swedish Lapland and have told stories such as "Peer Gynt", "Hemsöborna" and "The Hunchback of Notre Dame".



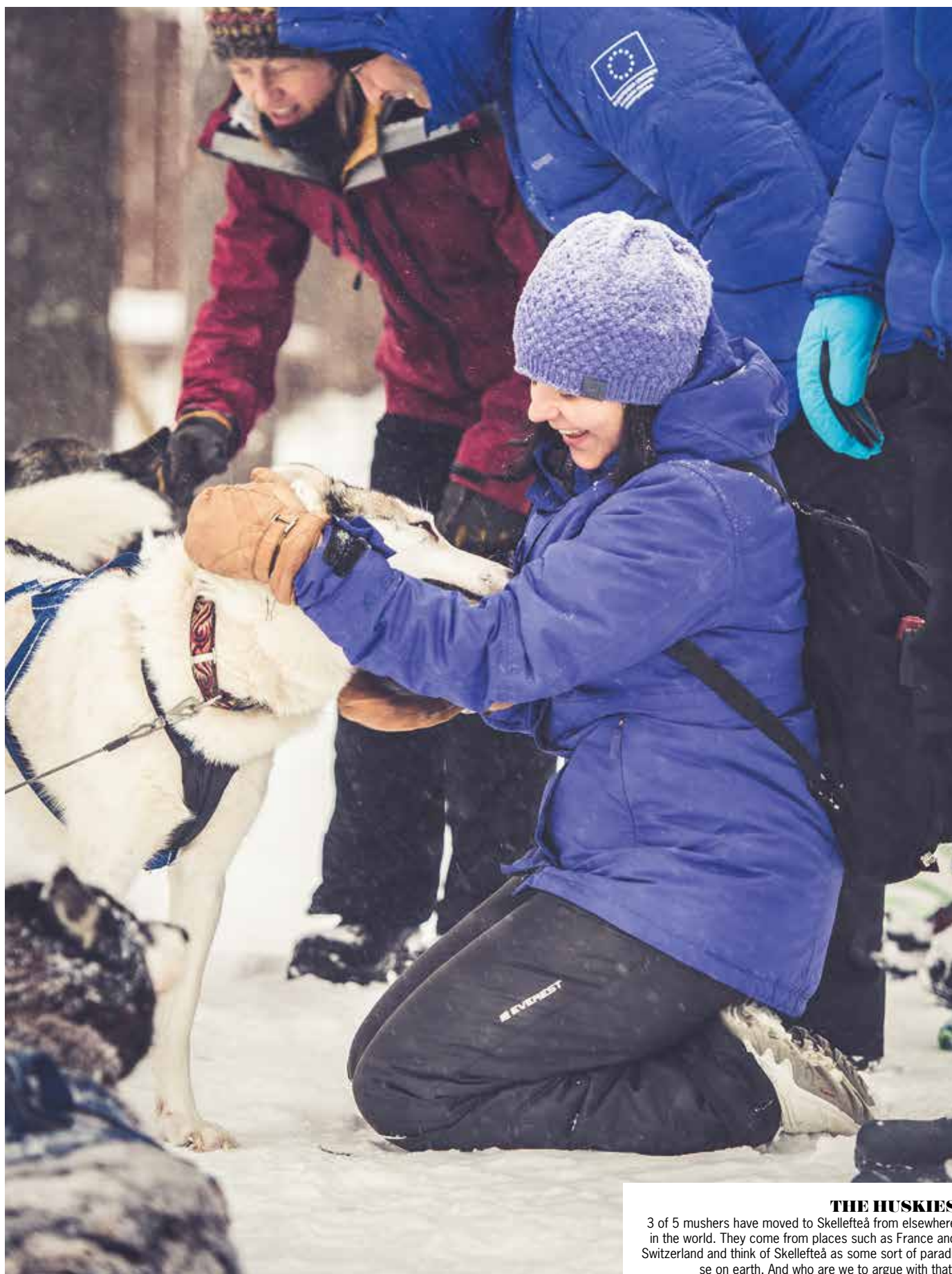
**INTO THE WOODS**

Skellefteå is the most densely forested municipality in Västerbotten County. Skellefteå is known as a wooden city and for the last couple of years people have been able to climb the to the treetops under controlled circumstances and go on thrilling zipline rides. You can do all this at the Skellefteå Adventure Park.



**IN THE OLD DAYS**

We can never be quite sure of what life used to be like in the olden days. Therefore, it can sometimes be a good idea to turn back the clock. This can be done at Skellefteå Museum or at Rismyrliden, the 1825 homestead, only open in summer.



**THE HUSKIES**

3 of 5 mushers have moved to Skellefteå from elsewhere in the world. They come from places such as France and Switzerland and think of Skellefteå as some sort of paradise on earth. And who are we to argue with that?



**TAKE A HIKE**

Getting just the right amount of physical activity will do you good. This is common knowledge. It is also said that nature is a healer for both body and soul. In Skellefteå you can choose from about 20 hiking trails.



**THE COAST**

Skellefteå has the longest coast in the entire country, 300 kilometres. And the archipelago consist of more than 200 name given island. You can access some of them with boat taxis.



**NATURE RESERVES**

There are more than 30 nature reserves in Skellefteå. Some are small sanctuaries for rare plants such as fairy slipper orchids. One of the larger ones is Vitbergen, where the fairytale forest has plenty of room for everyone.



### SNOW CANON

In November 2014, Jack Frost dumped almost a metre in depth of snow on Skellefteå. This was a weather phenomenon known as a snow cannon. Snow cannons occur when the sea is still open and relatively warm whilst the air is cold. That can cause insane amounts of snowfall. If you love snow, you will love snow cannons.



### LOADS OF SPACE

Skellefteå is about as big as Skåne. Surface-wise, that is. About half of Skellefteå's population lives in the city of Skellefteå, the other half in surrounding rural communities.



### TAKE A BATH

Skellefteå has just over 1,500 lakes. The longest sandy lake beach is found by Lake Bjurträsket, spanning, 500 metres. The longest sandy beach in Västerbotten County is Storsand, out on the island of Bjuröklubb.



**THE COLD**

A temperature of -45.6 degrees Celsius was recorded in Myrheden on October 10, 1950. This is the coldest temperature ever observed in Skellefteå – so far. Back then, there was no high-tech thermal clothing, but people used their ingenuity.

Of course, it's not a stress-free zone, but my experience is that the tempo is different. Life becomes simpler. A bit calmer.





# THEA & THE RURAL ROMANCE

THEA HOLMQUIST IS AN INCURABLE RURAL ROMANTIC. SHE LOVES LIFE IN THE COUNTRY-SIDE AND SINGS THE PRAISES OF THE NORTH, ITS BEAUTY AND BENEFITS, WHENEVER SHE GETS THE OPPORTUNITY. HOWEVER, THIS HASN'T ALWAYS BEEN THE CASE.

WORDS: TED LOGARDT PHOTOGRAPHY: THEA HOLMQUIST

**T**here is a clattering of pots and pans in the large country kitchen. The apple cake is on its way into the oven. Apples from the farm. Yes, actually from the apple tree that Thea got the year she turned eight. That's almost 20 years ago. "My family is the fourth generation living here", she explains. "Here" is her childhood home in Bureå. It was built almost 100 years ago and has been remodelled and extended over time. Now, Thea is living here with her partner, Jonathan. For two years, they have slowly but surely been making their own mark on the family farm. "There is something very special about this place", she says with a smile.

## INKED WITH VÄSTERBOTTEN

Thea Holmquist is a rural romantic. She loves her home village, unconditionally, in sickness and in health. She rolls up her sleeve. On her upper right arm are the contours of Västerbotten County. "I got that tattoo after moving back up here. A celebration of my roots, of the forests, the rivers, the marshes, the cliffs and everything else we find in abundance here." However, it hasn't always been there. The love of her home village, that is. "I think anyone who grows up in a smaller place will at some point become blind to their hometown. There is often an unspoken rule that those who remain

have failed in some way." Like many others before her, Thea dreamt of something else. "Not that I disliked where I was. On the contrary, my childhood was wonderful. But I was one of those who didn't understand what I had before I left it."

## THE URBAN NORM AND LOCAL PATRIOTISM

The opportunities of a bigger city were

alluring. A life where you didn't have to carefully watch the time for the last bus home. A life of potential career developments. Uncompromising self-realisation and a cornucopia of entertainment, superficial fun and everything else that a city of a million inhabitants might seem to offer when you let your thoughts run free. "An urban norm. The dream of the big city is so easy to fall for, not least when you're young." She plugs her mixer in and pours cream into a bowl. Her university education meant moving away. First to Sundsvall and then all the way down to Stockholm. That's when her local patriotism sprung to life. She took on the role of preaching to those around her about the conditions, diversity and benefits of life in northern Sweden. "Norrland", she sighs. "It is so damn generic. That term and the way people throw it around drives me crazy."

## STEREOTYPES

The Norrland region covers 60 percent of Sweden's surface and 12 percent of its population. Often perceived as quiet and toned-down. Wastefully dependent on subsidies. "The stereotypes are problematic of course. Partly the idyllic ones, saying that all we need is our little red house next to a quiet little lake of our own – and also the idea that we are ignorant and uneducated. Different individuals live here. Some



*"Being rich, to me, means being free to fill my life with things that make me feel good. Picking mushrooms. Ice skating."*

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You can follow Thea's love for her home county on Instagram, where she is Västerdrottningen, ruling her very own cyberspace realm. There, you will also find a link to the blog of the same name.

may be remarkably slow walkers. Some may speak only if they really have to. That doesn't mean that there's no stress, that there's nothing to say. There are just as many who are talkative, inclusive, innovative, intellectual, artistic and whatever else a human may be, here as anywhere else. Of course, we are shaped by where we're from, but how we're shaped is very different. Take dialects as example. They're incredibly diverse just within the Skellefteå region. Lumping half of Sweden together and talking about things as 'typically Norrland' is complete nonsense."

#### FEELING RICH

And so she moved back home, to the large, yellow house with an enormous balcony and her very own apple tree because that was what her heart yearned for.

"What's the best thing about living in northern Sweden?", I ask.

"Everything", she says with a laugh. "It's like Frida Hyvönens lyrics: 'I bought a house in Västerbotten, so that I could feel rich.' It's not a matter of money, but of opportunities. Being rich, to me, means being free to fill my life with things that make me feel good. Picking mushrooms. Ice skating. Having breakfast on a mountain, growing my own food, being a regular at a café where they know that I drink an iced latte even in midwinter. Those are the best things. All the space is for me and who I want to be. We might not have everything here, but there's no saying we can't have what we want, eventually." The egg timer goes off. "In a way it's a bit sad", she says, "that I had to leave to find my way home. Sometimes, however, a bit of perspective is just what we need."

The apple cake is ready. ●

#### THEA'S FIVE TIPS

**Society café** - an oasis in central Skellefteå

**Brudslöjan** - a waterfall in Sorsele with a magical view

**Lövånger Church Town** - a picturesque piece of history (Not Marrnäsälvan)

**Sillhällorna, Bjuröklubb** - magical summer nights. Sometimes a dream-like mist, sometimes soft pastels becoming one with the sea

**Missenträsk** - home to one of Västerbotten's most famous writers: Sara Lidman



# BJURÖKLUBB

Bjuröklubb is a peninsula and one of Skellefteå's most popular places to visit. The lighthouse at Bjuröklubb was built in 1859. On the edge of a cliff, 52 metres above sea level. A yellow wooden octagon. She, the lighthouse, is still called "the old lady". Why, no one really knows, but throughout the years, she has seen quite a lot.

Like in 1916 when two German ships were hijacked, in the midst of the burning World War. 22 crew members were still on board when the ships arrived in a Finnish harbour, under Russian command. 36 escaped on lifeboats, to Skelleftehamn. The event went down in history as the Bjuröklubb hijacking. Four days later, April 16 that year, the steamship Syria was torpedoed. The ship was wrecked. 4,350 tons of iron ore on its way from Luleå out into the world, followed it to the bottom. Some divers say that the best diving in Sweden can be found right here.

History and culture aside, many would argue that Bjuröklubb is first and foremost about nature. In 1976, the island was designated a nature reserve, thanks to its polished rocks covered with stones carried by the waves, weathered, gnarly pines and spruces growing amongst the rocks. Not to mention the beaches with grey alder shrubbery, valerian, meadowsweet and the hair grass, *Deschampsia bottnica*.

It is sometimes said that the sun always shines over Bjuröklubb. That is an exaggeration of course, but the fact is that the island's location contributes to it often having clear skies. It is therefore no wonder that Storsand, the longest sandy beach in Västerbotten, is an incredibly popular bathing beach during the summer months.

Read the entire story at [visitskelleftea.se/about-a-peninsula](https://visitskelleftea.se/about-a-peninsula)




# SWEDEN 'S TWIN PEAKS?

FOR A LONG TIME NOW, SKELLEFTEÅ HAS BEEN LIKENED TO THE FICTITIOUS TOWN OF TWIN PEAKS, FROM THE 90'S HIT TV SHOW OF THE SAME NAME. WHERE DOES THIS CONNECTION COME FROM AND IS THERE ANY TRUTH TO IT? JOIN US, AS WE DIG DEEPER IN THE BACKCOUNTRY OF CREATIVITY.

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: **TED LOGARDT**





**I**n the early 90's, Twin Peaks took the world by storm. David Lynch and Mark Frost, the series' creators, changed the very foundation of TV watching. Genres were blended, shaken and stirred and viewers all over the world were spellbound. Horrified, yet enchanted. Yes, rumour has it that then Soviet premier Gorbachev called his American counterpart, demanding to know who killed Laura Palmer. Despite President Bush's attempts at persuasion, Lynch refused to reveal the answer. Now you may be asking if all this has anything to do with Skellefteå? Well, like everything ... and nothing ...

### **Similarities**

Yes, there are similarities. Shared characteristics between the two locations. The silhouette of tall tree tops. Mountains (well, just one) in the city centre. Heavy, basic industry is a fundamental part of the cities' identities. And the forest envelopes each and every resident. In the TV series, the Packard Sawmill plays a central role. Kind of like Boliden, the Rönnskärsverken smelter and one of Europe's largest gold deposits, the Björkdal mine. Skellefteå, with its 500,000 hectares of forestland is also the most densely forested municipality in the county. Yes, Skellefteå even calls itself the Wooden City and is renowned for the construction of large wooden structures. Amongst other things, there is an ambition to build a new cultural centre using this method, which upon completion in 2021, would be the largest of its kind in the world.

### **Beneath the surface**

Twin Peaks is a fictitious town in the state of Washington, in the northwestern corner of the United States, bordering Canada. Skellefteå's location is also somewhat off the beaten track. Whatever

*"David's fascination with Twin Peaks can be seen in in the name. The network was named 'The Lodge' – a direct reference to the parallel dimension of the TV series."*

### **Twin Peaks**

Twin Peaks is a TV series created by David Lynch and Mark Frost. The series was recorded in the northwestern United States and broadcast on Swedish TV in the early 90's. In a way, it became defining of all subsequent TV series and gained a cult following.

you may think of that and whichever way you turn the world map, a place far away from the cosmopolitan melting pots and overflowing abundance of international metropolitan areas. The fringe in a sense becomes its own universe with its own terms and its own characters, suffering from small-town complexes and delusions of grandeur. The cosy autumn and the rush of spring. Wet mires and morning mist. And something entirely different. Something bubbling beneath the surface.

### **The opportunities**

"Take Möjligheternas Torg (the Square of Opportunities) for instance", says Ted Kjellsson, filmmaker based in Skellefteå. He has just released his first feature-length film and knows all the ins and outs of Twin Peaks. "There is nothing but opportunity there. Well, not counting the hot dog stands, that is. But you know, opportunities are the best thing you can have." Ted explains that he has always seen Skellefteå as a place of untapped opportunities, not least for fantasy and creativity and he likes the reference to Twin Peaks. "Look at 'Lyftet'", he says with a grin. "A duck pond in development. You can hardly imagine a more Lynchian square in an average-sized Swedish city. Actually, I think the reference is 100% correct. If you think of Skellefteå as the other side of the coin. The good side. Where what's beneath the surface is not malevolence but rather the power of creativity."

### **She-left-you**

The digital, creative industry of Skellefteå is world-renowned. With North Kingdom at the forefront, multinational companies such as Google, Disney and Warner Bros. have been taught how to pronounce the tongue-twisting name of the city. In English. She-left-you.

That's the way it sounds. The question is what it means? In the early 2000's a major international entertainment company came to visit. Part of the agenda concerned recording of materials for an upcoming campaign. Once the team had familiarised themselves with the people and surroundings, someone made the comment: "This feels like Twin Peaks."

It was said in reference to the small town atmosphere, the scenic environments and the colourful characters. Some might have been offended. Twin Peaks has plenty of warmth, but also a lot of darkness.

Skellefteå, however, loved it.

A few years later, this was formalised by David Eriksson at North Kingdom, the loosely connected network of digital creators, then hard at work with putting Skellefteå on the world map. David's fascination with Twin Peaks can be seen in in the name. The network was named 'The Lodge' – a direct reference to the parallel dimension of the TV series. "The idea was to amplify the mystery associated with being in a small town, far away, whilst at the same time creating really great things," says David.

### **The storytellers**

Whether or not there exists a storytelling tradition particular to Västerbotten County is a matter of contention, but it is a fact that remarkably many authors have found inspiration in Skellefteå and its surroundings such as the three giants, Sara Lidman, PO Enquist and Torgny Lindgren. They depict the outlying areas. Where life moves at a gentle pace. Often focusing on the little guy. Vulnerability and decisiveness. And there are more examples of storytellers, many more. You could argue that it's a storytelling with a particular essence. Often low-key. Sometimes a bit slow. The small gestures, the grounded but simultaneously eccentric







## Locations with a Twin Peaks vibe

**Marranäsvältan** – the invisible brook steadily digging further into the underground. If this isn't the entrance to a parallel universe, where would be?

**The Great Northern** – the most obvious one. A creative business park peppered with Twin Peaks references.

**Vitberget** – Skellefteå's One Peak.

**Möjligheternas Torg** – Where there is

nothing, there is also everything. Lyftet - a duck pond in development. You can hardly imagine a more Lynchian square in an average-sized Swedish city.

**The old sawmill ruins Örviken** – Amongst other things, the site of many recordings by Skellefteå's creative minds.

**Hooting owls** - Found in any given, large, forest. Preferably around midnight, in late August, when the owls, or whatever they are, can be heard...

people carry stories that are often deeply rooted in the landscape. "I have never really fallen for the discrete. Hela Skrotarna [Editor's note: TV series recorded in Skellefteå, directed by Ted Kjellsson] takes place in the futuristic interpretation of Skellefteå, Hedvig City. To me, the series is Twin Peaks, or Skellefteå if you will, on speed," says Ted.

### Growing and growing

In actuality, Twin Peaks is much smaller than Skellefteå. The series' creators imagined a population of 5,120 but the network, ABC, were afraid that people would never

be able to relate to a city that small. The pragmatic solution was to add a '1' to the now iconic city sign. Which made it larger. A full ten times larger. Skellefteå also wants to grow but for real and at a gentler pace. One worthy of a city in the Northern Hemisphere where the Law of Jante has reigned for centuries. From 72,000 to 80,000 residents, before 2030.

### The city and its ice hockey team

Ice hockey is important. Skellefteå is said to be, amongst many other things, a hockey

city. Often an emotionally involved one. Like ten years ago, when a Skellefteå-bred player came back after a period in the NHL and chose not to play for the city team. "The city's like Twin Peaks. Luleå is a whole other story." Skellefteå was furious, but regained composure. For the next derby against Luleå, Skellefteå AIK replaced their ordinary intro music with the first few moments of the unmistakable Twin Peaks theme.

Isn't that what Skellefteå really does sound like, though? Playful? Jazzy? Somewhat unpredictable?



## The embrace

When a new start-up-creative-community-melting-pot-centre was built, Skellefteå went all the way. The reference was embraced completely and the love of Twin Peaks manifested itself in The Great Northern. In the series, the Great Northern is the hotel where FBI agent Dale Cooper spends time during of his stay. Skellefteå counterpart is a melting pot for young, creative companies with the world at their feet, also full of flirtation with an admiration of the Twin Peaks universe. “The name of the building was a spin-off, a tribute to The Lodge and the stories that are created here in Skellefteå”, says Per Hultgren, one of the people behind the Great Northern and CEO of game developers, Gold Town Games. The building, TGN, is an important story about what we can create, together, in this place where we live our lives. My hope is that it will help us find and capture opportunity, creativity and limitlessness.” Inside the Great Northern

you can enjoy a cup of coffee ‘as black as midnight on a moonless night’ and ‘a slice of cherry pie’. At the Norma Coffee House. Meeting rooms have names such as the Log Lady, the Giant and Harry S Truman. Even the WiFi has been named, after Twin Peaks most devilish character – KillerBob. It’s like the love knows no bounds.

## The Arctic gaming scene

Today, computer and video games are a form of entertainment just like cinema and music. And the gaming industry carries many unabashed success stories. Look at Minecraft, still played by 90 million people, monthly, eight years after its release. Or Rockstar’s Grand Theft Auto, grossing 800 million USD within the first 24 hours, or the gaming phenomenon Fortnite, with more than 125 million registered players in the summer of 2018. “Practically everyone is into gaming these days”, says Michael Stenmark, game developer and a driving

force behind the Arctic Game Lab, founded in Skellefteå in 2016 and currently found in five cities throughout northern Sweden. So, things are bubbling here too, undeniably. Maybe in the gaming scene more than anywhere else. “Today, there are more than 20 game development companies in Skellefteå. Two years ago, there were two. That really says everything about the creative power there is in gaming and in northern Sweden.

Diane. 11:30. February 24: “Yes, there are similarities. Far-fetched, perhaps? Not really, though. Can you take it a step further? There are many connecting threads. What is the next step? Finding characters? Locations? Counterparts, that is. And by the way, Diane, can you request to become twinned with a fictional city? ●



# *Touch ground in Swedish Lapland*

Skellefteå is the gateway to the aurora borealis, genuine husky experiences, the great outdoors and other mind blowing experiences. Considering the cold facts, it's quite easy to touch ground in the Arctic.

[www.visitskelleftea.se](http://www.visitskelleftea.se)



SKELLEFTEÅ