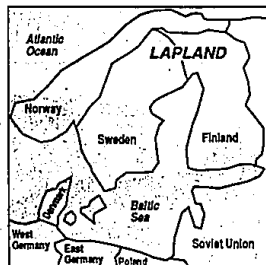


Next to Santa Claus, reindeer are the main attraction at Santa Claus Village near Rovaniemi.

photos by MICKY JONES



In Lapland, just about everyone owns reindeer like this gentleman who tends to a part of his herd outside Rovaniemi, Lapland, Finland.

Christmas: Alive, well in Lapland

By Iris Sanderson Jones
contributing travel editor

Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer wouldn't last many yuletide seasons in Finland.

If he runs wild above the Arctic Circle, where any self-respecting Finnish reindeer lives, he is owned by one of the 4,000 Lapps who live there, and he's in trouble. If he survives the great fall reindeer roundup, he will probably end up pulling a tourist through the dark Arctic afternoons in a reindeer safari.

According to the Finnish Tourist Board, Santa Claus lives in the Finnish province of Lapland, officially designated Santa Claus Land, specifically in Santa Claus Village outside Rovaniemi.

Santa sends 300,000 letters a year to kids all over the world, but there is nothing he can do about Rudolph in a world that loves smoked reindeer meat and reindeer safaris.

Most Americans don't visit Lapland when the Swedes, Norwegians and especially the Germans come to canoe, hike and even hunt rabbits during June, July and August.

THEY COME in midwinter when the sun comes up at 11 a.m. and goes down at 2 p.m.

If you thought Santa Claus lived at the North Pole, look at the map — not that flat map in an Atlas, but the northern end of a globe.

Check out the Arctic Circle. It rings the North Pole and encloses northern Alaska, part of the Canadian Northern Territories, most of Greenland, the northern third of Norway, Sweden and Finland and the northern edge of the Soviet Union.

According to Elso Siirala of Finland's Oulu University, all the people who live within that circle have some things in common. All, except the Finnish Saami developed from the Mongoloid race. They all fall within six linguistic groups and have all adapted to a harsh landscape in similar ways. And they all have reindeer. Reindeer were wandering around when the Finns entered present-day Finland at the time of the birth of Christ.

THE LAPPS had to put up with the usual coming and going of invaders over the centuries, but in modern times, all the Scandinavian countries have recognized their hereditary right to fish, hunt and herd reindeer.

The Finnish Lapps have been herding Rudolph and his friends for a long time; in the 20th century, they've bureaucratized it under the Union of Reindeer Raising Districts. Any Finnish citizen who lives in one of the 56 reindeer districts can own reindeer.

Every reindeer has a mark cut in his ear, and is registered, so he belongs to somebody, whether he is moseying through a back yard pasture or wandering wild.

I wish I could tell you that Rudolph and company wander in pastures with bells on, but the truth is that reindeer are herded by motorized sleighs, walkie talkies and airplanes.

In October-November, the roundup and the festivals begin. During the roundup, the reindeer are driven into corrals and counted. The



Mirva Salmela still wears Laplanders' native costume.

newborn are marked with the brand of their mother. About a third of the reindeer are slaughtered to provide more than three million pounds of meat annually.

REINDEER hides, destined to be rugs or wall hangings, are also a big tourist item in Finland.

If Rudolph is still around, he is probably cavorting through Santa Claus Village six miles out of Rovaniemi or recovering from the Christmas tourists.

When the governor of the province of Lapland proclaimed the whole province Santa Claus Land and Santa's personal domain in December 1984, he knew what he was doing. Reindeer herding may be a great old industry, but tourism is even better.

Santa's official post office datemarks letters to kids all over the world. The largest number are delivered within Finland, but the second largest amount go to Japan, followed by Australia, Italy, Sweden and the United States.

Santa gets their names and addresses from visitors who write them in a book in one of Santa's workshops. His elves make many Finnish crafts and sell gifts, but I warn you, Finnish prices are extremely high.

YOU DON'T have to buy. Take pictures or read Santa's biography. He was born "a long time ago" and knows all the different national Christmas customs, like who gets gifts down the chimney and who gets them in the shoe.

If you want to get in on all this, you can of course take the plane that flies in every year from London, but most people take the Santa Claus flight from Helsinki. They visit Santa Claus Village and a reindeer farm (very scruffy reindeer, folks, sorry), get a reindeer-driving lesson and certificate, go through a Lapp ceremony for crossing the Arctic circle, have a great sauna and settle down for a fiery glass of Koskenkorva at the local Rantasiipi hotel, center of Rovaniemi social life.

You can do a jeep safari, a snowmobile safari, a wilderness safari, ride the Finnish hobbled slide down the nearby mountain, or really do it up brown with a three day reindeer and snowmobile safari.

For more information, contact Rudolph at the Finnish Tourist Board, 855 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

Taking a step back to a Christmas of long ago

By Roberta Schwartz
special writer

Beautiful wreaths, garlands and lanterns light the way to Crossroads Village and the Huckleberry Railroad in the heart of Genesee County north of Flint.

Christmas at Crossroads Village and a tour on the steam-powered Huckleberry Railroad has become a family tradition for thousands who come to the 1800s' village every year to marvel at the display of 40,000 lights that illuminated the village for the holiday season.

Adults pay \$5.95 to ride the steam locomotive and listen to carols, piped into the long cars as the train thunders past Mott Lake and the farmlands of central Michigan. It's great to see the village from the windows of the steaming train and absorb the Christmas atmosphere from the unheated, but cozy cars.

The 38-ton Baldwin locomotive was originally designed to operate at 80 degrees below zero near Fairbanks, Alaska. The restored coaches, the oldest of which was built in 1875,

are from railroads in the West, Southwest and Mexico.

Crossroads Village represents a typical community of the late 1800s-1890s and many of the buildings have been moved to the site from Genesee County and more distant parts of Michigan. Village fathers have tried to recreate the lifestyles and folk art of the time realistically. While strolling through the village, visitors see wool spinning, toy and furniture manufacturing and printing on an old-fashioned hand press.

The village opened in 1976 with six buildings and has grown constantly since then. The Bunnell House, with its pillared porch and triangular pediment, reflects the Greek Revival style of architecture. It was the first structure moved to the village in 1968 from downtown Flint.

THE T.N. NORTH and Son Bank was built around 1889 and originally stood in Fenlon, a small community near Flint. For many years, it served a flourishing lumber and

trapping community. Today, it serves another audience.

Children delight in the huge Christmas tree, decorated with popcorn, candies and cornucopias, filled with every variety of holiday goodies. Illustrated signs also explain how Christmas trees were introduced to the United States from Germany and how country people made the first decorations by hand.

Codwater Chapel offers still another holiday diversion. Church choirs, bell ringers, madrigal singers and bell choir groups perform for visitors who fill the church.

The wood-framed chapel was built in 1890 to serve a small German farming community in Livingston County. Many wedding ceremonies are still performed in the chapel as are Sunday worship services.

Christmas at Crossroads Village has something special for every visitor. Carolling in the streets, paper ornament making for children, readings of Christmas stories at the township meeting hall and wagon and sleigh rides for just 50 cents make visitors feel they have partici-

pated in a merging of Christmas past and present.

"The Gift of the Magi" is performed every evening in the opera house on the second floor of the his-



Crossroads Village is a spectacle of lights with an old-fashioned flavor on weekends during the holiday season.

toric Horton-Colwell Building, which also houses the general store, a U.S. Post Office, which puts the Crossroads stamp on thousands of visitors' Christmas cards every year, and the village cafe, where visitors warm up

with hot chocolate and coffee.

ONE BIT OF advice is in order for visitors.

To enjoy the Christmas visit, it's a good idea to dress warmly. No amount of apple cider or hot chocolate can keep you warm and comfortable, if you don't wear heavy scarves and wool mittens to ward off the winter winds.

Another hint may be in order. The village is about a 60-mile drive by expressway from the Detroit. Visitors can reach Crossroads Village off I-75 or I-49 to I-47E. Exit on Carpenter Road (Exit 11 off I-47E) and follow the signs to the village.

For additional information, write the Genesee County Parks and Recreation Commission, G-203 Branch Road, Flint 48506 or call (313) 738-7100.

Crossroads Village is open from 3-9 p.m. Friday through Sunday every week in December. Special rates are available for persons 60 years and older and tour groups. Parking is \$1.

ROBERTA SCHWARTZ