

New Book Reviews

Walking in Central Sweden

by Paul van Bodengraven & Marco Barten

One Day Walks Publishing, £14.95

THE FRUITS OF SWEDEN'S entrenched outdoor culture or 'friluftsliv' ('outdoor life') abound in our British outdoor stores. Swedish brands are now familiar to many of us. Social media is increasingly populated by images of the country's far north and the Kungsleden features as a must do for wilderness walkers. Surprisingly though there are few English guides to walking Sweden's extensive and wild landscapes.

Walking in Central Sweden addresses that in part. One of a series, this is a guide to hiking in three central provinces of Sweden, parts of the country where the flat south gives way to the more rugged north and which are relatively reachable from Stockholm. This is a guide to a region which is the gateway to the 'boreal', covering areas which are within the ranges of the bear, lynx, wolf and moose but which equally contain picturesque towns and villages at the heart of Sweden's national story.

The book presents 22 detailed routes in the counties of Gästrikland, Hälsingland & Västmanland. Each one sets out a day walk, of varying demands, with a number of tools to assist the walker. An illustrated map, GPS points and a detailed descriptive narrative should set you on the right course. Most importantly, the combination of this narrative along with the numerous colour photographs is more than enough to entice you to don your boots and head out.

Therein is the strength of this guide: practical information presented well to facilitate your journey but also a descriptive turn of phrase that will draw your interest in and along the trail. The guide has an understanding of the places it traverses and

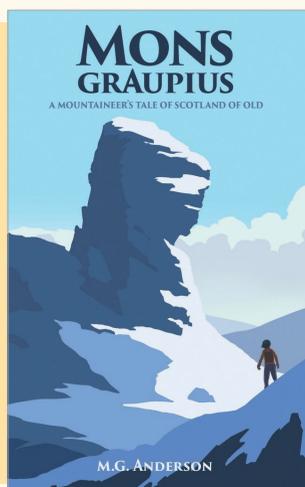
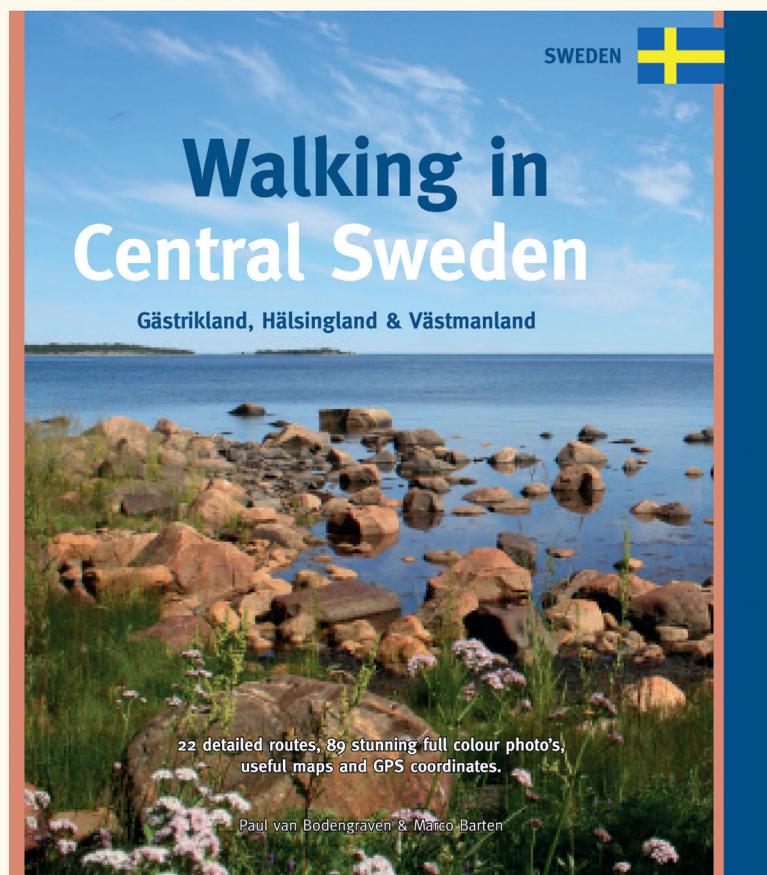
it resolves the fact that Sweden is a country of extensive wilderness but equally one with an industrial history that drew workers to places where raw materials could be extracted and processed.

My head has been turned by a number of these walks, not least one which runs through through wild Hamra National Park. A place of ancient pine forests and the 'lek' of the Black Grouse this is undeniable wilderness. Following the *Walking in Central Sweden* route description provides three possible variants on a trail. The two shortest will ease you around the park on

duck-boards. The longest, at 13.1km, pitches you through a sub-arctic wilderness with the promise of an 'end-of-world feeling'. All will give you a sense of what makes Hamra special.

I've walked Sweden extensively and yet this little guidebook has thrown up the opportunities within vast areas of the country which are unknown to me. And perhaps this is what it does best. Serving as an accessible guide, it will lead you safely through the Swedish wilds and into its inner peace.

Mark Waring



Mons Graupius

M.G. Anderson

Published by Boyle & Dalton

This quirky novel, set in post-war Edinburgh, tells the story of mountaineer Moira Fiorelli – an young upper-middle-class woman in a male-dominated pastime. She begins by climbing hills in the Pentlands with her father, soon graduating to Munros, and then rock and ice climbing. Soon she's climbing at the highest standard, but romantic entanglements and mountain disasters get in the way. The first-person narrative is written with a breezy, ironic humour, which makes Moira's accomplishments as a mountaineer all the more impressive; this self-deprecating, understated tone is a breath of fresh air in the genre. *Mons Graupius* is an entertaining, beautifully written story packed with classic mountain locations in Scotland. Recommended.

Alex Roddie