

Christmas in Finland

6 Days | Starts/Ends: Kuhmo



CHRISTMAS TOUR: Spend a white Christmas in the winter wonderland of Kuhmo near the Russia border. Visit Santa Claus in his home country, go sledding with horses and huskies, take a snowmobile sleigh ride and much more - guaranteed to be a Christmas to remember!

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- Spend Christmas Day in the magical winter wonderland of Kuhmo, in the north of Finland
- Meet Santa Claus, the real Finnish Joulupokki in his home country with your family
- Enjoy lots of winter activities including husky and horse sleigh rides, and an optional snowmobile ride
- Spend your free time tobogganing and sledding in the great outdoors with your family

What's Included

- 5 nights at the Hotel Kalevala (3 star)
- 5 breakfasts, 4 lunches and 5 dinners (inclusive of a Christmas Eve Traditional Gala Dinner)

- Welcome drink
- Arrival and departure transfer from Kajaani airport on days 1 and 6
- Visit to Santa Claus at his local home
- Journey to collect the Christmas tree to bring to the restaurant for the children to decorate
- Taster horse sleigh, husky sled and snowmobile safaris
- Free use of kick-sledges, toboggans, DVDs, Playstation2 and Nintendo Wii games, Wi-Fi and board games
- Daily evening saunas and jacuzzis

What's Not Included

- Items of a personal nature and additional meals
- International flights to/from our tour start/end points and visas
- Tipping - An entirely personal gesture
- Optional excursions

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : Kuhmo



22nd December 2022. Upon arrival into Kajaani airport you will be met and transferred to the Hotel Kalevala. The drive takes about an hour and you'll travel through some beautiful snowy Finnish countryside on the way. On arrival at the hotel you will be greeted with a Welcome Drink before check in. This evening we will enjoy our first dinner together. **Overnight - Kuhmo (D)**

Day 2 : Visit Santa Claus



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After breakfast we get to enjoy the area around the hotel. There are kick sledges and toboggans available to use and you can make snow angels or perhaps visit and feed the hotels 2 reindeer. Hot juice will be served by the open fire after our activities.

Later on this afternoon we meet Santa Claus, known in Finnish as Joulupukki. During the visit the children can tell Santa their Christmas wishes and secrets. This evening we return to our hotel for dinner and to take advantage of the on site saunas and jacuzzis.

Overnight - Kuhmo (B, L, D)

Day 3 : Christmas Eve



This morning we take a magical journey across the snowy landscape of Kuhmo. We'll then get the special experience of heading out to bring a Christmas tree into the restaurant we'll then decorate it together. In Finland it is a very important duty for the children to decorate the tree and today will be no different. Lunch today will be a meal of Christmas rice porridge, a very traditional dish served across Scandinavia during the festive season. In Finland rice porridge is very much enjoyed by the children especially as whoever finds the hidden almond wins a prize!

This afternoon we take a traditional visit to the churchyard at Kuhmo, we'll have the opportunity to light a candle for our loved ones near and far. This evening's dinner is an authentic Finnish buffet including ham, casserole, herring and gingerbread desserts. They also serve

up a good selection of international cuisine as well.

In Finland Santa Claus visits on Christmas Eve. This is a tradition that the hotel really embraces - if you have your own presents for your children then please give them to reception to give to Santa.

Overnight - Kuhmo (B, L, D)

Day 4 : Christmas Day



Merry Christmas everyone! Today is a free day to do as you please. There are lots of optional activities so why not go out on a husky or snowmobile safari, try your hand at snow shoeing or cross country skiing or just relax at the hotel.

After dinner this evening we have a traditional campfire evening which will include hot juice and sausages.

During one of the next 2 days you'll enjoy a fantastic Husky sleigh ride through the snowy surroundings. Guests staying at the hotel will be split into 2 groups and the exact day you do this excursion will be confirmed during your welcome meeting. **Overnight - Kuhmo (B, L, D)**

Day 5 : Boxing Day



After breakfast you'll also get the chance to enjoy a short Reindeer sleigh ride taster. There are also kick sledges and toboggans available to use. Hot juice will be served by the open fire after our activities.

The afternoon is free to do more optional activities. Tonight we have dinner and a special Finnish folklore evening of dance, music and stories.

Overnight - Kuhmo (B, L, D)

Day 6 : Kuhmo

27th December. Our amazing Christmas in Finland comes to an end today after breakfast and hotel check out with an included transfer back to Kajaani airport. (B)

ACCOMMODATION

Highlighted below are some of the accommodation/ hotels which we frequently use on this tour. We reserve the right to substitute these stays to ones of a similar standard.

Please refer to your Tour Voucher for your confirmed arrival hotel or start point and further arrival information.

Hotel Kalevela

On the banks of Lake Lammasjarvi sits Hotel Kalevela - a beautiful family run hotel with on site spa. Guest rooms are comfortable with modern facilities. The hotel boasts a fantastic gourmet restaurant, 4 saunas and 2 hot tubs. The hotel can organise lots of activities like husky sledding, snow shoeing, cross country skiing etc. There is a lounge and fireplace for relaxing by and the hotel also provides kick sledges, toboggans and children's games to keep the whole family happy.



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BEFORE YOU GO

Our partners

This tour is operated in conjunction with our trusted partner and you will join travellers who booked through different operators, not solely On The Go.

The sightseeing group may vary in size from 2 – 26 persons.

Visas

Please be advised that visa requirements are subject to change and that visa procurement is the responsibility of the traveller and not On The Go Tours, therefore it is essential that you check current visa requirements with the embassy before travel. Please also ensure that your passport is valid for at least 3 months from your planned date of departure from Finland, has at least two blank pages and has been issued within the last 10 years.

UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and USA passport holders do not require a visa for a stay of less than 90 days.

Finland is part of the borderless region known as the Schengen Area and South African residents require a Schengen visa in order to enter Finland. This schengen visa must be submitted at least 15 days before their intended departure for the Schengen member states. Visa forms can be down loaded at <http://formin.finland.fi/Public/default.aspx?>

Currency

The official currency of Finland is the Euro. However please note the 1 and 2 cent coins are not used in Finland and everything will be rounded up to the nearest 5 cents. All major credit and debit cards are accepted in Finland. ATMs are found in every city, major town or resort and even some small villages.

Time & Voltage

Finland works on GMT + 2 hours. It observes daylight saving with clocks going forward at the end of March and back again at the end of October.

Standard voltage is 230 volts, 50 Hz. Primary sockets generally require Continental or European plugs, of the two round pin variety. We recommend that you pack a universal travel adaptor. You will need a voltage converter, and plug adaptor in order to use U.S. appliances.

Health Requirements

You should seek medical advice before travelling to Finland from your local health practitioner and ensure that you receive all of the appropriate vaccinations. As a guide Tetanus is recommended. The medical facilities in Finland are good and available for free to European Union citizens with a valid EHIC form or its replacement ID card.

The water quality in Finland is excellent and tap water is always drinkable

Food & Drink

Unsurprising for a nation surrounded by water, fish plays a very prevalent role in Finnish cuisine with salmon and herring often playing a starring role. Meat is also widely eaten with delicacies including reindeer, elk and bear. More commonly found is the HK Sininen Lenkki sausage. Many main meals are served with potatoes, berry sauce and gherkins/pickles and rye bread is often the bread of choice.

Alcohol is fairly expensive in Finland (compared to continental Europe) however it is very easy to find. Local beers like Lapin Kulta, Karjala and Olvi are easily found in local supermarket – they are branded by their alcohol content though. I is the weakest and cheapest whereas IV is the strongest and no doubt the most expensive. Anything harder than beer needs to be bought at Alko – a government run chain of supermarkets. They hold

the monopoly on where you can buy anything pretty much over 4.7% in Finland.

Daylight in Finland

Due to its location in northern Europe with the Arctic Circle crossing the north of the country, parts of Finland experience both extremes when it comes to daylight. The northern part of the country (Lapland) that sits above the Arctic Circle has at least one day a year when the sun never sets (usually mid to the end of June) and one day when the sun doesn't even appear (usually mid to the end of December).

Helsinki in the south has the least extreme of the daylight hours but still sees a lot more than most European capitals in the summer and a lot less in the winter. The earliest you are likely to see the sun rise in Helsinki is about 4am in the middle of June, on top of this you can enjoy up to 19 hours of daylight with the sun not setting until just before 11pm. The winter is obviously a very different story with the latest the sun rises being about 9:30am in late December, early January. The sun generally sticks around for just shy of 6 hours before setting around 3:15pm. After January the daylight increases slowly until June and then begins to decrease again until it's December again.

In Rovaniemi (the capital of Lapland) the story is a bit more intense. In June and most of July you'll be unlikely to see much darkness. From mid July the sun rises at about 2am and doesn't set until about 00:45am. Towards the end of December the sun doesn't tend to rise until 11:45am and barely sticks around for an hour, setting at 12:32 in the afternoon. As with Helsinki the daylight increases moderately from January to June and then decreases again in the second half of the year.

What to Pack

For an extensive list on what to bring when travelling to Finland during winter

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see our Lapland Packing List on our Travel Guide on our website.

- Walking boots or snow boots (avoid wellies/gum boots), woollen socks (Merino if possible - avoid cotton)
- Long johns (wool or polyester - avoid cotton), jogging/sweat pants and ski trousers or waterprrof trousers.
- Base layer (wool or polyester - avoid cotton), fleece shirts, woollen jumper.
- A down parka is ideal but pricey, otherwise a down shell jacket or a similar insulated jacket.
- Hat, gloves and mittens, scarf and balaclava (optional)
- Padded bag for camera
- Spare batteries and SD cards
- Swimming costume/trunks/swimming shorts if you plan to visit a sauna when you are in Finland

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