

NWT Dogsled Adventure, Wilderness Living Experience & Writing Workshop

Enjoy a subarctic dogsled adventure at a wilderness homestead in Canada's Northwest Territories in the company of two top outdoorsmen and nature writers. You'll experience a whole new world through their eyes and trail talents. Plus you'll hone your own journal-writing, story-telling and creative writing skills.

8 Days, April 7-14, 2013, including 3 nights at a wilderness homestead and 4 nights of dogsled camping in tundra & taiga

\$4,900 all-inclusive from Yellowknife, Canada



Your hosts: Dave and Kristen Olesen have lived at their Hoarfrost River Homestead on the northeast tip of Great Slave Lake since 1987 (when they were young and eager -- now they are older, but still eager!) Together they offer perspectives on life in the outback that few people today can match. Their daughters Annika (17) and Liv (14) are eager to introduce you to their huskies. They'll be joined by northern Minnesota's legendary raconteur, Sam Cook, Outdoor Editor of the Duluth News Tribune, columnist, writing guru, accomplished outdoorsman and author of four books.



The place: Located in a spruce taiga on the edge of the subarctic tundra, the Hoarfrost Homestead is 170 air miles from the city of Yellowknife. Accommodations in this remote, dramatic setting are rustic: log guest cabin with bunks (or wall tents for those desiring more privacy), log workshop and gathering place for discussions, the Olesens' cozy 3-story log home for mealtimes and a shoreline wood-fired sauna for bucket bathing. As Dave wryly notes, plenty of water is available (from North American's fifth largest lake!) but none of it has been trained to run.

Dave & Kristen moved to the far north 26 years ago when they left northern Minnesota where they'd led dogsled trips with Paul & Sue Schurke at Will Steger's homestead. Fishing and hunting help fill their food cache and power is provided by solar panels, wind turbine and a generator. With their kennel of 30 dogs, they've competed in the Iditarod, Yukon Quest, Race to the Sky and John Beargrease Sled Dog Races. Dave has authored two fine books about their experiences. The Olesen family will host and outfit this trip, and Dave will be the lead guide for the trail portion and all nuts-and-bolts aspects. Kristen will be the mainstay of our day-to-day time at the Hoarfrost River. She is a masterful chef and baker, and also an accomplished outdoor photographer. We will enjoy wonderful meals and good company.



The writing experience: Sam Cook will lead morning and evening sessions on outdoor writing and journal keeping, with insight from his 35-year career as an award-winning author and far-ranging wilderness traveler. Sam will share techniques he's learned through the years -- honing your observational skills, organizing a story, writing with rhythm, exploring different writing forms and killing adjectives on sight. You'll have the opportunity to practice those newfound skills on the trail and in sessions at the Olesen homestead. Dave will tag team these sessions with Sam. He knows the country around his home intimately, and is engaged in a lifelong effort to see it with an honest eye and describe it in an honest voice. His favorite writing quotation is from John Haines, an Alaskan poet, who encouraged writers to make "a sustained effort to demolish the cliché."



Together these two long-time friends will help participants hone their writing skills, their knack for observation and description, and the power and clarity of their writing. Whether people aspire to write for personal inspiration or with an eye to publication, everyone will come away with a fresh perspective on their efforts. When the trip is finished, writing from all the participants will be assembled into a hard-copy collection, a memento to be savored and shared with friends and families.

The dogsled adventure: Heading up from the lake basin on our 5-day dogteam trip, we will go to the edge of the tundra, only a few straight-line miles to the north. On the trail we will sleep in snug Arctic Oven trail tents, and at this season some will likely opt to sleep outside for a night or two (or every night!), for a better chance at seeing the northern lights. To ease logistics, our dogteams will be small and our loads will be light. Some re-supplies will be set out ahead of time so we can travel as light as possible.

This trip will be rigorous but not intensely so. The time of year makes for a good mix of winter and spring, and our itinerary on the trail will emphasize morning and evening time to pause and ponder and write -- that is the focus. Good fitness is a pre-requisite. Previous dogsled and winter camping experience will be a bonus, but are not required.



Itinerary

Sun Apr 7: assemble in Yellowknife. Ski plane flight to Hoarfrost River, about 1 and a half hours. Meet and introduce, settle in, go for an outing by dogteam. Writing discussion, dinner.

Mon Apr 8: breakfast, writing discussion, snowshoe or ski outing, dogteam outing, picnic lunch out away from the homestead, writing discussion, time for wandering and writing, packout for day three departure on the trail. Dinner, evening slide show.

Tue Apr 9: Day three: breakfast, departure on the trail, heading northeast up the trails or out along the coast of the lake, depending upon conditions and group interest. Camp early, time for writing and discussion. Kristen and the Olesen daughters may join us for this first night on the trail.

Wed-Fri Apr 10-12: Travel, camp, write, read, discuss. A loop up toward to the edge of the tundra, with eager dogs and springtime sledding conditions.

Sat Apr 13: Return to Hoarfrost River, settle back in with a sauna, a celebration dinner together, a final round of writing and reading & selection of writing excerpts to be shared as a momento book

Sun Apr 14: Ski plane back to Yellowknife, midday. Connect home that evening or next day.



Group Size: Minimum 5, max 6 participants will be hosted the Olesen family and Sam Cook

Trip Logistics: Dave and Kristen will provide dogteams, sleds, tents, all camping gear and trail food. Their kennel is comprised of Alaskan huskies whose size and pace falls somewhere between that of sprint dogs and Wintergreen's Inuit freight dogs.

Wildlife: We'll be immersed in the most expansive wilderness remaining in North America -- the barrenlands of Canada. This region is the realm of wolves, musk ox, caribou, wolverine, moose, black & grizzly bear, marten, ptarmigan, geese, falcons, eagles & fox. We'll hope to see them and even if sightings are sparse we'll certainly be aware of their presence along our route by their tracks in the snow. The ice fishing can be good and will be an option, but not a trip focus.

Weather: The season will be sub-Arctic April, which can serve up a mix of daily temperatures from cold to warm, but will hold long hours of daylight. Daytime temps average in the teens and 20s though the nights can dip well below zero. Much of the trip will be within the treeline where we'll have some shelter from any blustery weather. But wind is likely to be our companion during the couple days we'll spend experiencing the wide open expanse of the Barrenlands.

Fitness: Variable terrain and snow conditions mean that our travel conditions will vary each day as well -- from easy to challenging. Stretches of gently rolling terrain and hard-packed snow can make for smooth sailing. But assisting the freight sleds over hummocks and snowdrifts will require some effort especially if we encounter deep snow. Participants should be prepared for a mushing experience that may be similar in rigor to that found on Wintergreen's advanced Boundary Water trips. That includes our team effort in setting tents and assisting with camp and dog care chores.

Price: \$4,900 for 8 days all-inclusive from/to Yellowknife. Price covers charter flights to/from Yellowknife, all meals, lodging, and trail outfitting at the Hoarfrost River Homestead. Price does not include airfare Edmonton-Yellowknife-return (around \$250) or meals/lodging in Yellowknife.

Gear: All camp gear provided. Loaner anoraks, pack boots & beaver-fur mitts available as needed.

To secure a reservation: Request a registration form through Wintergreen Dogsled Lodge Submit with a \$500 deposit (refundable till Feb 1). Balance is due March 1, 2013.

For more info: Contact Paul Schurke at Wintergreen, 877-753-3386, info@dogsledding.com.

Read Dave's books: [Cold Nights](#), [Fast Trails](#), [North of Reliance](#), Sam's: [Up North](#), [Quiet Magic](#), [Camp Sights](#), [Moving Waters](#). Visit www.hoarfrostriverhuskies, Dave's blog: bushedpilotblog.wordpress.com, Sam's blog: samcook.areavoices.com

