



**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION
7-DAY ARCTIC MUSHING PACKAGE**



(5 DAY WILDERNESS SAFARI WITH ROOM & BOARD EITHER SIDE)

DAY BY DAY INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR 7-DAY TOUR



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 your 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 wander 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).

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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.

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 This is your 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 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 (by which stage everyone taking part in the tour is definitely here!) for an official introduction and a basic check of your kit and clothing. 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.

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 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!). Previous clients have overwhelmingly seen the presence of the snowmobile to be advantageous.

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 other places which give the chance to join in with life on the farm to the same extent and most people love it but, if the hustle and bustle of feeding is too much for you, our old retired dogs without a 'forever' sofa, would really appreciate cuddles or walks. 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!

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!



DAY 3, OFF TO THE WILDS (AGAIN)

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 for the day that we call the 'OBSTACLE DAY'.

You will cover somewhere between 35 and 55km each day with your dogs during the next four days. This first day out of the farm is one of the shortest and normally the easiest (after the introductory day) but we call it the obstacle day since it contains a number of challenges designed to hone your skills, including bridge and reindeer separation fence crossings, and a couple of short but pretty steep descents and ascents which will get your heart racing.

The day will also set the tone for the following days in that you will be stopping along the way on the trail for coffee and snack break(s) and lunch. We will stop a little more frequently on the very cold tours, just to watch to see that you are doing OK. For the sake of expediency, we will generally have hot soup and sandwiches at lunch and wait for the larger meals at the start and close of each day.

During the safari days you will transition 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 soft light of mid-morning gives way to the mystical twilight colours and spectacular sunsets of the afternoons and then, for those who are lucky, you are likely to also have the chance on at least one day to run with the dogs under a star-filled Arctic sky, guided by northern lights in the heavens above.



The first night out from the farm is normally spent in the best-equipped cabin of the journey, in Galdotieva, the last settlement on the Finnish side of the Norway-Finland border. 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.

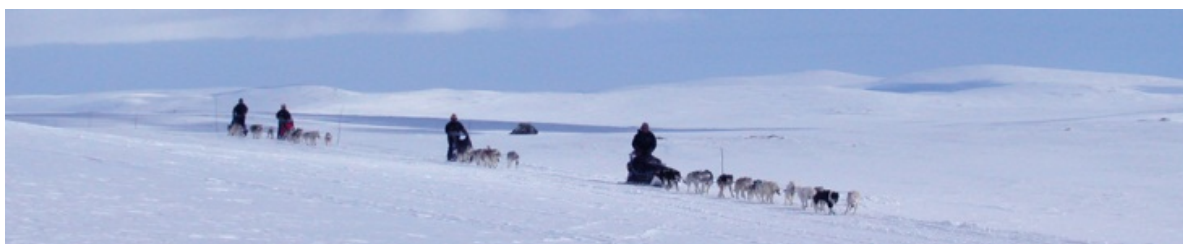
You will no doubt appreciate the luxury of this location if you are lucky enough to stay in a heated Galdotievo cabin since there is an indoor sauna in each shared cabin as well as a shower, toilet. Down by the lake, near to where the dogs sleep, there is a large lake-side sauna which can be booked if requested. There is even an ice hole to challenge the brave.

DAY 4 – THE HIGH TUNDRA

If you want to try helping with the care of the dogs whilst out on safari on just one morning, this is probably the best morning since it is easier to get out of bed here in this warm cabin than in the cabins warmed simply by log fires in the days to come. The first morning duty is to ensure that the dogs have a good, warm drink, at least two hours before they are scheduled to run – and then, of course, we also have to clean up after them.

And then it is time for breakfast for you and for those who have remained behind in bed. If you have realized that you have forgotten something of critical urgency, you also have one final chance, here, to purchase odds and ends like chocolate bars, beer etc, in this hamlet's sole shop.

Then it is time to turn your teams towards the high tundra – a beautiful plateau which climbs above the tree-line, is swept bare by the arctic winds.



The luckiest groups encounter both white-out conditions on one day and clear sunny skies on the next whilst up on the plateau – in other words, the full spectrum of arctic weather. It is incredibly beautiful up there in good conditions but it can also become incredibly hostile when the trails are blown and the conditions challenging – e.g. after fresh snow. Hence, spending two of the five days above the tree-line and the rest down amongst Europe's Boreal taiga forests is just about the perfect combination.

Please note that you might want one extra layer of clothes to hand for this day since there may be added wind chill that you might not have encountered to this point. Lunch will also be 'out in the open' since there are few trees to provide shelter.



Your cabin this night has no electricity but it is comfortably heated by two central wood-burning fires so you will be able to relax and tell candle-lit stories in their warmth during the evening. The sauna will also be heated for you to use if you wish and is a great place to dry socks.



Keeping each of the fires going is something you can definitely help us with since we will be running around juggling looking after the dogs (bedding them down comfortably and feeding them), the sauna, the cabin and your food. The cabin has four separate sleeping areas but because of its extra space, it can be quite chilly again, by morning. You will probably appreciate your arctic sleeping bags whilst here and you might want to wait until your guide has warmed it up again in the morning, before getting up.

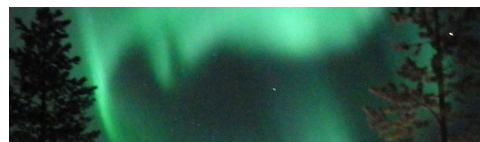
NB: Those taking part in this safari later in the season will spend a greater proportion of their time riding in daylight vs in twilight and dusk and you will have long evenings – as you can see from the arrival shot, taken from the back of this night's cabin, here - that the others do not have when they may arrive, already, in the dark of the early winter season, in which to explore the area around your overnight cabins or just hang out with the dogs).



NB: Past experience has shown us that those who participate in as many of the linked tour activities as possible get more out of their holidays than those who leave everything to the guides. For this reason alone, we will keep encouraging you to join in with dog-related activities but we do want to stress that whilst there is nothing much that you HAVE to do, there is lots that you CAN do if you want to get involved. Feeding and caring for your huskies is the most important element in making a great holiday. The more you work as a team with your huskies, the more they will work for, and respond to, 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. By the end of the tour, most clients know the names of most of the dogs travelling in the group (they sometimes get switched between sleds to balance speeds so you will probably get to know c. 10 dogs very well over the course of your safari), as well as the harnesses they wear and how to put the teams together and take them down at the end of the days.

The more that you walk in the vicinity of the cabins, too, the more that you will see signs of the wildlife all around you but seldom seen. If you look carefully at the snow, the abundant tracks will show what is moving around in your area. Identifying them all can be great fun. Here, reindeer outnumber people 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. And, of course, you are now in as remote a location as possible from which to search in the night, for the northern lights!



DAY 5 – FELS AND MORE FELS

During this day you will not only traverse again across the tundra landscape but you will encounter one of the biggest climbs and descents of the whole journey in the final moments of the day. Hence, keep some reserves back for this last challenge before arriving at your final cabin in the small Sami village of Näkkälä on the edge of the Pöyrisjärvi wilderness area. 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!

This area 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.

The cabin we use is a typical Finnish wilderness cabin, without electricity, (although the light switches on the wall - connected to batteries and solar power - sometimes confuse the clients in the winter). There are two differently sized cabin options. We sometimes opt for the smaller one during the colder months just because it is far quicker to heat up! Both cabins have access to an outdoor sauna.



You will have had a chance, by this stage, to really get to know your group well and also to understand what optional activities are possible on your free day and who you might like to do something with! Please make sure that you let your guide know what you are interested in, by this night at latest, so that they can call your interests through to the homestead and we can try to arrange things for you. If you leave it until the last minute, when you return from the fells, it might not be possible to organize reindeer farm visits, snowmobile tours etc.

DAY 6 – HOMEWARD BOUND

We head south again during the last day of your journey. When the weather is crisp and clear and the trees laden with snow, this part of your journey is truly spectacular. One of our guides once described the terrain here as 'a lunar landscape interspersed with tropical-looking islands of ice-covered trees'.



There is also a panoramic view of the rounded chain of fells which make up the northernmost part of the [Pallas-Yllästunturi National Park](#) through most of the day. Even in the Spring conditions illustrated here, this is an awesome day when the skies are clear.

However, before any of that can happen, we have to start the day, once more, by ensuring that the dogs have a warm drink at least two hours prior to their scheduled departure. And then, of course, we also have to clean up after them before eating ourselves and getting organized for the day.

The majority of your day will be spent mushing on gentle rolling hills as you gradually descend back down to Hetta. The final leg of the day is down the length of the Ounasjärvi lake where, if you are lucky, you may see the sun starting to set in spectacular fashion or, at least, see the changing colours of the arctic day. The lake can be a chilly windswept place, so have some extra gloves and buffs to hand, in case the sun sets and the wind comes up.

Once you have finally 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, return your borrowed kit and clothing and collect anything 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 – and even taking part in shared optional activities. 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.



DAY 7: 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.

DEVIATIONS IN THE STANDARD TOUR ITINERARY

FYI: The tour, as outlined here, is based on our standard itinerary. We will generally only change the itinerary from our side if we are forced to do so because of weather, snow and ice conditions on the tracks, reindeer movements or cabin availability.

However, if your flight arrangements necessitate a change from the norm (eg the free day prior to starting the safari), then so long as you end up with the same total number of nights in the hotel, the tour can be booked for the same price. We sometimes, for instance, have people booking one hotel night prior to the 2 days in the kota, 3 days in the wilderness and 1 night afterwards. Please just remember that you will then have a slightly different experience than the others in your group and you will have less chance to share optional additional experiences with them afterwards.

In 2016 the Enontekiö flight schedules switching to Sunday mornings have added an additional complication to the procedure. If, therefore, you want to book an 7-day package but want to arrive just before the start of the safari, you are then on a very different package from the other people in your group, (and will also need an additional hotel night and optional activities for 2 free days, to be organized for afterwards). This is still possible for us to arrange but there will be a small increase in the cost of the safari to compensate.

Please note: If you have booked our 7-day package with a modified itinerary, we will not be able to send you a customized day-by-day tour itinerary but the safari component of your product will likely follow the format outlined here.