

Trip report from Julia Martin, March 2017

Lappy Review

We flew in to Stockholm Arlanda and camped out in a restaurant / bar overlooking the train station waiting for our sleeper train to Gallivare and watching the world go by.

The train journey was more enjoyable than we thought it would be. Watching the snowy landscapes flash by from a very comfortable bunk.

At Gallivare we were met by the very welcoming Walter, who transported us to the lodge (or Lappi as we like to call it).

On arrival we were offered breakfast, even though this was past serving time, and everybody was very welcoming.

We were provided with thermal overalls and boots, although for the most part our own ski clothing was sufficiently warm. We were also provided with snowshoes and a recommendation of walks that we could take. We tried out the kick sleds which are more difficult than they look as you are pushing yourself through snow, however we found a small hill which we were able to glide down.

Our favourite activity was the ice fishing, this equipment is also provided within the package, but we took the guided option as this was something that we had not tried before. Franziska, our guide, (and the owner), taught us how to drill the holes and soon had us working away with a shovel and auger. We were lucky enough to catch a couple of fish (almost 3!) and it was nice that all at the lodge got to hear about it from Franziska, she was as happy as we were at our success.

We had also booked a snowmobile experience, this again was with Franziska and another couple staying at the lodge. It is amazing how fast these things go, and Franziska provided opportunities for everyone to unleash and "put their foot down".

We also went out on a couple of snowshoe walks with Franziska, one of these was after dinner in the hope of sighting the Northern Lights. Although we did not see them, this did not dampen the experience, we had no expectations and it was not the focus of our holiday, but had we seen them this would have been the icing on the cake.

What is especially nice about Franziska is that she enjoys the activities as much as her guests.

We were provided with 3 delicious meals a day, the chef (Benkt) was outstanding, and we very much miss his cooking. After a morning out in the cold it was a real treat to come back for a cooked lunch. Benkt also spent time with the guests, discussing the meal he was making and awaiting our feedback after the meal had been devoured.

We also enjoyed our little chats with Haneul who was working at the lodge whilst travelling. He helped out in the restaurant and built the fire each night ready for all to enjoy whilst having dinner.

Prior to the evening meal we would sit and play cards in the restaurant area, sipping a refreshing "acquavit cocktail" which Haneul would make for us each evening.

Franziska and her team like to create a "family" environment, and all are happy to come and chat to you about the day's activities or life in general.

Meal times are set so everybody sits down together, although you do have your own table, this creates a nice atmosphere and you have a sense that you are all one large group.

We very much enjoyed our time at the lodge, we had not tried a holiday like this before and so were unsure what it would be like. You can do as little or as much as you like, and for us it was a time to relax, chill out and recharge our batteries, whilst enjoying the

beautiful and peaceful surroundings, and falling into the odd snow covered ditch. We found it is so much more relaxing than a ski holiday as you can actually enjoy walking in the snow, giggle when you suddenly lose your leg in a foot of snow, and wish you were 7 years old again. Enjoying so much fresh air also ensures that you will sleep well and be fully refreshed for the next day's adventure.

At the end of our stay, Walter drove us to Kiruna for our flight out and an added bonus, we got to see some Reindeer crossing the road. We spent our last two nights in Sweden in Stockholm and after walking through the busy streets, peering into busy restaurants (on a Friday evening) looking for somewhere to eat (and ending up in McDonalds), it dawned on us that we were "un-Lappi" and wanted to go back.

This was a wonderful trip and I don't think we realised until after we had left that it was one of our most favourite holidays.

At the lodge there was an igloo near our room, from reviews I have seen, I believe there may be an option to build one of these yourself, it looks as though it would certainly be fun to try, and I expect it is not as easy as you might think but what a good excuse to go back!

Before the trip, Nature Travels sent us a very useful document providing general information on travel, contact details and a packing list which was a great help.

Thank you to all at Nature Travels for putting this trip together.