

Beyond the Arctic

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Abstract

1 In Between

Today was the second day of my three day trip to the regions beyond the arctic circle. Just for the geography:

The arctic circle is around 62 deg. lat and we were at a place near 66 deg. lat, and so really quite high up in the north and the northernmost part in Europe was northcap at 70 deg. lat.....

2 Off to Ski, did i!

Back to my story:

We get up at 8:00, as we have to be ready to go to Yllas, a skiing resort up in northern Finland. BTW northern Finland is called Lapland, favourately called Lapin by the Finns. The first thing that we all did was to see the temperature.. and lo it was COLD... -32, i can't imagine..... i have seen +32 but what is this!!! The Germans and the Finns knew what it was, and they had a good stock of clothing, but then I just had two layers of clothing and we were off!!

We reached Yllas in about 1hr, and the travel was great. It was a snow desert, just miles and miles of snow.... the trees burdened by the snow was just waiting to take revenge.. its prestige was at stake and were looking forward for the spring and summer desperately, so that they can raise in pride.....

Yllas was a skiing resort, with a range of small hills, the highest being the Yllas mountain whose peak was at 720mts. Not that high really, but for a flat country like Finland, that is quite a height. All my fellow passengers gear themselves for skiing, wearing those heavy boots and the long kangaroo kind of legs, but then after one day of rolling down the slopes (i just managed to go up the slopes the previous day, but not once did i come down gracefully, yes! of course it was fun rolling down too.....), i decide i would not try skiing.. and moreover Yllas did not have a baby slope for me try....

i joined a group of 3 who were not interested in skiing but were rather interested in walking and exploring the hills.. We decided to walk around the hills...

3 More to climb than to fall

First the group.. There were two French guys: Ralph a tall guy and Vincent a short fat guy.. and then there was Caro, a German girl who had climbed the Himalayas range up to 5000 mts..

Seeing a mountain slope proceeding upwards, she decided that it would be great if we could walk up.. moreover the argument was that it was sunny on the other side.. We started to climb... It was steep.. Vincent found it difficult to climb, and Caro was just up running... The climb was steep.... It was cold . (Of I forgot to mention, the route we took was totally away from the skier and we were not to disturb them.. It is rather forbidden to walk along the skiing tracks....)At one point, i felt it was too much, but going down the slope would be impossible as it was very steep (should have been around 35-40 deg or even more).....

We reached a hut, now the semi steep portions were left over... It was windy..It took us some 45 minutes to climb nearly 200 mts.... It was time to look around, and from that height it was astonishing... The sheer beauty of nature made you feel, 'this is not enough.. I want to climb up to the peak...'

There were two transmission towers up there at that height.... Our aim was now to reach them... A fair guess would be that the first was at a height of 500+ mts and the second was at the highest point (720 Mts).... It took us about 20 minutes to reach the first tower and lo and behold , already it was worth the climb.....

We reached a flat plateau (around 600 mts) at about 12:00. It was two hours since we started to climb, and it was the greatest sight... The sun was just around the horizon... It was gold..... A golden shower of light.... This is probably why the Finns call this **Lapin Kulta** (Also a famous Finnish Beer), literally meaning 'Lapland's Gold.....' It was cold... We were almost

shivering.. It took minutes to utter a single word.. My ears pained and my glasses were now becoming heavy for my ears..... The wind made us feel even more colder.... It was unbearable..

Near the peak we could see a small hut... It was what housed the antenna complex.. we decided that we would try to reach the hut.. BTW: All huts are usually heated (if they are open).. It took us 15 minutes to walk.. It was rather a very smooth slope and hence it was easier.. (Man! at that height and the wind with the mercury around -32, it would have been impossible to climb further.., surprisingly the sun never tried to warm me up... It just heightened your spirits..) Alas! the hut was locked..... We now were shivering ... We wanted to go down, but there seemed just one way..

We decided that we would move around to the smaller of the two hills, that was easier to move, and then try to navigate our way down... It would be nearly impossible to walk down the way we came up....

We started running down.. The snow was knee deep, but it helped.. It acted as a cushion.. We reached a valley that separated both the hills with in 10 mts.. (wow ! 2.30 hrs to climb up and 10 minutes to come down.. typical idiosyncrasy of life...) The next of the range now was, up at around 600 mts... we had decided to climb it.. It was rather easy, but my lace was untied, and with Ralph's help i tied it, but it took us nearly 5-7 minutes to tie it, as it was difficult to even move the fingers, and tying a knot... it is like impossible to do..

We climbed about 520 mts, when it was nearly impossible.. we were hungry and it was windy.. something told us that we should now go down.. We choose the path down, but it wasn't that good a decision as the path was quite steep.... We managed to somehow, (ungracefully, well, who cares about grace here!), and just when we were almost done, we saw a snow storm, with heavy winds engulfing the whole mountain.. we were luckily in time into a cafe, just at the foot hills....

For the next 30mts visibility was almost zero...., but who cared now, we were safe in the cafe.. warming ourselves.... up near the heaters.....

4 The Walk

At about 2:00pm, when it was clear again, we decided that we would take a big stroll around the range, (btw: this is the cross country path..), and we took a mighty 7 km walk across the white desert to reach our destination at 3:30 (lunch was on the way, while we walked.. it was a bit bad, as the temperature was around -20 (the storm among other things, managed to reduce the temperature)), to join the others...

In summary, though, i did not ski, it was a great day, i would have never imagined to see the most beautiful sight, have a nice hand shake with the sun at -32 deg, and at 720mts, at 66 deg. lat... on a nice January morning (Ok, it was 12:30 and technically it is afternoon.....).....

May be i would ski tomorrow.....