



Essential packing list

- Passport (see separate section for visa and passport requirements).
- Final travel letter – this contains vital information and your emergency contact numbers for the UK and Finland.
- Airline tickets.
- Trip dossier – itineraries are subject to change and the final schedule will be confirmed to you on arrival at your destination.
- Travel insurance policy.
- Full driving licence – If you wish to drive a snowmobile then you will need to take your licence with you. If you have a new style licence then you should ensure that you take both the paper and photo-card elements, the older paper licences are accepted. Please also see separate section regarding snowmobiles.
- Money or credit card – Most major credit cards are accepted. Avoid depending on American Express or Diners Club. Cash points are not generally available to you in our destinations.
- Glasses/Contact Lenses if required– we advise people who wear glasses to wear one day contact lenses if possible. This is not essential but advisable.
- Toiletries.
- Chargers for cameras and phones, as well as travel plug adapter (Northern Europe socket)

Clothing – the essentials

What to travel in:

You should travel in comfortable clothes and sensible shoes with a good grip. If you have access to a hat and gloves in your hand luggage this is advisable. We recommend dressing for a cold winter day in the UK and having a warm jacket available to you on arrival. Generally you only need to cross from the airport terminal to the transfer vehicle but you should be prepared.

What we provide:

There is no need to buy lots of expensive cold weather clothing before your holiday. The following items will be provided for you for the duration of your stay in all destinations in Finland **NB: except Kakslauttanen Igloo Hotel where clothing is provided for activities only (you can add clothing at Kakslauttanen for a supplement) and during our Autumn holidays where guests should take warm clothes and will be provided with winter clothing should it be required.**

Our suppliers cater for all shapes and sizes from small children through to very large adults.

Thermal overalls: These overalls are the ultimate in insulated outdoor gear. They are big, cosy and designed specifically for the Arctic. You will be given either a one piece suit or a two piece set to wear. This is your outer clothing under which all your additional layers will go so they tend to be fairly loose fitting.

Winter boots: The boots are large, well insulated and very sturdy. They are generally worn slightly larger than normal as you need to allow air to move around the boots as well as needing ample room for thick socks.

Mittens or gloves: Our partners have large, warm gloves available for you to borrow for the activities. Generally these are mittens as they keep your hands warmer than finger gloves.

Hat: Although in many cases clients like to take their own hats they are available for you to borrow should you wish.

Woollen socks: These big woollen socks provide excellent insulation and they are generally loose fitting to allow for the circulation of warm air. You may like to take your own but they will be available for you to borrow.





Country Dossier - Finland

What you need to take

The equipment provided should keep you comfortably warm however you should enhance your clothing with the following items:

Thermal underwear

Forget sartorial elegance and invest in some thermal long johns and long sleeved tops to wear under your overalls. You should take more than one set if you are travelling for a week as you will wear them every day.

Sweaters

Wool is the best material. We recommend wearing one or two such garments in sub-zero temperatures. They give you added flexibility should temperatures drop or rise.

Fleece jacket

A fleece is an excellent addition to your winter clothing and provides excellent flexibility and warmth.

Tracksuit bottoms

These are ideal for relaxing in the evenings and an excellent additional layer for under your overalls and over your thermals.

Socks

Again, wool is the best material. You should take several pairs both thin and thick.

Mittens

You will be provided with large mittens for activities but you may want to take your own pair. Mittens are recommended over gloves and ideally you should have access to them in your hand luggage.

Hat

Hats are available to borrow for activities however you may wish to take your own. You should take something that covers your ears fully and provides protection from the wind should you require it.

Glove liners and hand warmers

Thin glove liners can provide an excellent extra layer of warmth on really cold days as they fit easily underneath mittens. Hand warmers can be excellent for added comfort especially during long safaris.

Sturdy shoes or boots

You will be provided with winter boots for activities but we recommend taking alternatives that are suitable for snowy/icy conditions. Shoes or boots with good grip are essential for the icy conditions (you may want to consider adding some additional shoe grips). To save on space you may want to travel in these.

Thermal neck warmer

A neck warmer (fleece tube or similar) is excellent for keeping out the cold and keeping your neck and face warm.

Balaclava

Freshly washed balaclavas are often provided by our activity providers but you may like to consider taking your own. It's a personal thing!

Head torch

These can be very useful especially if you want to be out Aurora hunting. If you are staying in a wilderness cabin then they are also particularly useful. Ensure you have enough battery life or spare batteries with you.

Slippers and warm comfy clothes

These are excellent for lounging around in after a day of winter activities. They can also be very useful in wilderness cabins after a day on the trail.





Swimwear

Some destinations have swimming pools so be sure to take your swimwear. Although swimwear is generally not worn in saunas in Scandinavia we find many clients like to take theirs with them to wear.

Ski goggles

Although not essential these are especially useful during husky safaris and if you wear glasses or contact lenses. They provide excellent protection from the cold, snow and wind should you need it. These are available to borrow for husky safaris.

Small rucksack

You should take a small rucksack to carry any extra clothing during activities and is especially important during overnight safaris.

Sun glasses

The glare of the sun on snow can be blinding and so you should ensure that you have a good pair of sunglasses that are practical for the activities. In December and January this is less of a problem as the sun is rarely above the horizon during this period.

Suntan lotion and lip balm

You need to take these products with you but you should always take the advice of your guide before applying them. At very low temperatures guides will recommend the best course of protection as products may freeze and it can be dangerous to have these on the skin. High factor sun cream which is waterproof is best. Those which are designed for skiing tend to be ideal as they are designed for doing activities in cold and snowy conditions.

Tissues

These are very useful during safaris, as are wet wipes (although unless you keep them close to your body they will freeze!)

Camera

- You won't want to miss out on the photo opportunities so here are a few hints!
- ensure you have plenty of film or memory card space before you set off.
- make sure you remember your battery charger and a travel adapter.
- ensure you have spare batteries as there will be nowhere to charge anything once out on the trails.
- batteries perform poorly in cold temperatures so take multiple batteries and store the spares in a warm place (a pocket next to your body is ideal). NiCad and Li ion have better performance characteristics than alkaline batteries but are still affected. There are some restrictions on carrying certain Li ion batteries onboard aircraft. Please see the IATA website for current and up to date information:
http://www.iata.org/whatwedo/cargo/dangerous_goods/pages/lithium_batteries.aspx
- See our separate section on photographing the Northern Lights as this requires specialist equipment.

Towel – (holidays including overnight safaris only)

If you are travelling on overnight safaris then you will generally need to take your own towel with you – a travel towel is ideal for space saving.

Flask– (holidays including overnight safaris only)

You may want to take a thermos flask so that you can take drinks with you on the trail if the guides suggest it.





Medical history and advice

You must inform us at the time of booking if any of your party has disability, medical or behavioural conditions which could affect their participation in the holiday or other people on the holiday.

We cannot be held responsible for any incident or event arising from your failure to do this.

Group sizes and guides

Group sizes detailed in our brochure and online are always approximate. For tailor made programmes the group sizes for each activity will vary but the number of guides is always adjusted accordingly.

Your guides for the week are all qualified, highly experienced outdoor enthusiasts who are all exceptionally knowledgeable about the area in which they live and the activities they guide. The feedback from clients is always fantastic and the guides' passion for their work seems endless.

The guides' main role is to make sure that everybody enjoys the experience as much as possible but also to ensure the whole groups comfort and safety. Their word is final in respect of any decisions regarding the cancellation or duration of an activity on safety grounds.

Please see separate document with regards to safety which is uploaded into your online account at the time of booking.

Experience and fitness

The activities included in your itinerary are all designed for beginners. Full instruction and tuition are provided for all activities and you do not need to have any previous experience. For example you need never have set foot on a pair of skis of any kind before a cross country ski tour.

We have people of all ages and fitness levels taking part in our holidays.

In general you do not need a high level of fitness to participate in the holidays as in many cases dogs or snowmobiles do the work for you. We do highlight certain itineraries where an increased level of fitness is required – these tend to be on our very active holidays or during multi day safaris.

You should understand that days in the cold can be very tiring especially when taking part in activities and so a better level of fitness may increase your enjoyment of the holiday.

If you have any questions at all with regards to fitness levels please get in touch and talk to one of our experts.

You must inform us at the time of booking if any of your party has disability, medical or behavioural conditions which could affect their participation in the holiday or other people on the holiday.





Snowmobiles

Driving a snowmobile is very similar to hiring a car and Finnish road law applies. The driver must possess a full driving licence and must take this with them on holiday (old style paper licences are accepted and if you have a new photo card licence you must take both parts with you).

Safari organisers hold the driver of a snowmobile responsible in case of any damage to the vehicle. We would advise that extra care should be taken by the driver.

On all holidays that include a snowmobile safari you are liable for any damage caused to the machine.

For major damages (approx £500 and over) you will be covered by the owner's insurance and will only be charged the policy excess. In some cases safari organisers may require credit card details to be kept on file to cover this. Please confirm any details with the safari operator directly before departing on a safari if you have any questions or would like full details.

Full details can be found in our safety document which is uploaded to your online account at the time of booking, it is vital that you read this information.

Booking activities locally

In almost all of our destinations you can book and pay for additional activities locally. Please note that we cannot be held responsible for any injury or loss that occurs through any activities that are booked in your destination (see our terms and conditions for further details).

Booking your own flights – Cancellation disclaimer

If you have chosen to book your own flights then you should not finalise any arrangements until we have confirmed that you are able to do so. We will write to you once your trip is 'guaranteed to run'. In other words, once it has reached the minimum number of bookings necessary for us to operate the holiday and everything has been completely confirmed. When the trip is 'guaranteed to run' you will be free to make your flight arrangements. Before you book your flights you should check whether airport transfers are included in your trip. If they are then please phone our office for airport transfer times. Once your flights are booked, please send us a copy of your detailed flight itinerary. Please be aware that most of the cheaper airline tickets available for sale on the internet or from low cost carriers are non-refundable in the case of cancellation. For this reason we strongly advise you check the rules of the ticket when you make a flight booking and check the limitations of any cancellation insurance policy you have.

We cannot be held liable, in the unlikely eventuality that we should be forced to cancel your trip, for losses incurred relating to any flight booking you have made yourself.





Climate and daylight hours

Northern Finland does get affected by severe cold weather during the winter months. Temperatures can be extremely low and if you visit in winter you should come prepared for these harsh conditions. Temperatures depicted are for Kittila.

Daylight hours in Finland do decrease greatly in the winter months especially during December and January (during these months some activities may be operated in the dark). You will find that dawn and dusk are extended and even during the shortest days you will experience around 3-4 hours of this unique Polar light. From mid March and into April daylight hours rapidly increase. The daylight hours depicted are for Kittila.

Local time

Finland's time zone is GMT + 2.00hrs, so if you are in the UK count 2 hours ahead.

The Northern Lights

The sun is reaching the peak of its 11 year solar activity cycle (Solar Maximum) which basically means that the next couple of winters will provide an exceptional opportunity to see the Northern Lights. Full details of the science behind the Aurora and the importance of Solar Maximum can be found on our website and in our brochure.

The Northern Lights are a natural phenomenon which requires certain atmospheric and weather conditions to combine. **Even in such a promising season we can NEVER guarantee a sighting of the Aurora. You should always travel in hope rather than expectation of seeing them.**

Aurora Alerts

In some of our destinations guests are provided with an Aurora Alert. Essentially these are text message systems which alert you to any possible activity. The alerts generally operate until around 1am in the morning but it is best to confirm with your guides exactly what time a specific alert may operate until as times can vary.

These alerts are designed as an aid to Aurora hunting and although every effort will be made to issue an alert should the conditions seem conducive to a display, things can change very quickly and so you should not rely solely upon them and should keep an eye on the sky yourself.





How to photograph the Northern Lights

This is designed to be a basic overview and an aid regarding photographing the Northern Lights and it is not a comprehensive guide. If you would like to have detailed tuition then we recommend that you look at one of our dedicated Aurora photography holidays.

What you need

- D-SLR camera with manual focus and a suitable camera bag (should provide protection from humidity and should be breathable). Read the handbook and make sure you know how to adjust the ISO and zoom settings.
- Sturdy and fully adjustable tripod
- Spare batteries and memory cards (take plenty of both)
- Remote shutter/cable shutter (not essential) but highly recommended
- Wide angle lens (10-24mm) with fast aperture 1.4-3.5 (not essential).

Taking a picture

- You should find somewhere well away from all artificial light pollution – if you are travelling on an Aurora Zone holiday your evening excursions will help you to find the perfect spots.
- You will need a long exposure time to get an image of the Lights. Good exposure times for this are 15 - 20 seconds per picture (the tripod will help you eliminate shaking of the camera - you can't hold the camera by hand and a remote shutter is also great to eliminate any movement), this will help prevent star trails on the images.
- Set your camera to manual exposure, your lens to its widest aperture and the focus set to the infinity range. Remember it will be dark so you'll need a torch to see what you are doing.
- Turn on the noise reduction settings and set the white balance to Automatic on digital cameras.
- Try a variety of exposure settings, night photography is very difficult so perhaps practice before you leave home with various settings.
- Keep batteries as close to the body as possible when on activities to maintain power in the cold temperatures as they do not perform well or hold charge in low temperatures. We recommend carrying many spares and keeping them close to your body for warmth.

Currency and foreign exchange

The currency in Finland is the Euro. There are no cash points available in our destinations and so we recommend either pre ordering Euros in the UK or simply using a credit or debit card. The hotels accept most major credit cards in payment for items charged to your room (do not rely on American Express or Diner's Club cards). You should not rely on travellers' cheques.

Since 15 June 2007 new legislation on the controls of cash entering or leaving the EU applies in all Member States. Any person entering or leaving the EU will have to declare the cash that they are carrying if this amounts to 10,000Euros or more; this includes cheques, travellers' cheques, money orders, etc. This will not apply to anyone travelling via the EU to a non-EU country, as long as the original journey started outside of the EU or to those travelling within the EU.

We recommend that you tell your bank or card issuer where you're going abroad and what dates you will be travelling. This avoids the embarrassment of having your card refused because your bank thinks you could be a fraudster yourself!





Travel insurance

We consider adequate and appropriate travel insurance to be a pre-requisite to booking. Details of our preferred travel insurance provider can be found on our website. If you decide not to purchase travel insurance from our preferred provider, you must ensure that any alternative insurance provides adequate medical and cancellation cover. Please bear in mind that not all alternative insurance policies may offer cover for the sort of activities you may be taking part in during your holiday.

Please read your policy details carefully and take them with you on holiday. It is your responsibility to ensure that the insurance cover you purchase is adequate for your particular needs. We do not check alternative insurance policies. The Activity Travel

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Travel safety

The safety of our clients is of paramount importance at all times in terms of activity participation and destination. We always follow the advice of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and should they advise against travel for any reason you will be contacted with a view to making alternative arrangements. We monitor this advice on a daily basis. To see this advice for yourself visit www.fco.gov.uk

Passports and Visas – Applicable to British Nationals Only

Passport validity

You must hold a valid passport to enter Finland. For stays of up to three months your passport must be valid for the proposed duration of your stay; you do not need any additional period of validity on your passport beyond this. However, it is always sensible to have a short period of extra validity on your passport in case of any unforeseen delays to your departure.

Entry requirements

Visas are not required to enter Finland. You need a passport to enter Finland. As a British national, you can stay as a visitor for three months.

UK Emergency Travel Documents are accepted for entry, airside transit and exit from Finland. If you lose your passport in Finland then contact the British Embassy in Helsinki on +358 (0)9 2286 5100.

Local laws and customs

There are no unusual local laws. As in the UK, Finns take drug offences seriously and you can expect a prison sentence. Khat is illegal in Finland and those who try to import it are summarily deported.





Health care information

If you are visiting Finland you should obtain a free European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) before leaving the UK. The EHIC is not a substitute for medical and travel insurance, but it entitles you to state provided medical treatment that may become necessary during your trip. Any treatment provided is on the same terms as Finnish nationals, so if a Finnish national is required to pay a fee towards their treatment, you would also have to pay the same fee. The EHIC will not cover medical repatriation, ongoing medical treatment or non-urgent treatment, so you should make sure you have adequate travel insurance and accessible funds to cover the cost of any medical treatment and repatriation.

For further information on vaccination requirements, health outbreaks and general disease protection and prevention call NHS

Direct on 0845 46 47.

If you need emergency medical assistance during your trip, dial 112 and ask for an ambulance. If you are referred to a medical facility for treatment you should contact your insurance/medical assistance company immediately.

Luggage

Please see your flight confirmation for your luggage allowance.

Suitcases are fine for travelling to Finland but when travelling on an overnight safari you will need to pack your belongings into a soft large backpack or bag which can be easily transported on a sled. Luggage should be kept to a minimum as space in the cabins is limited. Any items that you do not wish to take can be securely stored.

Airport information

Delays

If you are delayed or your flight is cancelled then the airline staff will make new transportation arrangements for you. Please contact your representative in Finland as soon as possible to make sure that they are aware of the situation and can make the necessary arrangements for you. The contact details will be provided on your final travel letter which you should take with you when you travel.

Helsinki Airport

If you are travelling on a holiday that is less than 7 nights in duration then you will change planes at Helsinki Airport (check your flight confirmation for details). The airport is easy to navigate and on arrival you will need to check the boards for your next departure gate. Generally you will have to walk between the two terminals and go through passport control. If you have mobility issues and would require assistance then please inform us at the time of booking as we must request this from the airlines. If you have a longer connection time then there are plenty of shops and restaurants to keep you occupied. All details of flight gates and departures will be found on the screens and are not announced.

Please make sure that on your flight from the UK to Helsinki you adjust your clock forward 2 hours as all flight times are local time.

Regional Finnish Airports

You will most likely be flying into Kittila, Rovaniemi, Ivalo or Kuusamo, see your confirmation for details. These airports are all very small. A representative/driver will be waiting for you at the airport, generally in baggage reclaim or the arrival area depending on the airport. They will in general be holding a sign with our company name or your name on but in some cases it may be the name of your destination. They will then direct you to your transfer vehicle. Please remember to take your luggage with you.





Local food

Please see your holiday details for the exact meal inclusions.

The food in Finland is generally good and you should get to sample local dishes such as salmon and reindeer throughout your stay. You should not expect Michelin star cuisine (you are in the Arctic after all) but we can guarantee the food will be filling and exactly what you need after your adventures outdoors. **It is vital that we are informed of any special dietary requirements at the time of booking. Vegetarians can be catered for and allergy free meals are generally no problem as long as we are notified at the time of booking.**

If dinner is included on the first night of your holiday and your flight arrival time is late in the evening you may arrive after the kitchen closes. In such circumstances a meal (typically a cold platter) is provided for you on arrival and will either be served in your rooms or in the restaurant.

Local costs

Costs in Scandinavia are generally higher than in the UK especially when it comes to alcoholic drinks and so you should budget accordingly.

Saunas and hot tubs

Saunas are an everyday part of life in Finland and in almost all of our destinations you will have access to a sauna during your stay. In most cases there are male and female saunas as swimwear is not typically worn and so you should be aware of this. It is possible (although not recommended) to wear swimwear in the saunas or a towel as an alternative should you not wish to go without.

This is also the case with some outdoor hot tubs.

Tipping guidelines

At your discretion you may wish to tip your guides at the end of your stay as a gesture of appreciation for their efforts during your holiday.

Useful words and phrases in Finnish

We always encourage our clients to respect the lives of local inhabitants by learning a few important words, hello, goodbye, please, thank you etc.

English

yes
No
Please
Thank you (very much)
Good Morning
Good Afternoon
Good night
Goodbye
How are you?
Fine thanks and you?
Do you speak English?

Finnish

kyllä
Ei
Ole hyvä
kiitos
Hyvää huomenta
Hyvää päivää
Hyvää yötä
Näkemiin
Mitä teille kuuluu?
Hyvää, kiitos. entä teille?
Puhutteko englantia?

