



NORTHERN LIGHTS NIGHT (AND DAY)



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

DAY BY DAY INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR 1.5-DAY POLAR NIGHT SAFARI

1ST EVENING

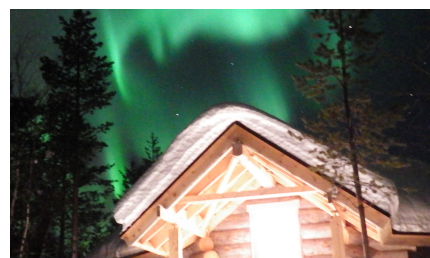
Your 'Northern Lights Day and Night' will start in the evening of day 1, normally around 7pm. We are happy to pick you up from your hotel if you do not have transport! We are based just 4km from the centre of Hetta, in the direction of the airport. NB: You might want to ask if you can leave extra bags at the hotel so that they don't end up smelling of our dogs.

After completing a basic check of your kit and clothing in the farmhouse and supplementing or replacing your gear with our own, we will head down to the farm itself and show you the traditional circular farm kota where most groups stay (sleeping on reindeer-covered benches around a central fireplace). Even those heading out to a nearby 'wilderness' cabin will have a moment to sort through their gear and to leave anything surplus to requirements behind.

With all of the logistics out of the way, it is time for your dog-sledding experience to start and, first things first, we normally kick off with a comprehensive farm tour followed by a session on how to drive sleighs and an introduction to putting together your own team of dogs.

The safari during the first evening is relatively short (between 5 and 9km depending on whether you are going to be staying in a nearby cabin or back on the farm) but there is a full day tour of between 30 and 40km (depending on where you have stayed and other factors including reindeer movements, general weather conditions etc) on the second day. If you are very lucky on your first evening, you may even get to run with the dogs under a star-filled Arctic sky guided by the illusive northern lights. However, if seeing northern lights in a wilderness setting is important to you, you are advised to choose one of the longer safaris since the more days that you are out, the more likely it is that you will encounter them!

Our safaris are normally led by one or two guides on either a dog-sled or snowmobile. Either way, we will try to keep the snowmobile, if used, more or less out of sight once we have balanced the speed of the dogs between the teams on the second longer day, since by then you will already be more experienced and it really only needs to wait for you at key times like at road crossings. (The snowmobile will stay closer to the teams if it is extremely cold or the conditions very difficult for the dogs as a safety measure). If you are in a small group, we might give one team of dogs a well-earned rest and just support you from the snowmobile.



Once back at the farm in the evening there will be warm drinks and snacks to enjoy in the kota after you have put your teams away, and then you will have the chance to either collapse into your sleeping bag and to relax, waiting for your dinner, or to really get stuck in to experiencing life on a husky farm.



NB: There are few other places which give the chance to join in with life on the farm to the same extent as here – and it is certainly something that we think is a positive experience for the clients and therefore something we want you to have the chance to participate in. (If we did not, we would just feed, etc, ourselves, since that is actually quicker, that way). Having said that, we do understand that it is not for everyone and the kota is therefore kitted out with a number of board games and books if you prefer to rest inside. Of course, you are welcome to have some dogs inside with you who need some attention or a cuddle – or even a brush. Old retirees often get forgotten in favour of the pups so they would particularly appreciate some quiet time with you indoors.

For those who do choose to head back out to work alongside a guide mentor, there are any number of jobs that you can participate in, depending on your level of interest: dogs to feed and poop (if the guides haven't managed to already finished the evening feed), long-haired dogs needing their coats brushed and medical needs to be taken care of in the farmhouse.

As a general rule, the dogs tend to get fed before the clients, since that way the rest of the guides can go home after a very long day and the dogs can maximise, also, their rest (dogs coming first will be a theme of your stay). However, if it looks like it will take us too long to get started with feeding, we will of course try to feed you first. Food will normally be the classic Lappish favourite of reindeer meat, mashed potatoes, gherkins and lingonberry jam. You will also get to try squeaky cheese and cloudberry jam at some point during the safari as well as local favourites like forest cakes.



Late that night, we will look at some of the information boards dotted around the farm and talk more about how we care for the dogs and the record-keeping systems we use, to help us to select the teams for the next day. You will also have a chance to visit the farm's souvenir shop and to maybe purchase a mug showing a sketch of your favourite dog or a necklace showing a silhouette of 'Valko' howling. A map of the route you have and will be taking will also be available for perusal so that you can 'take your bearings' a little more for the following day and all too soon it will be time to settle down and snuggle with a few of the dogs on the farm who could benefit from a night indoors. And, of course, if there happen to be northern lights, it is nice to wander out from the farm onto the huge adjacent marshes, lie on your back and simply enjoy the sky.

Occasionally we have small groups staying, rather, at a nearby wilderness cabin on the far side of Lake Ounasjärvi. This cabin's terrace faces north so it is very easy to sit inside in cosy comfort whilst keeping one eye on the skies for the lights. If it is a cold day, the cabin will have been pre-warmed for you prior to your arrival and should retain a great deal of heat from its fire through the night. It even has a wood-burning sauna if you would like to try this very traditional Finnish activity.



If you are staying here, there are a smaller variety of things going which you can be involved in, since we are likely to take all but a couple of the dogs back home with us to ensure that they can get the best nights' sleep possible in their own beds. The two lucky ones remaining behind are going to be quite happy to have your focus and attention for cuddles and massages.

Irrespective of where you spend your night, past experience shows that mushers who participate in as many of the linked activities as possible get so much more out of their holidays than those who leave everything to the guides. There is nothing much that you have to do, but there is lots to do if you want to get involved. The more you work as a team with your huskies, the more they will work for you. Hence, we recommend you spend time with them morning and evening, feeding them, checking their well-being and generally making a fuss of them. We also have dog brushes out with us on most safaris and the majority of the dogs love being groomed or massaged.



We also recommend you take walks out from the cabin or kota by foot or on snowshoes, to explore. The wildlife is well adapted to the conditions here and can be hard to see. However, the snow all round reveals what is moving. You will see a lot of tracks. Identifying them all can be great fun. Here, reindeer outnumber inhabitants by 10 to 1 and wolves, arctic fox, lynx and bear all exist in their natural habitat. There is no better way of feeling close to nature – or, indeed, of gaining a historical perspective of life in the Arctic - than by travelling with this ancient mode of transport.

DAY 2

On the following morning, you are welcome to help us get ready for your long mushing journey in terms of preparing food for yourselves and the dogs and getting the teams ready. NB: Given that the dogs need to have a good drink of soup at least two hours before they need to start running, preparing the water for feeding them in the wilderness can be quite a time-consuming affair.

Breakfast is normally the starting point for the day although some folk are keen to join in with the morning farm routines immediately. Once ready, we will pack away the kit from the night and prep the kit for the coming day. *If you have stayed in the farm overnight, you will have a better idea as to what you need to take with you, this day, and you can probably lighten the load for you and your dogs by leaving some more things behind.*

Making teams should be a much easier and less chaotic-feeling process already by this day and we might put the new-found skills of those staying at the farm to the test by getting you involved in laying out the sleighs, doing a final check for wear and tear and making all of the necessary teams for the morning safari departures all at once. If you are in the wilderness cabin it is a bit easier, since you only have your

own teams of dogs to assemble. On the farm, you might end up having the chance to help with the preparation of a number of different safaris. When everyone in your group is ready with their kit packed in their sleigh bags, and the dogs massaged and ready to go, it will be time to head off again into the wilderness.

During the long day's safari, you will transition seamlessly from open marshland to lake, river and forest glen through Europe's most remote landscape. You will not only discover many hidden gems in the terrain but will also experience the changing light of the Arctic days. The soft light of mid-morning gives way to the mystical twilight colours and spectacular sunsets of the afternoons. Every few hours, we will stop for coffee breaks – and maybe also lunch. (If we don't stop for lunch en route then we will eat together once back at the farm).



Some of the breaks may be in the open. Others may be over open fires or in open wilderness cabins – it depends a little on both the weather and the last-minute route choice, since we base the routes we select around the movement of the reindeer so as to disturb them as little as possible.

Once back at the farm you can thank your team of dogs one last time and take them back to their individual kennels. At that point, we are happy to either take you back to your hotel for a well-earned rest or, indeed, to incorporate you into the end of day farm tasks alongside the guides. Be warned, however! If you thought feeding your own team of dogs took a while whilst out on safari, you may be interested in the systems we use to ensure that feeding 100+ dogs not only happens as efficiently as possible but ensures that each dog on the farm gets the correct amount of food for his or her needs.

