



2-DAY POLAR NIGHT SAFARI



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

DAY BY DAY INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR 2-DAY POLAR NIGHT SAFARI

DAY 1

Your 2-day dog-mushing experience will normally start at 11am on the first day (although we may start you slightly earlier or later depending on what else is going on that day, so please be flexible). We are quite easy to find and are just 4km from the centre of Hetta. If you would like a transfer from a local hotel (in downtown Hetta only), please let us know and we may be able to pick you up. We generally charge €5 each way unless we happen to be picking up another group anyway.

FYI: Please do let us know where you are intending to stay before your tour even if you don't need a transfer since we have sometimes had delays caused by people trying to stay too far afield and then being late to arrive. Some people might also be planning to fly Enontekiö on the morning of departure so again it would be useful for us to know that kind of information in case of delay. If you are staying locally, it might also be worth asking if they can keep your extra bags until the end of the tour since otherwise they may end up smelling of dog!



Once everyone taking part in the tour is gathered at the farm, it is time for introductions, a basic check of your kit and clothing and the issuing of any final arctic kit needs before heading down to join the others at the farm. We will take all of your bags down to the farm with you (in pulks if need be) since the majority of our overnight safaris stay in our farm in our traditional farm kota – a circular log building in which people sleep and eat around a cosy central fireplace. There are set sleeping spaces for 7 which can be extended to 10 for family groups and the kota has both underfloor heating and electricity. NB: An overnight stay in a wilderness cabin might be possible, subject to availability. Even if you happen to be staying in a wilderness cabin, you can leave your extra kit in the farm kota.

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. We will then introduce you to the basics about putting together your team and you will no doubt feel pretty comfortable with this by the end of your stay. 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.

You will cover c. 70km overall with your dogs during the two days of mushing. How many km you do on each day will depend to a degree on which cabin you are staying in and what else is going on at the farm. Generally the first day is slightly shorter (c.30km vs c. 40km) than the second, although occasionally we might flip the routes around (and maybe even ask if you can come in slightly earlier) if it makes sense with the overall bookings.

Once you have started mushing you will see quite soon that despite the best possible planning, you are interacting with animals and not machines and the guides may have to move a few dogs around to ensure that all of the teams are moving at approximately the same speed (generally because of unpredictable client sizes!)).



Most standard-sized groups of 6 clients are led by both a guide on a lead dogsled, and a guide on a snowmobile since this makes road crossings far safer. The snowmobile guide generally moves increasingly further away as you gain in confidence and ability although they obviously have the option to remain closer to the teams as a safety measure if it is extremely cold or the conditions are very difficult for the dogs. 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.

We will stop along the way for rest stops and snacks or lunch as applicable on each day's route. Where we stop – i.e. whether in the open or in a wilderness cabin – depends a little on both the weather and the last-minute route choice, since we base the routes we select around factors like reindeer movements (so as to disturb them as little as possible), water on lakes, availability of cabins etc. For the sake of expediency, we will generally have hot soup and snacks at lunch and wait for the larger meals at the start and close of each day. 80% of our tours visit our nearest wilderness lakeside cabin as part of their first or second day's tour and it is a nice place to take a break, reward (if necessary) and enjoy some cuddle time with the dogs.



If you are staying in our traditional farm kota overnight, you will generally be sledging along all of our favourite trails near to the farm on the first day and your lunch will be in a wilderness cabin which we pre-warm when it is very cold. 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. We do hope that you are sufficiently interested to at least walk either some of the old retirees who aren't getting to run any more, or maybe a crazy pup needing handling and a fun time on the agility course. The dogs adore the attention. And, 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.

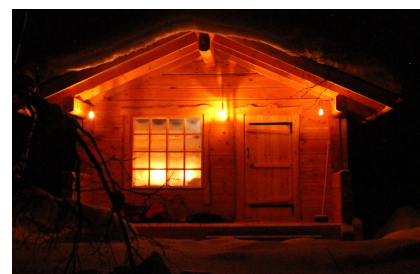
As a general rule, the dogs tend to get fed before the clients, since that way the rest of the guides can go home after a very long day and the dogs can maximise, also, their rest (dogs coming first will be a theme of your stay). However, if it looks like it will take us too long to get started with 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.



Later 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.

Palojoki Wilderness Cabin

If you are staying in our wilderness 'trappers' cabin beside the Palojoeki river on the edge of the Tarvantovaara Wilderness Area, or in either Näkkälä, Galdotievo or Ounasjäarvi, there are a smaller variety of things going on which you can be involved in, but we will definitely need your help in these places to organise the dogs, feed them and to help to get them settled down for the night. At least a couple of dogs with less thick fur will also no doubt need to stay inside with you for cuddles. All of the accommodation options fit 6 people comfortably, 8 at a squeeze.



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 into the heart of the wilderness.

DAY 2



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.

Once you return to the farm after your final day of mushing, 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. If you thought feeding your own team of dogs took a while, each day, 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.

