

Upcoming book

Moving a City — Kiruna



How do you move an entire city? In Arctic Sweden this experiment is coming to a conclusion, as over the past decade Kiruna has been moved to a new location about 4 km to the East.

The Kiruna mine is the largest and deepest iron ore mine in the world. Founded in 1900 and owned by LKAB, a Swedish state-owned mining company, Kiruna has been an industrial town for over a century and has been mined to a depth exceeding 1600 meters. The excavation is further and further and the deformation in affecting the stability under the town centre. As a result the town is at risk of collapsing — you can see the cracks in the ground.

But beauty meets industry in Kiruna, Sweden's northernmost town, lies within the Arctic Circle surrounded snow most of the year and lit by northern lights in winter. The town centre of Kiruna must move as it is at risk of subsidence, and therefore a move has begun.

Architects and sociologists were hired to investigate the implications and guide the process. A master plan was created and the process of moving began in 2013. Old Kiruna is undergoing a slow process of demolition and relocation. Some historic buildings being relocated using flatbeds trucks. An entire new town centre has been under construction since 2016. The new townhall was finished in 2019 and many of the 18,000 inhabitants will be moved during moves taking place over the next decade.

What you immediately realise when you visit Kiruna is the codependency of the town and the mine — they are entirely symbiotic. In fact, the entire economic development of the region depends on the mine, so the inhabitants have accepted for their neighbourhood to be relocated. It is done bit by bit, year by year, and in autumn 2022 the new Kiruna town centre opened — a big milestone.

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Language English
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Graphic Design WAAITT
Format 200 × 265 mm
Publication Date 2023

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