

Howling with Wolves, Running with Dogs

Adventures in Good Company's General Information

Welcome to Adventures in Good Company's dogsledding trips in Minnesota! Your friends probably think you're crazy; we think you show uncommonly good sense. We have compiled some information that may be helpful as you prepare for your journey. The front of this page has information that will be useful for everyone; the back will be primarily of interest to our out of state visitors. Please feel free to contact the Adventures in Good Company office if we can provide any additional information.

Emergency contact information

The number at Silver Rapids Lodge is 800-950-9425. We'll be staying in the Retreat cabin. Their web site is www.silverrapids.com

Weather

We've given up trying to predict Minnesota winter weather. Be prepared for anything from 40 degrees below (in which case we'll be inside) to 40 degrees above. Call us with questions about the packing list.

Conditioning

Many women find that dogsledding is a more vigorous activity than they had anticipated. In addition to standing on the sled, at times you run behind it, pedal with one leg, and help the dogs get the sled up hill. In addition you are often dealing with colder temperatures and wearing more clothes than you may be used to. On the other hand you will be sharing the sled with another person, so you can switch off who is mushing and who is riding cozily bundled up in the sled bag.

Given those considerations, additional conditioning is unnecessary for anyone who already exercises regularly, including some aerobic exercise. If you don't, you will probably find that you have more energy during the trip if you start a moderate exercise program a couple of months before your trip. For example, you might start walking 3 or 4 times a week for half an hour, at a pace that is fast enough to make you breathe deeply. Hills are good for this. Other options are working out at a health club on a stairmaster or treadmill, aerobics classes, cross country skiing or any activity that makes you breathe harder. The key is to exercise at a rate that makes you work, but not so hard that you are unable to talk or gasping for breath. Aerobic conditioning is much more important than strength training.

What if you don't have time to start an exercising program? Don't worry, you'll be fine – just a little more tired than usual at the end of the day!

Some fun pre-trip reading

The following are easy and informational, and will serve to whet your appetite.

"Dogsong" by Gary Paulsen- anything by him is worth reading

"My Lead Dog was a Lesbian" by Brian Patrick O'Donohue. A total novice runs the Iditarod. As funny as the title suggests.

"Woman of the Boundary Waters" by Justine Kerfoot-fascinating account by a woman who has lived in northern Minnesota since the 30s

"Running North: A Yukon Adventure" by Ann Mariah Cook. A journalist's account of the year she and her husband moved to Alaska to run the Yukon Quest.

"Race Across Alaska: the First Woman to Win the Iditarod Tells her Story" by Libby Riddles, Tim Jones. A professional dog musher's look at the great race.

"Wolves: Behavior, Ecology and Conservation" edited by L. David Mech and Luigi Boitani. The most comprehensive wolf book ever, written by 22 world-class wolf experts.

Some useful web sites

Sled dog central (www.sleddogcentral.com): widely regarded as one of the most comprehensive dogsledding sites on the web. It's aimed primarily at mushers but has useful info for everyone

Minnesota Tourism: (www.exploreminnesota.com) There's more to Minnesota than snowflakes and mosquitoes. This web site can help if you want to extend this trip or plan future trips

International Wolf Center: (www.wolf.org). This site, in addition to giving you more information about the Center, is a great place to start learning about wolves.

Tipping Guidelines

Tipping at the end of the trip is optional. If you feel your guide(s) did an outstanding job and would like to reward him or her for their efforts, a suggested rule of thumb is US \$5-\$10 per person, per day. Oftentimes, trip members organize a group envelope (this makes it anonymous) and present it to the guides at the last shared meal.

Getting here

Although all the major airlines have some flights to Minneapolis- St. Paul (MSP), Northwest Airlines is undoubtedly the dominant carrier in the market (1-800-225-2525 or www.nwa.com). Some low cost carriers with limited service include:

Air Trans (1-800-247-8726 or www.airtran.com),
ATA (1-800-435-9282 or www.ata.com),
Frontier (1-800-432-1359 or www.frontierairlines.com),
America West (1-800-235-9292 or www.americawest.com)
Sun Country Airlines (www.suncountry.com)

We will pick you up at 8 am so that we have time to stop as needed and to account for driving conditions. Therefore most people who come from out of town will need to fly in the day before.

What to do

The Twin Cities are home to myriad art galleries, theaters, and museums. In St. Paul, a good place to start your visit is the **Rice Park Area** with the **Ordway Music Theatre** (Box Office: 651-224-4222) and the **Science Museum of Minnesota** (651-221-9488).

In downtown Minneapolis, there is the **Walker Art Center** with its contemporary sculpture garden (free) (725 Vineland Place, 612-375-7577) and the world-famous **Guthrie Theater** (612-377-2224).

Uptown (the area around the intersection of Lake Street and Hennepin Avenue) is a lovely part of Minneapolis for strolling, with its variety of shops and restaurants. It is only blocks away from several Minneapolis lakes edged with paths for walking, running, bicycling and rollerblading. Also near Uptown is a favorite comedy club, the **Dudley Riggs Brave New Workshop** (2605 Hennepin Ave, 612-332-6620).

Outside the city limits but certainly close enough for an afternoon sojourn is the **Minnesota Zoo**, in Apple Valley, with both exotic and indigenous animals and cross-country ski trails open all winter (612-432-9000). **Fort Snelling State Park** (off highways 5 and 55 in St. Paul, near the airport) has cross-country ski trails on Pike Island. Oh, yes, the **Mall of America** has its home here, too—it's in Bloomington, not far from the airport.

Lodging

If you have any gambling spirit, the cheapest way to find a hotel room is to go through Priceline

(www.priceline.com). When you have a choice of area, choose the airport area. All, or almost all, of the hotels in this area offer an airport shuttle. In addition, they are all close to the Mall of America and many offer shuttles there.

If you prefer to know what you're getting into, the following are a sample of the possibilities (prices are approximate and do not include taxes):

If you want us to make pre-trip hotel arrangements for you, the ** denotes the hotel we will use. Please indicate your preferences on the travel form.

Days Inn/Mall of America (800) 329-7466
1901 Killebrew Drive, Bloomington, MN 55425
Ave. nightly rate: single:\$64 double:\$74
Indoor courtyard with indoor pool, sauna, whirlpool. Free airport shuttle service, across the street from MOA, complimentary breakfast. Reviews claim a bit of older décor.

****Country Inn and Suites /MOA (888) 201 1746**
2221 Killebrew Dr., Bloomington, MN 55437
235 rooms
Ave. Nightly rate: \$139 +tax
Free continental breakfast, color satellite TV, airport shuttle, on site restaurant, free cookies, 2 indoor pools and spa tubs, Free Wireless, 1.5 miles from 14,000 acre MN. Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

Embassy Suites Hotel—Airport (800) EMBASSY or (952) 884-4811 7901 34th Ave. S., Bloomington, MN 55420
Ave. nightly rate: \$130
All 2-room suites, living room, wet bar, refrig., and bedroom, color TV. Comp. breakfast, 2 hrs. of comp. beverages at night. Pool, whirlpool, steam room and sauna. Airport shuttle.

Comfort Inn (800) 727-7585 or (952) 854-3400
1321 E. 78th St. (I-494 at Portland / 12th Ave. Exit)
Ave. nightly rate: \$80
Just west of Mall of America on I-494. Five minutes from airport. Indoor pool, continental breakfast, free parking. Airport shuttle.

Super 8 Motel (800) 800-8000 or (952) 888-8800
7800 2nd Ave S., Bloomington, MN 55420
Ave nightly rate: \$75
Complimentary continental breakfast, airport and Mall shuttle, whirlpool and sauna.

Hampton Inn Richfield (800)551-ROOM or (612) 861-1000
4201 W 80th Street, Bloomington, MN 55437
Ave nightly rate: \$109
Free shuttle service to/from the airport and Mall of America, across from REI. Comp. breakfast buffet, free parking, and easy on/off location to highways.