



**PYHÄTUNTURI  
NATIONAL PARK**

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Cover: Noitatunturi viewed from Uhriharju

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## THE GEOLOGY OF PYHÄTUNTURI

Pyhätunturi is a chain of fells, intersected by steep rocky gorges, which stretches for more than 7 kilometres. Noitatunturi, which soars up to a height of 540 m above sea level, is the highest of the peaks. Isokuru, the deepest of the gorges, is over 200 meters deep. The surrounding countryside is very flat and the majestic silhouette of the five fell tops can be seen many leagues away.

Pyhätunturi is one of the oldest mountain ranges in the world, and was formed over 2,000 million years ago. In its youth Pyhätunturi was kilometres high, just like the Alps today.

What today remains of Pyhätunturi is hard, resistant quartzite, formed from layer after layer of the sand deposited on the bottom and shores of an ancient sea. The strata are clearly visible in places, running horizontally or turning up to form vertical bunches. The waves of this ancient sea have been preserved in some of the strata, in just the same way as today the waves shape beach sand.



*The waves of an ancient sea are frozen in the quartzite of Pyhätunturi.*

Some outcrops of conglomerate, a type of rock formed from different grades of cemented gravel, can be found on the southern slopes of the fells.

The oldest rocks found in the park were formed in volcanic eruptions already 2,500 million years ago. These volcanic formations are nowadays hidden by the overlying soil.

In the autumn, moisture works its way into hair-line cracks in the rock. When the water freezes, it expands and even the hardest rock fractures to form the layer of scree and rock which almost completely covers the tops and gorges of Pyhätunturi.

But the park area is not just barren fells: there are aapa bogs, various types of forest, emerald-green pools, crystal-clear streams and lush brookside groves. It is said that the Pyhätunturi National Park is like a miniature model of Lapland.



*The aapa bogs in the national park form part of an extensive belt running across southern Lapland. View of Tunturiaapa from Kultakero.*

## THE TIME-HONOURED HOLY FELL

In the old days Pyhätunturi (Holy fell) was a place of worship and sacrifice for the Lapps.

But why did they worship Pyhä? The answer becomes clear when we remember that the Lapps' gods of nature, "seita", were not always made of wood. Unusual stones, rocky cliffs and the great fells were the Lapp gods. The wildness, the bleak stoniness, the strange shape of the fells and the extensive, breath-taking views from their tops undoubtedly made Pyhä a holy place for the Lapps.

The Lapps who inhabited the area were mainly so-called Forest Lapps, who lived by hunting the forests. According to local folktales, the Lapps took offerings to Uhriharju (Sacrifice esker) to ensure good luck in hunting. When reindeer husbandry became more commonplace, it became the practice after the yearly roundup to carry out certain ceremonies to ensure that the next year would be a good one. Offerings to the "seita" included horns, skulls or bones of deer or reindeer and sometimes even whole animals. The "seita" stones were anointed with deer blood or fat. These practices were still continuing in the 17th century.

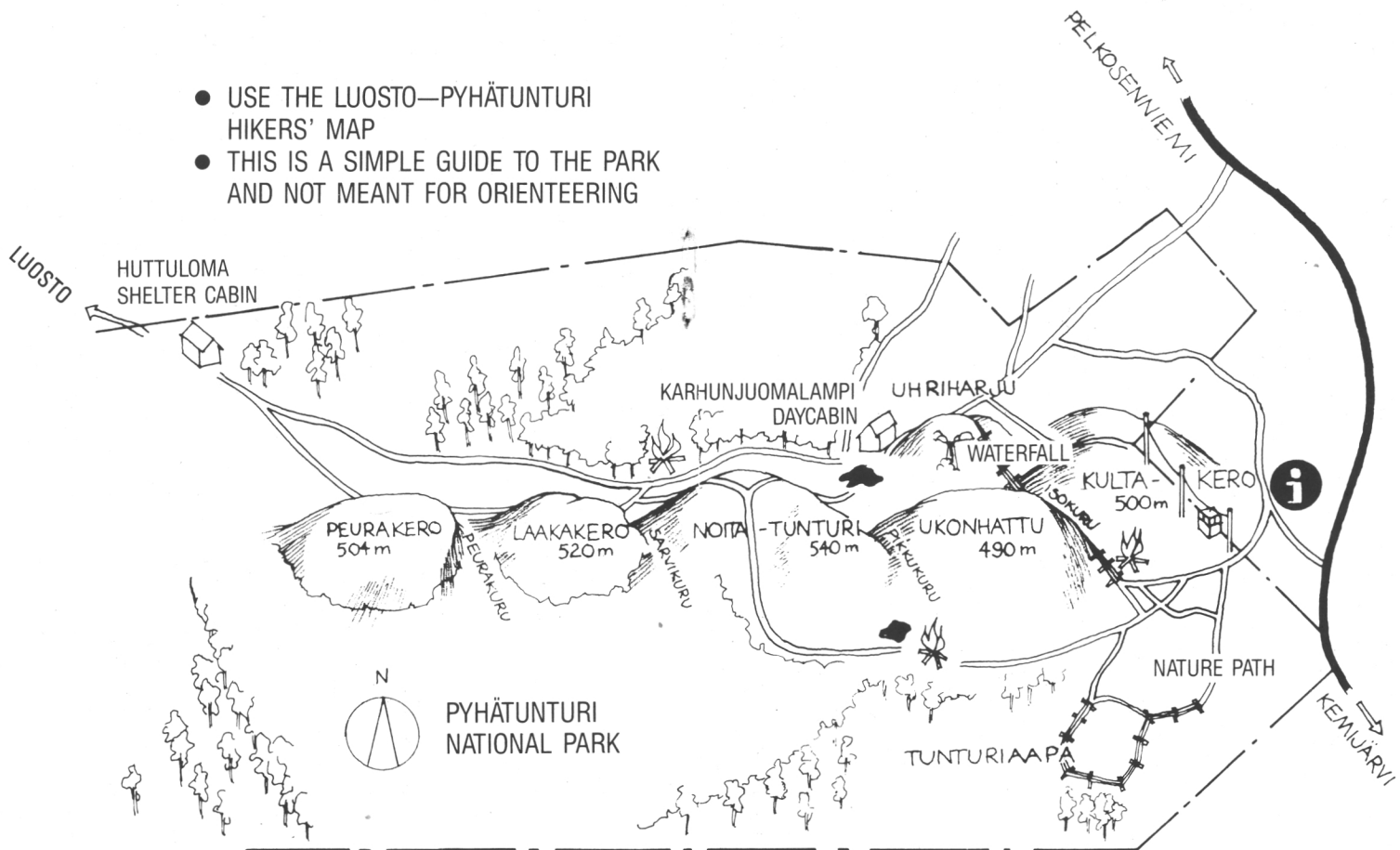
The pagan rites stopped at the end of the 17th century. The local Lapps were communally baptised at places which are today still called Pyhänkasteenlampi (Holy baptism pool) and Pyhänkasteenputous (Holy baptism waterfall).

The Lapps lived in the Pyhätunturi area right up to the 18th century. They were driven out, first by the Karelians, and then by other Finnish tribes arriving from the west along the rivers.

The Lapps moved further north, and never returned to the area. The only signs of the original inhabitants are the place names, which tell of the old ways and beliefs of the Lapps.

As far as we know, the park area itself has never been inhabited, the fell is too rocky and rugged for this. However, signs of stoneage settlements have been found right on the edge of the park.

- USE THE LUOSTO—PYHÄTUNTURI  
HIKERS' MAP
- THIS IS A SIMPLE GUIDE TO THE PARK  
AND NOT MEANT FOR ORIENTEERING



THE FINNISH FOREST RESEARCH INSTITUTE'S  
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CABIN



CAMPFIRE SITE



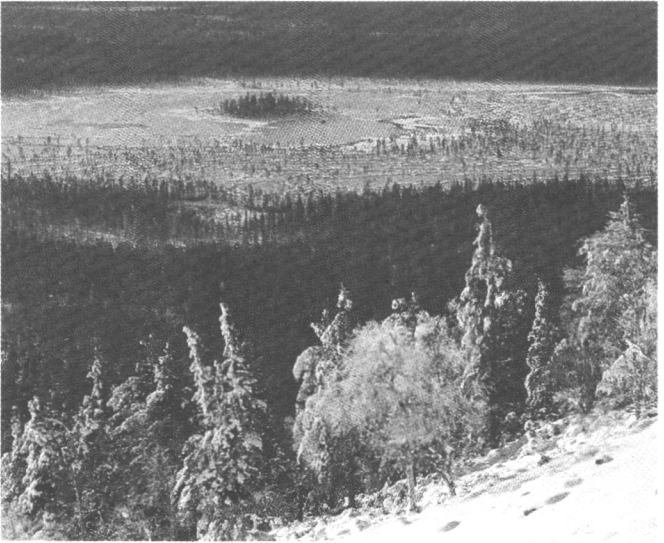
THE HOLY BAPTISM POOL AND WATERFALL



DUCKBOARDS



PYHÄTUNTURI  
NATIONAL PARK



*In the winter the Lapps made pilgrimages to their holy places across the frozen aapa bogs.*

The fells can be a treasure-trove for the lichen enthusiast. Nature has used them to paint patterns in a wide range of colours on the surface of the fell scree.

## FAUNA

The lynx and bear are frequently found in the park, but the wolf and glutton (*Gulo gulo*) are rather rare visitors.

Forest gamebirds include capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*), hazelhen (*Tetrastes bonasia*) and ptarmigan (*Lagopus lagopus*). There are plenty of suitable sites for birds which nest in hollow tree trunks: the stocks of owl, woodpecker, and swift are large in the park.

The red-necked phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*) and ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*) thrive on the aapa bogs. Although they don't actually nest there, the crane, swan and geese are also frequent visitors on bogland.

## FLORA

The oldest Scots pines in the park are over 400 years old. Pine forests are dominant. The Norway spruces have the typical narrow, slender crown of spruce in Lapland. The timber line here is much lower than on many other fells: the pine timber line varies from 320 to 400 m above sea level, mainly due to the scree formations and steepness of the fell. In places the tops of the fells have a dense growth of fell birch (*Betula pubescens* subsp. *tortuosa*), willows (*Salix* spp.) and ancient junipers (*Juniperus communis*), bent low to the ground by the wind and snow.

The covering of scree, and low calcium content of the quartzite, also mean that the flora to be found on the fells is very poor. The most common plants are wild azalea (*Loiseleuria procumbens*), mountain heath (*Phyllodoce caerulea*), alpine clubmoss (*Diphasiastrum alpinum*) and black bearberry (*Arctostaphylos alpina*). The rare parsley fern (*Cryptogramma crispa*), a typical lime-hating plant, grows here and there in cracks in the rock.

The vegetation on the bottom of the slopes and in the brookside groves is very lush in places. The visitor can find baneberry (*Actaea spicata*), yellow marsh saxifrage (*Saxifraga hirculus*), and the graceful lady fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*).



The rare parsley fern thrives in the barren scree covering the fells.



# THE PARK REGULATIONS

## What is permitted

- You can move freely by foot or skis throughout most of the park.
- Stay on the trails whenever possible in order to help keep the park in an unsullied condition.
- Camping and lighting fires are only allowed in the designated places, and use the wood which has been taken there sparingly.
- Wild berry and mushroom picking is permitted.

## What is forbidden

- Camping and lighting fires in places other than those designated.
- Hunting and fishing.
- Removing stones, plants or soil.
- Disturbing the reindeer.
- Dogs should be kept on a leash at all times.
- Making or dropping litter.

THE PURPOSE OF THE NATIONAL PARKS is to protect and conserve nature in an untouched state for future generations. In addition to recreation, the parks are also used for research and teaching purposes.

## THE PYHÄTUNTURI NATIONAL PARK

The national park was established in 1938 when the law concerning the first Finnish national parks and nature reserves was passed. The Pyhätunturi National Park, together with the Pallas—Ounastunturi National Park, are our oldest national parks. The purpose of the park is to preserve, in a natural condition, the geologically unique chain of fells and its fell forests, the historical sacrificial places of the Lapps and the places where communal baptisms have been performed.

The park covers an area of 42 km<sup>2</sup>. Part of it lies within the municipality of Kemijärvi and part in the parish of Pelkosenniemi.

Geographically, the area belongs to southern Lapland, and historically and culturally to Lapland.



