

Junior

Travel Reviews

A holiday to see the Northern Lights in Lapland - Family travel review

No Father Christmas? No problem... Writer Emma Oxley heads to Lapland with her family for an illuminating experience



Bjorklidden, Swedish Lapland

Our destination was **Swedish Lapland**, just 120 miles from the **North Pole**, to chase down the elusive **aurora borealis**, AKA the **Northern lights**, and we ended up with a snowy adventure more brilliant than the illuminated sky ever promised. Imagine 5 days whooshing down white slopes behind huskies, on snowmobiles, skis and toboggans.

Getting there

Auroras occur near the magnetic poles of the Earth, so the further north you travel in Europe the greater the chance of seeing the night display. While there are no direct flights to Swedish Lapland, the journey was surprisingly seamless given the remoteness of the destination. Flying out was just over five hours from London, with a one hour stop in Stockholm, then a short flight to Kiruna airport. From there it is a bus ride to **Bjorklidden**, which would have been about 45 minutes if we'd got on the right bus! As it happened, the lady pointed vaguely at a vehicle which we happily boarded, only to find ourselves on the way to the **Ice Hotel** - worth noting for an uber exclusive option. We were off-loaded in the snowbound road with everyone rolling their eyes at me, but managed to hitch back to the airport on another hotel bus, where we found our minivan had been hiding in front of the big bus. Once on our way we found the scenery so stunning we didn't actually care how long the transfer took: sparkling white landscapes dotted with bare black birch trees and the occasional sighting of a reindeer.



Bjorklidden, Swedish Lapland



A cabin

Hotel and Cabins

Bjorkliden is a remote self-contained mountain resort with every facility you could need for a Lapland adventure. We chose to stay in one of the cabins that fan out from the **Fjallet hotel** and were delighted with the plan, especially with kids who need the freedom of a kitchen cupboard and hot chocolate on demand. The cabin was simple, neat and functional in an Ikea sort of way with a small open plan kitchenette-diner, bedrooms with comfortable bunks, a hall with excellent hanging space for copious wet ski gear and a hugely welcome sauna. Behind us was a path, which became our family sled run, and, being ski-in-ski-out, we were minutes from the nursery slope drag lift.



The Fjallet hotel restaurant

Where we ate

It was a 50-metre trudge up hill to the **Fjallet hotel** for breakfast and dinner, and a 60-second sledge back down. The restaurant menu had gourmet reindeer options and there were fine burgers in the bar. It was a pleasant surprise to discover that, here at least, exorbitant Scandinavian pricing is a myth. Lunchtimes, we swept off the snowy slopes to our cabin for some homemade pasta, which was easily achieved, as a well-stocked shop was just 100-metres downhill.



Family-friendly ski slopes

What we did

We had come to see the Northern lights, but if they had never materialised we would still have had an unforgettable trip. For a start, the kids all learnt to ski, and this soon became the main event. A slip and tumble from our cabin, and the kids were on the lift being dragged along on their stomachs until they finally got the hang of it.

The quiet nursery slope was a friendly place to learn, and mini jumps and slaloms offered increasing challenges, so technique speedily improved. Equipment hire was efficient; an instructor for all 3 kids was incredibly reasonable and effective. There were five ski lifts and 25 pistes. None of the slopes were crowded, and my husband, who is a competent skier, headed up to the black slopes where he was literally the only person on the side of the mountain. Fortunately, he didn't break a leg!

The snowmobile turned out to be a fantastic one off experience, plus we unexpectedly got to drive ourselves, which was an adrenaline rush but possibly a little nerve racking for the kid behind me... We chugged out of the resort and were quickly in the vast snowy tundra, feeling like true polar explorers. I was anxious we would lose sight of the party and be lost in the endless whiteness, but we kept up and made it to an isolated mountain lodge, which was around 100-miles from the North Pole, for photos and hot chocolate. If you are a big intrepid party you can even stay over in this remote spot for an adventurous night.





Husky tour to the illuminations

The husky sled ride in search of the Northern lights, was as special an evening as magical as you could ever dream. Our family were kitted out in snow suits for the sub-zero night temperatures, then taken off to the dog pound to harness up the eager and vociferous teams.

The children were given dogs to help handle, learning their names and characters. It was a private expedition - our family of five were in two sleds with drivers who were really informative and enthusiastic. There was no promise of seeing the lights as it is a natural and unpredictable phenomenon. Electrically charged particles are drawn to the poles by the magnetic field, while gases in the upper atmosphere can cause varying colours to appear.

But, ever hopeful, off we swooshed through the trees, an icy breeze on our cheeks, a musky scent of husky in the air and the moon lighting our path. Eventually, we reached a frozen lake to pause in the heavy silence, wait and watch. On cue, the clouds parted and the sky began a rare, phantasmagoric show. A swirl of colour shape-shifted across the sky, so brilliantly, and indescribably beautiful. We were mesmerised for an hour. An hour we will all remember for the rest of our lives, along with the skiing, the huskies, the snowmobiles and the sheer fun of it all.



Spotted the Northern lights

Essential information

We flew with [Norwegian Airlines](#) and booked all accommodation and leisure with [Lapland Resorts](#), who were superbly efficient.

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