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Dog Sled Safari - Finland



This is an exciting adventure along beautiful, wild trails along the Russian Frontier across frozen lakes and snow drenched forests

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Dog-sled safari's in northern Finland.

Space to find peace, amid pure unsullied country side – that's Finland. It is Europe's 7th largest country with only 5 million people! Finland contains more lakes than any other country, these huge stretches of water link up to form massive inland waterways. Sprinkled with thousands of islands they form a vast aquatic system of astonishing beauty. This beautiful land freezes solid in winter.

'**Everyman's right**' is an age-old concept in Finland that gives everyone the right to roam no matter who owns the land. This does not give you the right to infringe on people's privacy or to damage the environment.

Sauna – smoke and steam but no sex

The Finns will prescribe a sauna session to cure all ills. There are over a million saunas in Finland, most of them are private. An invitation to bathe in a family's sauna is an honour. Finns are quite strict about the non-sexual character of saunas and this should be respected. The ideal temperature of a sauna is about 90°C, you can use the vasta (bunch of leafy birch twigs) to lightly strike yourself to improve the circulation. When you are sufficiently warmed you can then jump in the lake or sea (in the winter gently lower yourself through an ice hole!!).

Climate and Weather

In October Finland starts to freeze and then unfreezes in April. It is dark over the winter months but by February in the north there are 12 hours of daylight and the snow is normally in excellent condition. It will be cold with temperatures between -15°C and -5°C and March is the driest month. The lakes are solid and are used as roads and the forests and track are covered with over a metre of snow.

The Art of Dog-Sledding

Mushers do not need to be exceptionally fit although a reasonable level of fitness is required. Each team is made up of between 4 and 6 huskies and you will learn how to harness and look after your team. The starts are exciting moments. With upto 30 huskies eager to start, the atmosphere can become deafening and electric. You will tie your sled to a tree with a slip knot and the dogs will be pulling hard making the rope taught. Holding your sled in one hand and the rope in the other you will release the slip knot at the right moment and jump on the runners of the sled and hopefully stay onboard.

Each sled is equipped with a brake, a type of metal claw located between the runners. You will very soon become used to talking to the dogs and will be taking corners between tree with little difficulty. The most common difficulty for novice mushers is simply relaxing. The fear of falling off usually makes you tense up. You will need to develop a fluid relaxed stance that can react freely to the twists and turns of the trail.

dogs.

The Adventure

A husky safari combines a unique mixture of experiences: the peace and tranquillity of cruising across miles of pristine wilderness; the fun and adrenaline of dramatic starts and falls and shared moments with the dogs, the guides and other members of the safari.

For many people, a dog-team is a perfect means to travel through the wilderness and the co-operation within the dog team and between the team and the musher is a pleasure to be a part of. As the days progress and the teamwork develops, the rhythm and harmony between musher and dog-team becomes clearly evident. Everybody is a musher, driving their own team of huskies through some of the world's most beautiful and remote wilderness. During the safari we will be accommodated in a wilderness hut. On arrival we will need to light the fire in the hut and the sauna and, with an ice-screw, we may have to make an ice hole in the lake to get water. You need to work as a team not only with the dogs but with each other cooking your own meals and helping with the

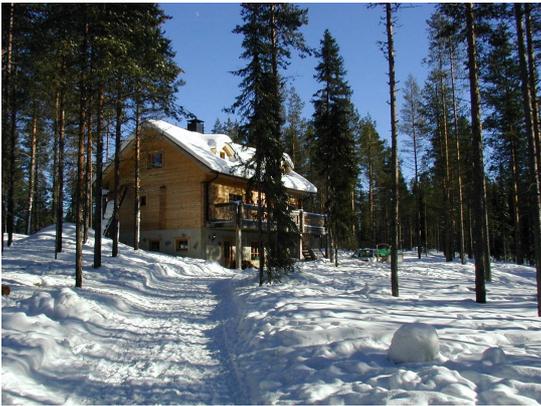
Northern Lights (Aurora Borealis)

The Northern Lights is a phenomenon created by electrically charged particles set off from the sun hitting the earth's atmosphere. As the particles penetrate the atmosphere they give off their charge and create beautiful moving colourful lights. They can be seen any time from November to April on cold clear nights. On average they happen every other night but to see them the sky must be absolutely clear with no clouds at all.

The Northeast - Russian Frontier

You fly into Kuusamo and will be met and transferred to a comfortable log cabin/lodge in a remote part of the Kuusamo region close to the Russian frontier. It is in pristine wilderness, just a few miles south of the arctic circle. This is a remote part of Finland with only 18,000 inhabitants of which half live in the city. Bear, wolf, lynx and wolverine are all found along the Russian border and are more prolific in this region as many are crossing over from Russia. The border zone is a hunting free area where wild animals can retreat to safety. Elk, reindeer and an assortment of wild birds will almost certainly be sighted as we sled along the border. There are a maximum of 5 people on the dog sled safaris and whole lodge only sleeps 18. If you are looking for somewhere well off the beaten track with very few tourists where you will experience very good personal service - then this is your winter retreat.

Accommodation – The Lodge



Your base for this adventure will be in an excellent lodge with good facilities.

The main lodge is situated in the centre of large fenced compound. The ground level has three double guest rooms. There is a large traditional Lappish stone fireplace in the main Takkahuone. Adjoining the Takkahuone there is a wood burning sauna for 10 persons

and a double shower complex. The first floor of the lodge is the main meeting and socialising area of the Border Inn. Here you will find the bar/restaurant with seating for 18 at the Kelo wood table and 4 at the bar.

The guest cabin is situated 200 m from the main lodge outside the compound. It is built with 9-inch Finnish red wood logs and is equipped to a very high standard. Downstairs there is a double bedroom, sauna and shower, cooking facilities and a traditional Lappish fireplace. Upstairs is open plan with 3 double beds and one single bed.

Kuusamo - Northeast along the Russian Frontier

Sunday Arrive Kuusamo via Helsinki and transfer to the lodge. Sauna and briefing on the safari.

Monday Meet the dogs and take a 20km training dog sled tour to enable you to learn your dogs names and develop a working rapport with your dogs.

Tuesday/Wednesday/Thursday/Friday You will depart on a three/four day wilderness dog sled safari. Travelling north along the Russian Frontier you will cover between 30-40km per day with the sled. The scenery is breathtaking and if the dogs catch sight of an elk or a reindeer then the pace can also be breathtaking, but with well trained dogs and guides a simple command and the dogs will continue on the correct trail without any mishaps. Stops along the route will be made for photographs and snacks and rests for the dogs. Evenings will be spent in a wilderness cabin. The hut used has no electricity but has a wood burning sauna, an open fire and a lake nearby to get water and to take an ice swim (not compulsory!!).

Saturday This is your options day, you can just relax and savour the environment at the lodge or for minimal extra cost (€100 per snowmobile) you can take a four hour snowmobile tour stopping for lunch by an open fire. You can also take another dog sled safari or explore the area on x-country skis at no extra cost.

Sunday Transfer to Kuusamo airport for return flights.

Visa, Passport and Currency

Finland is a member of the European Union thus no visa's are required for European citizens. You will need a valid passport and, for in-country medical emergencies, you should have form E111 which is available from most Post Offices. Finland is part of the Euro zone and Finmarks are no longer legal currency. The lodge does not accept credit cards. You will need to pay for your drinks by cash.

Early Bookings

Air flights and dogs are at a premium during February and March as this is the best time to visit Finland for winter activities. **Early booking is strongly recommended.**

Air Flights

If you are arranging your own flight you need to arrive at Kuusamo by about 17:00.

We can arrange international air flights - give Martin a call for a quote.

If you arrange your own flight please let us know your flight details.

Suggested Kit List

It is going to be cold. You will need to bring your own warm underwear etc.

You will be provided with: Warm, fleece-lined thermal overalls, boots, gloves, woollen socks and a sleeping bag.

You should bring the following:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Warm jumper or fleece jacket | <input type="checkbox"/> Woollen hat & balaclava |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Outer shell clothing (you waterproof would be fine) for walking about lodge complex and skiing. | <input type="checkbox"/> Headtorch and spare batteries / bulb |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mid layer fleece or thin jumper | <input type="checkbox"/> Good socks - wool is best (your feet are on or in snow all day) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 sets thermal vest and long johns | <input type="checkbox"/> Wash kit and large towel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fleece trousers or tracksuit bottoms | <input type="checkbox"/> Camera and film |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gloves – optional as gloves are provided | <input type="checkbox"/> Inside shoes. In Finland everybody takes off their shoes inside you may wish to take some shoes for inside. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Snow/Ski goggles or sun glasses. Sun glasses with side shields are very suitable. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping Bag Liner | |

Northeast - Russian Frontier Prices and Dates

This adventure can be arranged for any week from the 29 December until the 13 April for one or two people to a maximum group size of 6.

Winter 2013-14

Land only: £1795

Insurance: Insurance can be bought through our representative 'Travel & Insurance Company plc 0845 408 0583 or insurance@tagconnect.co.uk

The price includes: 8 days / 7 nights Sunday to Sunday with full board from dinner on Sunday to breakfast on Sunday, Two transfers to and from Kuusamo airport, all equipment, sled and husky team.

The price does not include: International air fares and travel to and from Kuusamo, downhill skiing or snowmobiling, personal spending money