

Mountaineering in Sweden

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The first ascent of Kebnekaise, the highest summit in Sweden, 2117 m, was made in 1883 by a Frenchman, Charles Rabot. After that it took us more than thirty years to make mountaineering into a sport. After the Great War we started to climb in an alpine way. A first ascent of a summit was made in the Swedish mountains as late as 1965. Just now Swedish climbing has reached its golden age. All summits are ascended along their ridges, but most of the walls are still unclimbed.

Most of the Swedish mountains are not suitable for climbing being rather flat and gentle. The areas interesting for an alpinist are, taken from the south: Sylarna, Sulitelma, Sarek, Kebnekaise and a district about ten miles to the north of Kebnekaise.

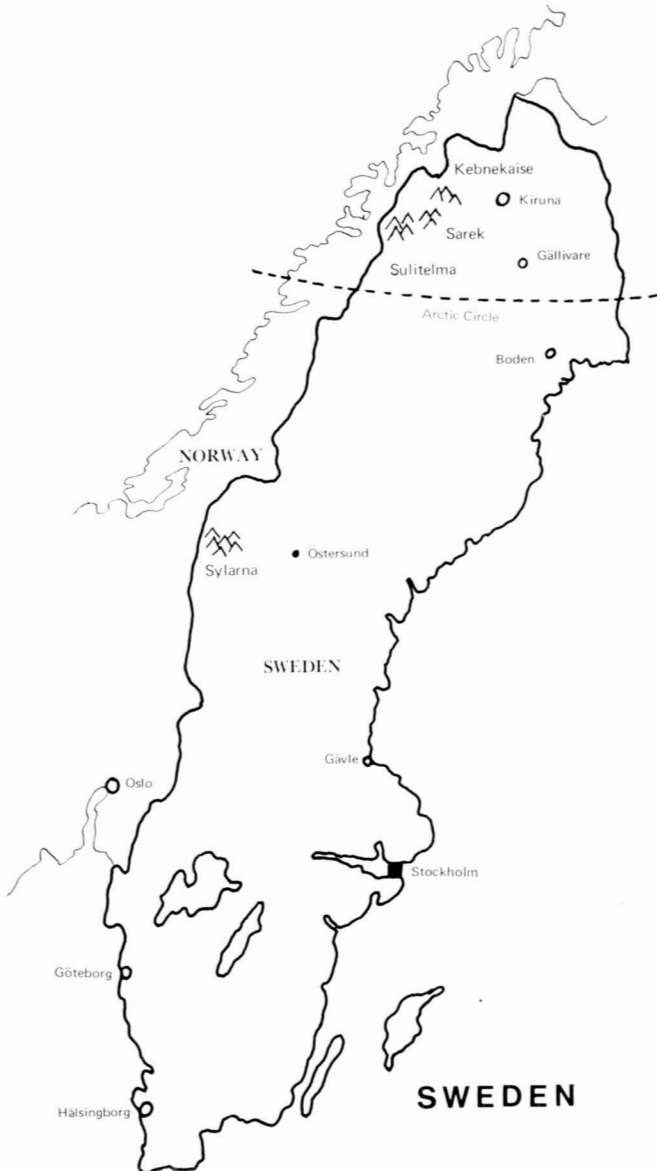
Sylarna (1796 m) is most interesting for winter climbing. In the summer its alpine character disappears. In the neighbourhood you have a tourist station, where you can live comfortably. The district is very well suited for snow climbing with your skis on your rucksack. When you have reached one of the summits you have wonderful skiing back to the tourist station. From the Swedish side of the frontier the easiest way to reach Sylarna is by train to Enafors. From Enafors you go skiing twenty-four miles to the tourist station of Sylarna. Sylarna is also easily reached from Norway. The area around Sylarna does not have an alpine character, but is excellent for walking in the summer and for ski tours in the winter. The routes are well cairned, and you can find tourist huts at comfortable distances (12 to 15 miles). The best time in the winter is April (Easter) and in the summer July–August.

The next area, Sulitelma (1914 m) is situated about fifty miles to the north of the Arctic Circle, and here you see the midnight sun from 5 June to 9 July. But this time of the year is not the best for mountaineering because of the weather. The best periods usually are Easter in winter and August in summer. Although you do not have midnight sun the whole summer, the light is strong enough so far north for you to be in action all night, even for the whole of August. Like Sylarna, Sulitelma is situated on the frontier between Sweden and Norway. The easiest way to reach the area is from the Norwegian side. If you want to attack the area from the Swedish side, you go by train to Murjek, and then by bus to Kvikkjokk. From Kvikkjokk you have about thirty-six miles of walking or skiing. There are no huts in this area. You have to live in tents and carry all your equipment all the way from Kvikkjokk. If your climbing trip is to last for two to three weeks, your rucksack will become rather heavy (70 to 80 lb). Your climbing trip will thus take the form of an expedition.

Sulitelma has two main glaciers, Blåmannen and Salajekna, most of the major peaks rise around the latter. The ice-fields extend into Norway (twenty-eight

sq km in Sweden, forty in Norway). The highest peaks of Sulitelma are situated in Norway.

Another fifty miles to the north you will find the National Park of Sarek, 1940 sq km in area. The land of a National Park, protected by law, has to remain in its natural state, so you do not find any huts or cairned footpaths here. This really is a land of wildness. Visiting a National Park you must live in a tent and be able to take care of yourself. Winter climbing in Sarek is like an expedition





19 *Tuolpagorni*—South-west wall with *Silhouette Route* as left profile. This and next three photos: E. A. Bo Söderberg

20 *Kebnekaise*—East wall. Main summit snow covered on left, north summit right

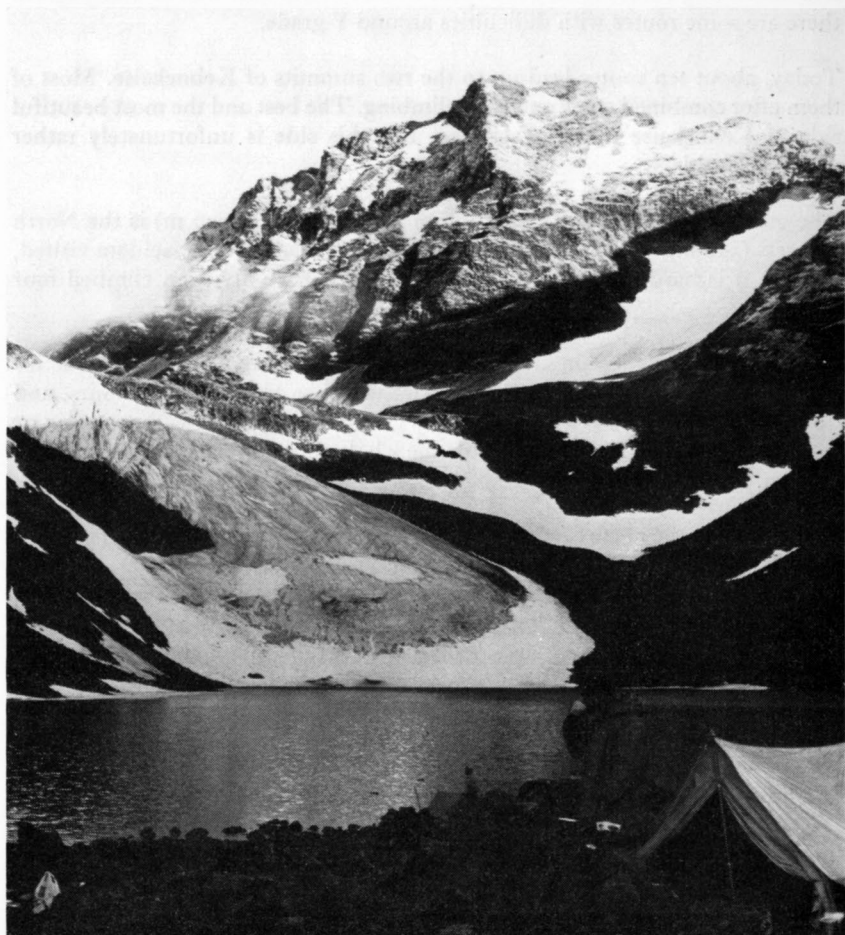


with a lot of hardship. Camping in winter time is best done in igloos, because the igloo is much warmer and more comfortable than the tent. Some of the peaks in Sarek are still unclimbed in winter time, due to the difficulties of reaching the area. The shortest way to the central Sarek goes via Stora Sjöfallet, easily reached from Gällivaare by bus. Then there remains a walk of twenty-four miles.

Sarek has at least four massifs of great interest for the climber, first the central massif with the peak Sarektjåkko (2090 m) the second highest mountain of Sweden. The central massif has about twenty-five isolated peaks with a lot of unclimbed walls. The area is dominated by a big glacier, the Mikka glacier. One other interesting region in Sarek is the Äpar massif with Perikpakte as the most attractive peak. Perikpakte is one of the very few mountains in Sweden that force you to climb to reach the summit. Most other peaks have at least one easy way up to the top.

The two other interesting areas are the Pelloreppe massif and the Påte massif.

21 *Kaskasapakte—South wall*



These two regions are not very often visited by climbers, but they really give good sport.

In the whole of Sarek conditions are good for both ice and rock climbing.

Sarek has much more to give visitors than just beautiful peaks. They call Sarek 'the last wilderness of Europe'. If you are lucky, you can here see both bears and big mooses. Between the ridges there are deep luxuriant valleys, mostly excellent for walking, but sometimes very impracticable.

The most popular climbing region in Sweden is Kebnekaise. This area is rather easy to reach, and here you have a tourist station and a few small huts. The Kebnekaise region consists of about fifteen isolated mountains. The most famous of them are Tuolpagorni (1960 m), the South (2117 m) and the North (2097 m) peaks of Kebnekaise, Kaskasapakte (2040 m) and Koupertjåkko (1970 m).

Tuolpagorni is easily reached from the tourist station, and probably because of that is the most climbed mountain. Its *Silhouette Route* (IV-) gives pleasant and interesting climbing on good rock. On the South-east wall of Tuolpagorni there are some routes with difficulties around V grade.

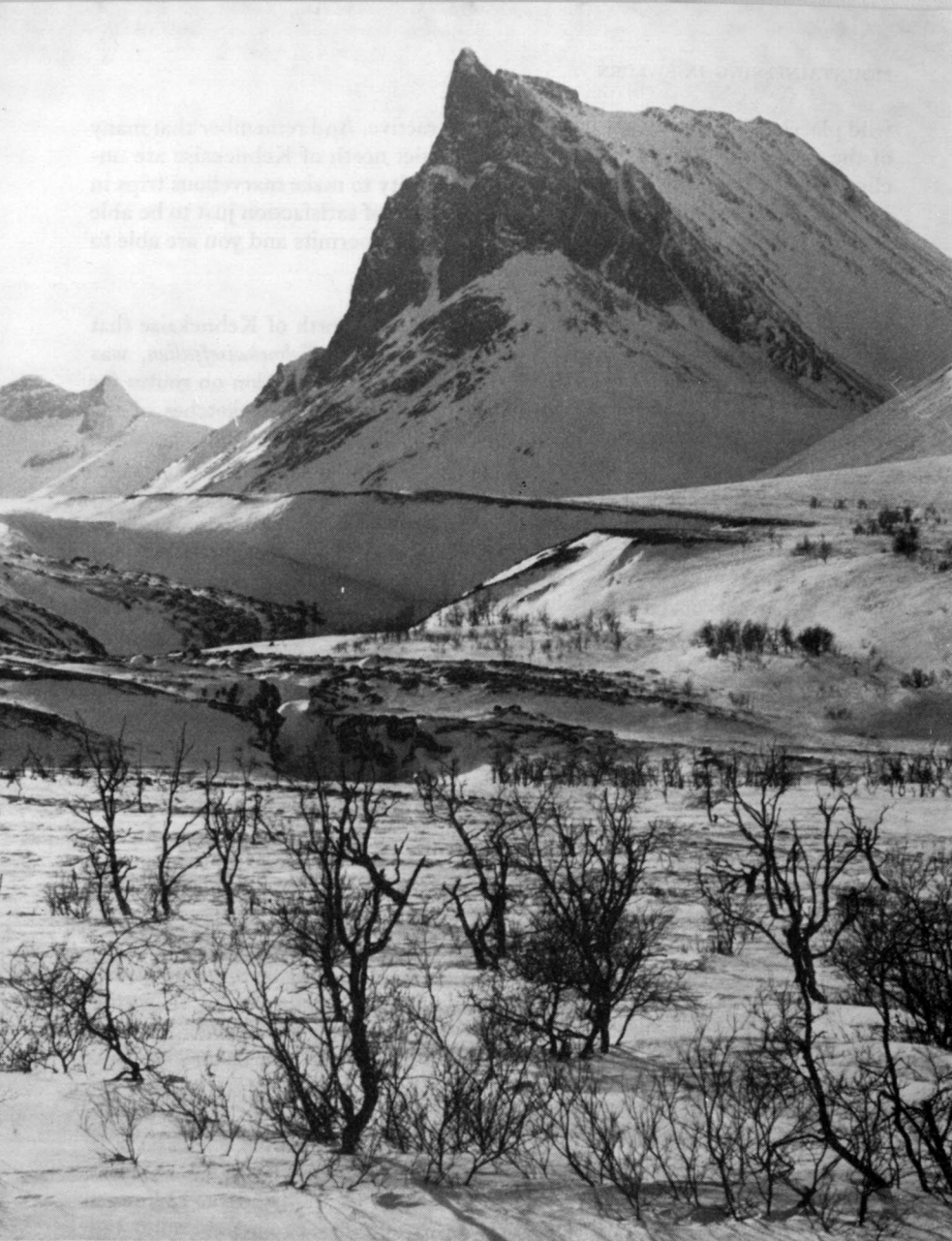
Today, about ten routes lead up to the two summits of Kebnekaise. Most of them offer combined snow and rock climbing. The best and the most beautiful side of Kebnekaise is the West face. But this side is unfortunately rather unapproachable.

The greatest route leading to the top of Kaskasapakte (2040 m) is the North buttress (518 m), V. This part of the Kebnekaise massif is very seldom visited, because it is hard to reach. The North buttress has only been climbed four times.

The glaciers in the region are easily practicable, although there are some ice falls. The climbing routes in this district will take ten or twelve hours, and during this time there is a great risk of a change from good weather to rain or snow. You can meet new-fallen snow the whole summer, even at the height of 1500 m.

The district to the north of Kebnekaise is sited around the peaks Nallo (1540 m) and Mårmapakte (1939 m). This district has some interesting routes, but they are spread out on many different peaks. Here it is mostly rock climbing, but you have also two snow couloirs with an inclination of about 50°. In this area there are six huts of different sizes. This district is remote; the shortest approach is to walk from Nikkaluokta, twenty miles through the valley of Vistas. This way, however, is very laborious in summer, but excellent in winter when you can ski on the river.

In summer the weather in the Swedish mountains is a big problem for climbers. It is very often raining and the temperature is about 5°C. It can be troublesome to live in a tent under such conditions. If you are out in rain on a big tour, you



22 *Nallo from the east*

do not have a warm hut to return to. This is one reason why we do not climb so much in Sulitelma or Sarek. Another reason is that the approach is long and laborious. On the other hand climbing experiences from Sarek are valuable for expeditions, for instance to Greenland.

The Swedish mountains have not so much to give to people who are only interested in climbing. These who are interested in extreme outdoor life in

wild places will, however, find Sarek very attractive. And remember that many of the walls in Sulitelma, Sarek and the district north of Kebnekaise are unclimbed. In winter time you have the opportunity to make marvellous trips in a landscape of complete wilderness. It gives a lot of satisfaction just to be able to live under such conditions. If then the weather permits and you are able to make a few ascents, you are lucky.

It is only the routes of Kebnekaise and the district north of Kebnekaise that you can find in a climber's guide-book. This book, *Kebnekaisefjällen*, was written in 1952. It is not up-to-date but gives good information on routes for climbers who are not familiar with the area. The book has sketches of the routes, and even people who cannot read Swedish will probably find a good use for it.

Svenska Turistföreningen S.T.F. (Swedish Tourist Union) owns most of the tourist stations and other huts in the Swedish mountains. The tourist stations have hotel comfort with rooms for two to four persons and a bar or a restaurant. At the tourist station you can also buy provisions and other things that you need. The huts on the other hand are mostly unmanned and do not give any service at all. You will find a hut with twenty to thirty beds in one or two rooms and with a common kitchen. In the kitchen there are saucepans and a hot-plate of some sort (Primus). Food and other things you have to bring there.

S.T.F. arranges a lot of tours with leaders and also courses. There are many different courses from igloo courses to walking trips in the summer. Together with S.F.K. (Svenska Fjällklubben) S.T.F. has a few alpine courses. In the summer there are one field course and one climbing course. The field course deals with geology, glaciology, botany and how to live in the mountains. The climbing course is an addition to the field course. There you will learn climbing up to the third grade of the international alpine scale. It is a climbing course for the novice. Beside rock climbing you also practise glacier walking and climbing in ice-falls. The climbing course has about twenty pupils yearly. In winter time there is a winter climbing course, embracing skiing on steep slopes, and ascents of easier summits. All these three courses take place in Kebnekaise and are open to everyone.

The organisation for climbers and extreme outdoor life people is S.F.K. The club has about 800 members and the alpine section (A.S.) of S.F.K. has about eighty. Today there are about 200 active climbers in Sweden. The most popular training grounds are Häggsta near Stockholm (see separate note) and Kullen near Helsingborg in the south of Sweden. Here there is lively activity in spring-time. The rocks are crowded with climbers. Many of the climbers go abroad to the Alps for their climbing holiday. The most popular areas are Mont Blanc, the Dolomites and of course Norway. The Swedish climber is generally closer to Jotunheimen and Romsdal in Norway than to his own Lapland with Sarek and Kebnekaise.

(For further information on mountaineering in Sweden see *A.J.* 20 443; 41 355; 50 248).