



**HETTA  
HUSKIES**  
LAPLAND, ARCTIC FINLAND

### **3-DAY TAIGA TOUR**



### **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION**

## DAY BY DAY INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR 3-DAY JOURNEY

### DAY 1 – INTRODUCTORY SAFARI DAY AND INTRODUCTION TO LIFE AS A MUSER

This 3-day safari 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 on your first night and 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 second night. By the third day, you 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.

Your mushing adventure will start at 10am on the first day so please arrive promptly. We are quite easy to find – just 4km from the centre of Hetta. FYI: Even though you have chosen not to stay with us before the start of the tour, please let us know where you are intending to stay since we have sometimes had delays caused by people trying to stay too far afield and we need to be able to plan for potential issues (eg, potential flight delays, if you are arriving into Enontekiö that morning). If you are staying locally, it might be worth asking if they can keep your extra bags until the end of the tour.



Once everyone taking part in the tour has gathered at the farm, it is time for introductions, a basic check of your kit and clothing and the issuing of any arctic kit needed before heading down to join others on your tour who may have chosen to stay on the farm the previous night. We will take all of your bags down to the farm with you (in pulks if need be) since you will be staying in the kota for the first night. The farm kota is a traditional circular log building with a central fireplace over which we cook the evening meals. 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.

You will have time to sort through all of your kit in the evening and, hopefully, to leave some of it behind. 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 – and hopefully, to be convinced, after having mushed for a day - that you can leave quite a bit of it behind. There will be a large cold-store for your bulky items and small electronics can be left behind in boxes in the kota itself.

With all of the logistics and a basic farm tour out of the way, 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. 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 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 generally be in the (pre-warmed on cold days) wilderness cabin shown and the trails you will be riding along, close to base, are some of our favourites.



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 retirees 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

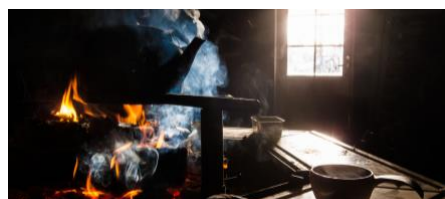
Our three-day safari route is not set in stone. We make the final route choice based on factors like recent snow-fall, the condition of the lakes, the fitness of the group, cabin availability and the number of daylight hours, each day. Although there are many route options, the safari experience for 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 larger 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 Palojöki 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.

## DAY 2 - 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 Palojöki, 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 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 a very vibrant reindeer herding area and there are reindeer separation fences just 3km from your cabin. The village 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 3 – 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 collecting any that you had left behind.

At that point it will be time to head back to your hotel for a well-deserved meal and sauna. Most clients really enjoy hanging out together at the end of their trip and exchanging photos, etc. However, if you haven't quite gotten your doggy fill, you are more than welcome to continue to help on the farm in the evening!

Be warned, however! 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 also that each dog on the farm gets the correct amount of food for his or her needs. Whichever option you choose, don't forget to try ice hole swimming on this, your final evening, if you have not managed to do so before! There are two or three places you can do this through most of the winter in Hetta.

