

February/March 2012

# WildJunket

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I took a piece of dried beef jerky Wild Hasse's wife was cutting up into bite sizes. Hasse himself was bellowing in a deep voice, asking people to step up and try some of his dried meats (törkatkött) if they dared.

"Vad är det för något?" I asked her what it was in Swedish. "Björnkött!" Bear meat. She watched in anticipation as I popped that dark piece of bear meat into my mouth, waiting for a response. Not bad, I thought trying to break down the mild-flavored chewy jerky.

Not bad at all.

I was in subarctic Sweden in the small town of Jokkmokk with a population of roughly 5,000. On assignment to learn and research certain aspects of Sámi culture, there was no better setting than the 400+ year old Jokkmokk Sámi market held every February at the height of winter.

The Sámi are an indigenous people of roughly 70,000 living in the Arctic and subarctic regions of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Kola Peninsula in Russia – a land area collectively known as Sápmi. Roughly 20,000 indigenous Sámi live in Sweden.

For over 400 years, the winter market in Jokkmokk served as a trading post for different Sámi groups to exchange goods such as reindeer, skins, fur, crafts, herbs, and other supplies. Holding the market during winter made it easier for them to travel across frozen lakes and rivers on skis and dog sleds with herds of reindeer and wares for sale.

Today, Jokkmokk winter market remains the largest Sámi festival in the world. It spans three days, opening the first Thursday of every February with folk dances, joiking (traditional music similar to yodeling), reindeer races, dog sledding, traditional food samplings, Sámi Duodji (handicraft) as well as a reindeer caravan procession led by Sámi elder Per Kuhmunen.

I hope these snapshots of the 406th annual Jokkmokk Sámi Market will give you a good glimpse into Sámi culture and traditions - and transport you into their world.

# The Spirit of Lapland

By Lola Akinmade Åkerström



A photographic glimpse into the 406 year old indigenous Sámi market in the Swedish Lapland.





**Clockwise from top left:**

**Animal instincts:** Getting ready for the reindeer caravan through Jokkmokk market. While reindeer is an integral part of Sámi culture and has been such a strong symbol for hundreds of years, it by no means defines the entire culture.

**Traditional architecture:** Built in 1753, the colors of Jokkmokk's old church mimic traditional Sámi attire called *gákti*. The church is usually open to travelers in summer and during the winter market in early February.

**Sámi unite:** Finnish Sámi reindeer herder Nils-Anders (right) meets up with friends Jon-Nils Gaup and his wife, Kirsten J., both Norwegian Sámi reindeer herders from Máze. Though the Sámi are spread across four countries, they all speak a common language.

**An eye for art:** A local blacksmith shows off some of his handicrafts.

**Game feasting:** Cooking reindeer meat in its fat over an open flame. Reindeer along with moose and salmon are key protein sources for the Sámi.



## DESTINATION SWEDEN



**Clockwise from top:**  
Winter couture: Local Sami slöjd designer, Elise Tullnär, shows off her clothing designs at a fashion show in Jokkmokk market.

**Snow sleighs:** A young Sami teenager holds on to a calf during the reindeer caravan.

**Back to basics:** Anna Lisa sells a selection of local balms, medicinal salves, and dried mushrooms at the market.

**Next page:**

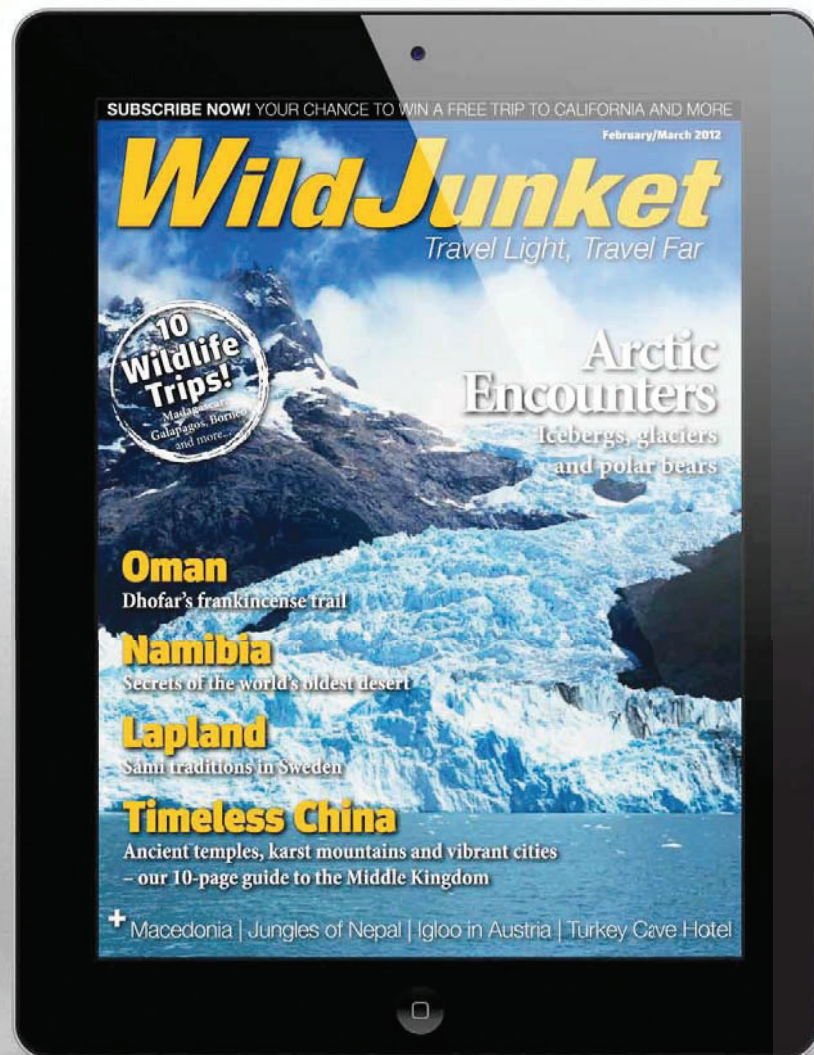
**Holding on to traditions:** A young boy wearing a *gákti* - traditional Sami clothing - with an embroidered belt, boots, and gloves made from reindeer skin and fur.



**Winter nomad:** Nils-Anders, Sámi herder from Northern Sweden, had just moved his reindeer from Norway over to Sweden for the winter.



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