

Snow Safari in Lapland

Feb 18 – 25, 2023

Can you say Aurora Borealis three times fast? A glistening Arctic kingdom of snow and ice awaits for what will be your coolest vacation ever! This trip to the Top of the World is one that AFS clients constantly beg us for a repeat but this time, we're doing it even cooler with off-the-charts scenery and large fun for what is truly an Arctic Disneyland for adults to defrost your hearts.

You'll witness the mesmerizing Northern Lights dancing across snowscapes as only part of this bucket list trip that also includes snowmobiling, dogsledding, and woodland saunas. The frosted fairyland that is Finland's Lapland is truly a Winter Wonderland. It's the land of thrilling escapades in the snow with eye-popping scenery in an untamed wilderness with nature in its purest form. Winter in the Arctic Circle is high season here as it becomes a playground of adventure. Thermal suits are provided to ensure you'll stay warm and cozy while taking in the pristine scenery that was the basis of Disney's acclaimed movie "Frozen." Our past 5 AFS groups loved it all. We fly north from Helsinki to Ivalo, the ultimate destination for those who truly want to experience winter fun. Our home is the unparalleled Kakslauttanen Arctic Resort, with its stunning glass igloos that allow you to stargaze and watch dancing Northern lights from your own bed! These are the original epic igloos that other properties try to copy but can't compare.

Our Snow Safari begins with an adrenaline rush by donning snowsuits and zipping through the shimmering snow blanketed arctic forest on snowmobiles. The kid in you is sure to come out as we visit with the true Father Christmas and his elves. And just when you thought you couldn't have enough fun, you'll meet dozens of happy huskies at the Husky Farm for dogsledding across frozen rivers and fields. You've never breathed air so crisp and clean. Enjoy Lappish cuisines, a reindeer experience, horse sleigh rides, snowshoeing and more. Each evening on our Arctic Adventure, we have the chance to see those magnificent Northern Lights as they shimmer across the night sky. We'll return to uber-cool Helsinki and explore this ultra-modern Finnish capital. For more diversity, we then ferry to the country of Estonia to explore the fairytale-like Medieval capital of Tallinn. You'll wander the cobblestone streets of this distinctly Eastern European city and feel you have been transported to another world. Don't miss this AFS Arctic Blast, limited to just 24 people. Lapland is a costly destination, but we negotiated a great price for you. Awaken your child-like spirit of adventure and exploration. Come join us to witness a magical place like no other. It's a once in a lifetime Snow Safari you'll treasure forever!

Our Glorious AFS Itinerary

Feb 18 Fly USA to Helsinki. Plenty of airline choices. Air and trip details coming soon and AFS Trip Tips.

Feb 19 – Arrive Helsinki Tervetuloa Suomeen! Welcome to Finland! We arrive at Helsinki's ultra-modern Vantaa Airport in the morning and head to our hotel, Scandic Helsinki which is at the airport next to Terminal 2 and can be reached through a partly covered walkway. So convenient for any air arrival times! The Finnish capital of Helsinki is known for its great mixture of neo-classical buildings, orthodox style churches and chic bar and restaurant scene. Alvar Aalto, a world-renowned Finnish architect and designer has contributed to much of the functionalistic architecture in Helsinki that is loved and hated by so many. This is a walking city with heated sidewalks in the main pedestrian area! There's so much to do in this cool capital, you may want to extend your trip pre-or post. Your afternoon is free but this evening we will get introduced to your fellow group members followed by a Welcome Dinner.

Overnight at hotel Scandic Helsinki Airport (1 night) D

Feb 20 – Fly to Ivalo Lapland! After breakfast, transfer to Airport for our morning to our flight north to magical Kakslauttanen in Saariselkä arctic wilderness. We'll go directly to our magical Kakslauttanen Arctic Resort so we can check out our Glass Igloos! Years of research went into this marvel of development on these futuristic domes, the coolest igloos on the planet. Polar nights are magical here, one of the world's best places to watch the Northern Lights! These sparkling domes provide a unique opportunity to admire the Northern Lights and the millions of stars of the crystal-clear winter sky while enjoying a comfortable room temperature of about 70°F. Built from a special thermal glass, the temperature inside the Igloo always stays at a normal level. It also prevents the glass from not getting white frosted, hence keeping the view clear even when the temperature outside drops to under -20°F. (We recommend that you bring only the essentials to the igloos because of their size. While there is a toilet and sink, the showers and saunas are shared and nearby.) On arrival you'll be briefed with a presentation of activities here like a Reindeer Safari with herders, horse-drawn sleigh rides, ice fishing, the Sami experience, planetarium and more. A very Finnish thing to do is to enjoy an evening sauna. Finns take saunas seriously for the healing warmth and brings both physically and spiritually. There are 3 different smoke saunas here, one is the largest in the world holding over 100 bathers at a time, each with a fireplace and dressing rooms. Afterwards, you can take a dip in the cold spring water pool for total rejuvenation. There is an Ice Bar and 2 restaurants offering local Lappish cuisines of the freshest fish, salmon, reindeer and local delicacies. Also see the new art gallery and gift shops for local handicrafts. This evening we will depart for Aurora Hunting on a 2-hour adventure to see the Northern lights. Seeing these dancing colorful lights casting their magical glow across the Arctic sky is always an unforgettable sight. There's no guarantees with nature but studies reveal that late February to early March are your best chances. Dinner is served at our hotel. Lapland Overnight: Kakslauttanen Arctic Resort B,D

Feb 21 – Snowmobile Safari + Visit to Santa's home After breakfast, head out on a thrilling morning Snowmobile Safari through the arctic forest. The best way to see the fell landscape in Lapland is by zipping across the frozen landscape with a snowmobile. We'll be taken to the activity location and provided with instructions as well as thermal outfits to keep us toasty. Each snowmobile sits two with one driving and other on the back, but feel free to swap drivers halfway. There is an option to have the snowmobile all for yourself, or if you can choose to ride in the back of a sleigh (for extra cost). Head into the wilderness with a bit of adrenaline and get immersed into the arctic nature. After the ride, we'll have some hot juice and a Finnish treat together before heading back to Kakslauttanen.

Later in the afternoon, it's time to drop in on Santa. Young or old, a visit not to miss! Mrs. Claus will greet us by the reindeer fence for great photos and then take us into Santa's cozy and beautiful crafted home where guests can experience Christmas around the year! Meeting Santa in person is a moment that will bring out the kid in all of us. Selfies are a must! We head to the impressively decorated Celebration House to enjoy a hot drink. Along the way you might see some elves as well! Our dinner will be back at our hotel. Overnight: Kakslauttanen Arctic Resort B,D

Feb 22 – Husky Safari After breakfast, get ready for today's Husky Safari – an unforgettable journey through breathtaking winter scenery. Mushing is a must here. These dogs love to run! Again, we will be provided with thermal outfits at the husky farm. Then it is time to meet the friendly dogs who are eagerly waiting in front of the sleds. Husky dogs can't wait to get going! You'll hear them barking in anticipation as you arrive. Our guide will give instructions on how to stop, turn and drive the husky sled pulled by the team of dogs. The sled is for two people unless you wish to have your own alone (for extra cost). One person is seated in the sleigh while the other is standing and mushing in the back, you can swap drivers halfway. You will enjoy riding in the

wintery forest as much as the dogs! Then we return to the farm and thank our dogs for our adventure together, it's time for a hot drink and some husky stories. The rest of the day at leisure. There's plenty of choices for your free time at the resort like the Ice Pool challenge, more snowmobiling and horseback riding through a snowy forest. Buses run regularly to nearby Saariselkä with its Ski Center and Finnish spas. There's miles of Nordic cross-country skiing trails and lessons, tobogganing and snow tubing. Overnight: Kakslautanen Arctic Resort B,D

Feb 23 – Farewell Lapland, Hello Helsinki! After breakfast, we head back to the Ivalo airport our Finnair flight 10 to 11:45 AM back to Helsinki where we will enjoy a 3-hour guided City Tour. This comprehensive tour will introduce us to the most important and interesting parts of Helsinki, such as the Helsinki Cathedral at the Senate Square, the Presidential Palace, City Hall, the Parliament building, Finlandia Hall, the Opera House, the Helsinki Music Centre, and Central Library Oodi. Our hotel is the Crown Plaza Helsinki Hesperia is in a great location with plenty nearby to see and do. So much to explore here... Book a Taste of Helsinki Foodie Tour, Instagram Tour or the Red Rib Survivor Experience if you like! There're sauna tours, museums, heated outdoor pools, ice bar bars and more. Helsinki Overnight: Crowne Plaza Helsinki Hesperia (2 nights). B

Feb 24 – A Day trip to Tallinn This morning transfer to Helsinki harbor to embark on a 2-hour ferry ride across the Baltic Sea to captivating Tallinn. The medieval capital of Estonia, the walled city of Tallin is the trendiest part of this region and a world away from the modern sites of Helsinki, Stockholm, Oslo, or Copenhagen. We walk the historic old town, a UNESCO world heritage site with photo ops around every corner. See grand merchant houses, 13th century Gothic Townhall, Saint Nicholas church, Parliament and more. Streets are lined with cozy cafés for special peasant local cuisines and shops filled with Estonian treasures. Prices are so good here, it's where the Finns come to shop. Tallinn delights everyone! We'll return to Helsinki in the evening by ferry. Overnight: Crowne Plaza Helsinki Hesperia B

Feb 25 – Depart For USA Today you will transfer to Helsinki Airport to catch your return flight for home.