



**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION
5-DAY TAIGA TOUR PACKAGE**



**THE 3-DAY 'TAIGA TOUR' SAFARI
WITH ROOM AND BOARD EACH SIDE**

DAY BY DAY INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR 5-DAY PACKAGE:



This 3-day safari with room and board either side is a short but full-on mushing experience, ideal for people planning a short but adventurous break from normal life. You will learn the routines with the dogs already from your very first evening with us on the farm. You will reinforce your learnings during your second night when you will truly get a glimpse behind the scenes into the world of a sleddog guide and then you will have a chance to see how we adapt these routines when in the wilderness during your third, wilderness, night. By the last day of your tour you will feel confident in your abilities to have fun in this white landscape and by the time it comes to saying goodbye to your dogs, you will invariably feel like you are parting with friends.

DAY 1: ARRIVAL DAY

For planning purposes, please let us know where you are flying into, and how you plan to reach us overland. All of the many transfer options from nearby airports in each of the neighbouring countries are outlined in detail on our website in our ['how to get here'](#) section and, since most people route through Finnish airports, the ['From Finland'](#) page is particularly detailed.

ARRIVAL BY BUS

If you intend to arrive by bus, please ask your bus driver to let you out at Hetta Huskies (*they are more likely to know the farm than the name of the bus-stop, which is Saharannantie*). They sometimes pull into our yard but they are more likely to drop you at the bus-stop c. 100m down the road. There is rarely a time when we don't have people in the house watching over recuperating dogs, so just knock on the door if no-one is in the yard to greet you!

FYI: Please let us know your travel plans even if you are intending to arrive by bus since we may have shuttles arriving from the same place that you could hop into, for the same price, which would lower the price for the others in the group.

AIRPORT TRANSFERS OR SHUTTLES

If you have organized an airport transfer with us, you will be met at either Enontekiö or Kittilä Airport (or Levi) as arranged.

Please note: If you have asked us to help with a transfer to Hetta from anywhere other than Enontekiö airport (which is just 10 mins. drive from us), you will need to be patient when it comes to pinning down the details. We only start to dive into the optimal transfer logistics once we understand the flight requirements of everyone in both the outgoing and incoming groups. Kittilä Airport is about 150km / 90 miles from Enontekiö and the drive takes about two hours by car / 2.5 hours by bus so if we end up doing a transfer, it takes at least half of our working day, so we have to plan it wisely.

NB: The bus is anyway a great backup plan if arriving before 6.30pm and departing after 11.30am, so do check if this works for you. We can, of course, help you find the most cost effective and hassle-free way of reaching us if your flight times are more challenging. Do let us know what you work out, and we can put you into our planning.

FYI: If it turns out that the best option is to wait a couple of hours, post landing, for a transfer, we often suggest using the airport shuttle to the nearby bustling ski town of Levi where there are nicer places to eat and relax than in the airport. The drop off point in Levi is at a hotel where there is a free luggage room for this purpose. (Again, this is explained in more detail, on the website).

FIRST EVENING AT THE HOMESTEAD

We try to make one person available to look after you full-time from c. 5pm on the night before your safari starts. This person may be one of your tour-guides but more likely than not, they will be on a much-needed day off so that they can be well-rested for when the tour itself starts. Hence, please hold all of your detailed questions for when you have the whole group together on the evening of Day 2. ☺

Your guide will issue you with the kit and clothing you will need for your tour, do a very brief introduction to keeping safe and warm in the arctic and then introduce you to the farm and dogs through a guided tour.

All of your bags will go down to the farm with you (in pulks if need be) and you will have time to sort through them in the kota. The farm kota is a traditional circular log building with a central fireplace over which we cook the evening meals for the first two nights. There are set sleeping spaces for 7 which can be extended to 10 for family groups. If, after the first day of your tour, you realise that you don't need to take all of your belongings with you into the wilderness, we are more than happy for you to leave kit and clothing behind. Indeed, we will definitely encourage you to do so! There will be a large cold-store for your bulky items and small electronics can be left behind in boxes in the kota itself. We find that people tend to feel more comfortable doing this having tested their issued kit on Day 1 and this, for us, is one of the major benefits of returning to the farm after the first day of sledding.

You will have the opportunity to feed the dogs that evening if you so wish and if this is the case, a guide will be chosen to mentor you through a 'farm feeding' session. (Most people choose this option and we can generally match a guide to your language needs on this first evening - but you are also totally welcome to hang out in the kota and just relax beside the fire whilst waiting for your meal!).



FYI: We try to start the food preparation for the dogs between 4 and 5 pm, which means that we are normally feeding the main part of the farm by 6 or 7pm (although some dogs may even be out running on northern lights tours until much later than this!) With three experienced people feeding c. 170 dogs, feeding takes about an hour. With help from 3- 6 clients, it might take substantially longer but the systems we use for ensuring that each dog is not only fed as efficiently as possible but also gets the correct amount of food for his or her needs, is probably quite interesting.

Please be aware that if you choose to help feed the farm, your own meal that evening might be a bit later in the day, so it might be a good idea to have a few snacks to hand if think you will need them!

Everything on the farm has to be flexible from our side on this first evening when you all come together from different places. Some of you may arrive at 10am and others at 10pm. Those who have purchased just the ground-only tour won't even join the group until 10am the following morning. For this reason, it is hard to give an exact timetable and itinerary for this first evening and we very much just try to listen to how much you want to be involved vs how much you might just want to crash. The only certain thing is that at some point, we will feed you and you will also be able to sort out your gear for the following two nights in the farm kota where you will sleep.

Early arrivals: If, for some reason, your travel arrangements bring you to Enontekiö earlier than normal on Day 1, (or, indeed, earlier still, since we have sometimes had clients arrive to do a few days of XC skiing ahead of time!), please let us know your approximate arrival time so that someone can be available to issue you with arctic-suitable kit and clothing for exploring the area in, if you own clothing is not sufficient.

You will be able to leave your bags with us and we will try to shuttle you into town so that you can, for instance, grab lunch in Café Silja (well known for its reindeer burgers and huge salads) or Hotel Hetta (great reindeer pizza) and visit the Saami nature centre or local shops. Very organized people might even have an optional extra activity (snowmobiling etc.) arranged for that day. It is about a 4km walk back to Hetta Huskies from the centre of town, passing a number of souvenir shops and the main post office along the route. Hence, most people tend to eat lunch in town and then wonder back at their own leisure. (If it is super cold, you can give us a ring and we may be able to pick you up).

Late Bus Arrivals: If you are intending to arrive on the night bus, you will step into our yard around 10pm. In that instance, you will have missed the standard dinner but we will still try to have something easy to share with you in the farmhouse whilst you are issued kit, before taking you down to the farm kota where you will spend the night. If the majority of people arrive on the late bus, we might just issue all of the kit the following day. Please allow us to be flexible with this and see what works best.

This 3-day safari is a full-on mushing experience - ideal for people planning a short but adventurous break from normal life. It is the ideal product length for those wanting a quick but true insight into mushing in this Arctic Wilderness. You normally see the routines with the dogs on your first night and then feel like a pro when putting them into practice during your second night. You will also have your own routines down pat by the third day and will feel confident in your abilities to have fun in this white landscape. By the time it comes to saying goodbye to your dogs, you will invariably feel like you are parting with friends.

DAY 2 – INTRODUCTORY SAFARI DAY AND INTRODUCTION TO LIFE AS A MUSER

On the morning of day 2, most people prefer a relaxed start to the day over getting up to help with giving the dogs their morning soup. Breakfast will have been laid out ready for you in the kota and you will be able to help yourself at your leisure since the guides will be busy with the dogs. The dogs need a clear 2-hour window between finishing their morning soup and being able to run so there is always a rush to get the first task of the day completed in a timely way so that the safaris can start as soon as possible.



If you think you need any supplementary kit to be issued, there will be a chance for this after breakfast. Alternatively, you can either relax in the kota, prepare your kit for the day or head outside to photograph or join in with, the remainder of the morning routines. There may, for instance, be dogs needing to be brushed, old dogs to be walked, pups to be trained on the agility to release some energy or other safaris scheduled to go out before yours for which teams will need to be prepared. If so, the guides on the farm will just include you in the various activities taking place.

FYI: Taking part in the 5-day package over the 3-day tour gives you this extra chance to get a true 'behind the scenes' view of life on a working dog farm, and our tendency will be to expect you to want to be involved in anything and everything that is going on since this is what most clients want, but please let us know if this is not actually the case, so we know how much to try to include you.

Your tour group will be gathered back together with your tour guide around 10-10.30am for an official introduction and a basic check of your kit and clothing (since by this stage everyone taking part in the tour is definitely here, since some will have purchased just a ground-only package!). Once all of the logistics are out of the way and we are sure that everyone has had a good introduction to the farm and dogs, it is time for your dog-sledding experience to start!

First things first, we kick off with a session on how to drive sleighs and how to put your dog team together (assuming that you haven't already been helping us with putting teams together in the morning!). We will build upon this base knowledge through the week so that by the end of the week you have a chance of being a pretty competent musher. There may be other safaris going on in the farm at this time so you will get a real feel for the life of an arctic husky guide as they make teams and break them down again whilst also interacting with client groups from all over the world.

Your first introductory safari day will include c.30km of riding relatively close to the homestead with at least one of the guides who will be with you through the remainder of your tour. You may or may not have the same dogs when you head out into the wild since we will be trying to give the multiday dogs as much of a rest in-between the long tours as possible, ready for the hard days on the high tundra. Nevertheless, you will see how the guide will work hard at the beginning of the day to balance the speed between the teams. This is affected as much by how the dogs are feeling about running on that particular day as it is by the relative weight of the clients themselves.

Most normal sized groups (6 clients) are led by both a guide on a lead dogsled, and a lead guide on a snowmobile. The snowmobile hovers nearby on the first day until you literally find your feet and it then gradually moves further out of range until, by the end of the tour, it is just present at breaks and road crossings. FYI: Although it is a huge additional expense to have a second guide on a snowmobile, the security it provides is priceless. So, too, is the fact that it is able to take a lot of the weight which would otherwise be in your sleighs, needing to be propelled forwards by you and your dogs' (yes, you may need to push too!). The advantage to having a snowmobile 'around' is overwhelmingly supported by the feedback of clients who have participated in the tours, to date.

Your lunch will be in a (pre-warmed on cold days) wilderness cabin and the trails are some of our favourites, close to our base. Today is the day when we figure out how much you need to eat so we get the portions right for the tundra!



Once back at the farm in the evening there will be warm drinks and snacks available in the kota, and you will have the chance to either relax before dinner or to really get stuck in to experiencing life on a husky farm. As a general rule, the dogs tend to get fed before the clients since that way, the dogs can maximise 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.

NB: There are few places which give the chance to join in with life on the farm to the same extent as we do – and it is certainly something that we think is a positive experience for the clients so we do our best to incorporate you. (If we did not, we would just feed, etc, ourselves, since it is actually a lot more efficient, 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. We do hope that you are sufficiently interested to at least walk either some of the old retired dogs who aren't getting to run anymore and haven't yet managed to find a forever sofa, or maybe a crazy pup who just needs cuddles or a fun time on the agility course. The dogs adore the attention.

Alternatively, why not wander around our 2km farm loop, in search of northern lights or visit the farm's souvenir shop for a mug showing a sketch of your favourite dog or a necklace showing a silhouette of our logo of 'Valko' howling? There are lots of options when on the farm!

For those who 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: food to prepare (but few clients help with that one), dogs to feed and poop, long-haired dogs needing their coats brushed and medical needs to be taken care of in the farmhouse.

Later that night, we will talk more about how we care for the dogs, our record-keeping systems and sled-dog welfare in general and we will also conduct a thorough 'cold talk' and answer any questions you may have (about routes, fun aspects, challenges, emergency procedures, etc.) about the days ahead. A map of the route you will be taking will also be available for perusal so by the end of this session, you should have few questions left about your final selection of goods to pack and take with you. And, hopefully, we will have persuaded you to leave a lot of it behind!



ROUTE CHOICE FOR DAY 2 AND 3

Our three-day safari route is not set in stone. We make the final route choice based on factors like recent snow-fall, the condition of the lakes, the fitness of the group, cabin availability and the number of daylight hours, each day. Although there are many route options, the safari experience for the clients should end up being pretty much the same. In some conditions, for instance, you might cover 6km in 20 minutes and in others, it might take over 2 hours. For us, therefore, we think more about the overall time that will be needed to move from A to B in the prevalent conditions rather than simply looking at the km to be travelled. This gives us a great deal of flexibility and enables us to match the tour to the season and to the client's abilities. However, it makes it challenging to provide an exact itinerary here.

If we are doing the Näkkälä tour, for instance, we can approach from two different directions. Earlier on in the season, when there are fewer daylight hours, we may approach the hut from the south, to avoid doing a large climb and descent in the dark. Occasionally, at the extreme ends of the season when there might be a lot of water on the large lakes, we may choose to do a 'there and back' via the easterly 'obstacle' route (in which there are a number of reindeer fence and bridge crossings). Similarly, if we use the remote Palojoki hut, we may alter or shorten the route to and from it if there has been particularly heavy snowfall, since these trails are less used and can, therefore, be challenging.

The decision as to the route selection is always made by Hetta Huskies and the selected route choice will be presented to you in the evening kota session on the evening of Day 1. There is one final route option available for the three-day tour which includes more time on the tundra. However, this route option is only used when agreed beforehand for bigger private groups and it is a more costly option.

FYI: The sole reason for outlining the differences between the cabins is so that, after your tour, you will be able to look back and remember the name of the cabin and area you have visited. We do not believe that the choice of cabin makes any fundamental change to the product itself!

DAY 3, OFF TO THE WILDS AGAIN

This is the first morning when everyone starts together at the farm. Breakfast is normally the starting point for the day - unless there is someone who is extra keen to join in the basic farm work. Once finished, everyone works together to pack away everything from the night before so as to leave the kota in good condition for the next group, and to complete their own final kit preparations for the tour. As much as possible is left behind so as to lighten the load for you and the dogs.



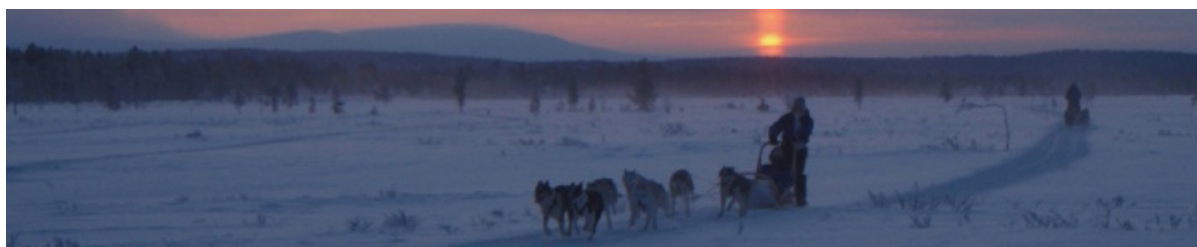
Assuming you really want a 'behind the scenes' view of the work on the farm, we can include you in a few more things this morning since most clients find making teams a much easier and less 'chaotic-feeling' process already by this day. (Remember that there is a two-hour window following completion of morning souping of the dogs, when we cannot yet set off on safari). You could end up helping with pups / old dogs / brushing the 'fluffies' / laying out and the sleighs and doing their final wear and tear check or making the teams for the other morning safari departures. Or, of course, you could relax in the kota until departure time.

At least one of your tour guides will be around to coordinate activities and help you to prepare – but they will also need to clear away breakfast to the farmhouse and make sure that everything is ready in both the guide sleigh and the snowmobile pulk. Hence, they might hand you over for a while to someone else in the guiding team who isn't so focused on departure.

When everyone has their kit packed in their personal sleigh bags, and their dogs massaged and ready to go, it will be time to head off into the wilderness towards either Palojoiki, Galdotieva or Näkkälä.

Whichever route you take, the mushing days will follow a similar pattern in that you will be stopping along the way on the trail for at least one coffee and snack break and for lunch. We will stop a little more frequently on the very cold tours, just to see that you are doing OK. For the sake of expediency, we will generally have hot soup and sandwiches at lunch and have the larger meals at the start and close of each day.

In all of the routes you will find yourself transitioning seamlessly from open marshland to lake, river and forest glen and, you will not only discover many hidden gems in the terrain but will also experience the changing light of the Arctic days. The vibrant pinks and blues of dawn merge into the soft light of mid-morning until this, in turn, gives way to the mystical twilight colours and spectacular sunsets of the afternoons / evenings. For those who are visiting in the earlier part of the season you may also have the chance to run with the dogs under a star-filled Arctic sky, guided by northern lights in the heavens above. Once at your overnight camp, the dogs will be bedded the dogs down for the night and then you will be free to relax whilst waiting to enjoy your supper.



Working with your dogs

Once at your overnight camp, you will be free to relax and enjoy your supper once we have fed and bedded the dogs down for the night. You will no doubt be pretty tired after your long day – but don't worry. You have already 'broken the back of' the route and the return route on the following day is going to be psychologically easier for both you and the dogs.

NB: Past experience shows that those who participate in as many of the linked activities as possible with the dogs 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 in the feeding and caring for your huskies. The more you work as a team with your huskies, the more they will work for you. We recommend you spend time with them morning and evening, feeding them, checking their well-being (particularly their feet!), grooming the fluffy ones that really need it and generally making a fuss of them.

We also recommend you take walks out from the cabins, to explore. The wildlife is well adapted to the conditions here and can be hard to see. However, the snow all around will clearly reveal what is moving around. You will see a lot of tracks. Identifying them all can be great fun.

Here, in the far North of Finnish Lapland, 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.

Palojoki Cabins

The Palojoki Cabins are typical trappers cabins in the middle of no-where on the banks of the Palojoki river, at the edge of the little-visited Tarvantovaara Wilderness Area. To reach there, the final stage of the day involves the crossing of Lake Suonttajärvi. This wild open expanse can feel quite exposed in a snowstorm on a dark night. Scattered cabins dot its shores. These are now holiday houses made from the remains of a Saami summer village used since the 1700s.

At 'Palojoki', there is one larger cabin which sleeps 6 people comfortably, 8 with a squeeze, a smaller one which sleeps 3 or 4 as well as a woodshed, outdoor toilet, outdoor fireplace and sauna. These cabins are warm and cosy since we have built them ourselves over the last few summers.



The route to these cabins is fairly easy when the conditions are good but can be challenging for the guides to find after a heavy snowfall. Having said that, we can alter the distance we travel en route to these cabins quite easily, so they are a particularly good option for early season when conditions are too challenging to reach Näkkälä in a reasonable number of hours - or for groups that want to do shorter days.

One of the guides generally sleeps in the main cabin with the clients and the second guide generally sleeps in the small cabin so that we can take more dogs indoors overnight. NB: Although the Palojoki river is well known for its rich assortment of fish, you are unlikely to have much time to think about fishing since the dogs will no doubt keep you fully occupied!

Galdotievo

The Galdotievo cabins are a similar distance away from the homestead as the Palojoki cabins. They are the easiest to access by land since they are in the last settlement on the Finnish side of the Norway-Finland border. In this sense, they are less 'wilderness' cabins and more 'frontier' cabins and clients generally enjoy the fact that they have electricity, a shower, sauna and indoor toilet as well as a larger communal sauna close to the ice-swimming hole which is available for hire. There is even a small shop and a café in the village. NB: these cabins are generally only used as a back-up option for Näkkälä when conditions prove very challenging or for a modified tundra tour.

Näkkälä Cabins

This is one of the two cabins we use frequently in the small Saami village of Näkkälä, on the edge of the Pöyrisjärvi wilderness area. Clients are often baffled by the light switches in the Näkkälä cabins – which only work in summer since they are operated, then, by solar power!



Näkkälä is still a very vibrant reindeer herding area and there are reindeer separation fences just 3km from your cabin. On some nights you may even hear the noise from a reindeer separation (your guide can tell you more about this fascinating lifestyle)! Indeed, the village of Näkkälä was made 'famous' (in the German speaking world) in a [film](#) of the same name made by a Swiss man who lived for some years amongst the reindeer herders.

When we approach Näkkälä from the east, the mushing day is quite a long one and filled with obstacles like reindeer fences and bridge crossings and some steep but short climbs and descents to test your newfound skills. The route passes by Galdotievo and climbs to its highest point on open fells in the final hour of the day. The ascent and descent of this final hill is the longest in the whole journey, so conserve your energy for this last challenge of the day. The descent to this cabin may literally take your breath away and, at minimum, will give you an adrenalin-filled buzz right at the end of the day!

DAY 4: HOMEWARD BOUND

Regardless of where you are staying, your day will start, once more, with ensuring that the dogs have a good, warm drink, at least two hours prior to their scheduled departure. And then, of course, we also have to clean up after them. Finally, it is then time for breakfast for you and for those who have remained behind in bed.

We will again adjust the route, as far as is possible, to the conditions on the way home. Once you have arrived back at the farm, you will have a chance to put your team of dogs back in their own kennels, thank them one final time and then have a final hot drink and snack before returning your borrowed kit and clothing and collecting any that you had left behind. We will then spend some time chatting through the highlights of the tour and giving you a chance to provide some feedback before taking you to your hotel for a well-deserved meal and sauna.



Most clients really enjoy hanging out together and exchanging photos, etc, at the end of their trip. Hence, we try to put everyone into the same family-owned hotel in the village. All of Hetta's hotels have communal saunas which will be warm for you that evening, since Finnish people can think of nothing better than relaxing in a warm sauna after being out on wilderness trails. Don't forget, though, this might be your last chance to try ice-hole swimming, if you still have energy to spare! There are two or three places you can do this through most of the winter in Hetta.

DAY 5: DEPARTURE DAY

If we are organizing your transfer back to either Enontekiö (included) or Kittilä, we will arrange, with you, an appropriate pick-up time on the morning of your departure. If you have any final things that you wish to see or do in Hetta prior to that, just let us know how we can help.

