

Karelian Wilderness Safari

7 days / 6 nights/ 5 days dog sledding



The vast forests of northern Karelia are a perfect place to experience the thrill of driving sleddogs. Lieksa in particular is well known for its good mushing possibilities. Not only are many national sled-dog championships held here, but also Finland's only long-distance race is held here.

Our trails give you the opportunity to experience all the highlights of this amazing area in one week. During the trip we pass through southern Finland's biggest national park, use the bears-path trail, visit the actual Finnish/Russian border and pass along the beautiful Ruunaa Rapids, as well as many sites of historical interest. It really is one of the most complete tours in Finland. The daily distances vary from 20-50 km. For the duration of the tour we will travel through the taiga forests, along frozen streams and rivers and over wide open bogs and swamps. We will be happy to explain the intriguing history of Karelia, its many wars, interesting visitors and fascinating nature. The nights will be spent in lakeside wilderness cabins, where we can enjoy a well earned sauna, dinner by candle light and some good cabin stories.

During the tour you will drive your own enthusiastic dog team for which you are responsible for the entire tour. This means that the feeding, cleaning, petting and massaging are all part of your job as a trainee musher.



Sunday:

Arrival in Joensuu and transfer to Hopealampi cabin. Introduction to your hosts, dinner and a well deserved nights rest.

Monday:

After a hearty breakfast we equip you with the necessary gear and head off to the kennel to introduce ourselves to the dogs, meet our guide for the week, and to clean the dog-yard. Then there is an extensive instruction in how to drive a dog-sled, some basic sled-dog psychology and how to harness the dogs. Before noon we leave on a day tour of about 30 km and have a nice lunch around the camp-fire in the forest. We return to the kennel, to mull over our experiences, enjoy a coffee and some of Veronika's excellent cooking. Overnight at the Hopealampi cabin.

Tuesday:

After breakfast and cleaning the yard we pack our sledges with the gear for the following days. Well prepared for the tour ahead, we leave on our first day of the trip. Today's trip takes us through Patvinsuo, the biggest national park in southern Finland. Well known for its scenic beauty and the many different types of swamp represented within its borders. Lunch is around a campfire in the centre of the park, close to the Nälämä river where the first beavers were introduced to the area back in 1945. After lunch we continue through the park and finally arrive at our destination, Väärälampi cabin. Once arrived there are lots of chores to be done. Dogs have to be fed, water carried, saunas heated and firewood chopped. Once our chores are done we can relax, have a sauna and enjoy some delicious Finnish home cooking.

Wednesday:

After our morning chores we depart on our trip along the "Bears-path". Our route follows winding trails and meandering rivers. We have a camp-fire lunch at the Valkealampi battle site, where in 1939-1940 during the winter-war, the Russians advanced along the nearby road. The rest of the day we continue along the bears-path and finally arrive at the Uramo cabin. After the evening's chores we enjoy a sauna and a hearty meal.

Thursday:

Today our trail takes us to the Ruunaa Lake and the Ruunaa nature reserve, which is the biggest roadless wilderness area of southern Finland, and home to a small herd of rare wild forest reindeer. We use some of the border guards' trails and if our licences are approved will actually visit the real Russian/Finnish border inside the restricted area and strict nature reserve. Due to the fact that the trail is inside the restricted border zone it is an area only visited by border guards. Only very few human eyes see this area. After our visit to the border we have lunch on the shores of Ruunaa lake and proceed to a wilderness cabin in the Ruunaa wilderness recreation area. After the afternoon's chores we enjoy our sauna and meal.

Friday:

Our trail today meanders through the Ruunaa area, following the shore ice along the Ruunaa rapids and river. After leaving the Ruunaa area we pass through the small village of Hatunkyla on our way back to the kennel. Upon our return we store our equipment and sledges, feed our hardworking dogs and settle in for a well-deserved meal. After saying goodbye we take the short trip back to Hopealampi cabin. Our beds will be especially pleasant this night.

Saturday:

After breakfast it is time to say our 'farewells' and you will be able to 'face the world' with renewed energy! Transfer back to Joensuu airport.

Departures weekly from: **15th January to 25th March 2012** (Sunday to Saturday)

Cost: £1595 per person **Group size:** min 1 person, maximum 6 persons

Included:

*Transfers from/to Joensuu airport, full board, 5 days of dog-driving (1 day-tour and a 4 day tour), accommodation 3 nights in wilderness cabins, and 3 nights in Hopealampi Cabin in a double room or a bunk in the main room, equipment and thermal outer-clothing and boots, 3-5 dog-team, sled and guiding in English/Dutch/German.

Not included:

Flights, travel insurance, alcoholic drinks, personal expenses, souvenirs. You may take a **little** alcohol with you. Alcohol in Finland is very expensive so it is best to buy before you go.

*Restricted border zone:

To enter the restricted border zone we need a licence. We will require your full name, date of birth and ID number. We will ask for these upon arrival.

Please note that this is what we hope to achieve but is subject to change due to weather conditions, trail access and client ability.

***Transfers are from Joensuu airport at 17.00. Return to Joensuu for the 11.00 flight. For other times there will be an extra charge of £50 per person each way.**

