

# Postcard from... **NORWAY**

**Hi Everyone!**

Drops of powdery white snow trickled off the tip of my nose as I pulled my jacket round me to keep warm. I stamped my feet, the -20°C Norwegian climate getting the better of me! Luckily, something was heading towards us that would soon take my mind of the chill in the February air.

Hundreds of huskies were hurtling towards our small group huddled on the mountainside – we were about to go sleighing!

As the panting dogs lounged in the snow, our instructor filled us in on how to ride the sleighs properly. According to him, the word husky in fact came from the word Eskie.

'It was a nickname once used to describe the Eskimo tribes who came into contact with Europeans who'd made early expeditions into their lands,' he explained.

And now we were going on an expedition of our own...

Clambering aboard, I tucked myself under the big thick rug while my boyfriend Ross, 19, took hold of the reins.

'Aha,' he shouted, which is the Norwegian word for go, and we were off!

Icy winds tore across my face

as six huskies pulled us through the frozen terrain. Gripping on for dear life, my heart leapt as we began our 5km tour around Kirkenes Reindeer Park.

As we jiggled about in the sleigh, I watched the outline of the white hills roll by. 'Come on, girls!' Ross hollered, flexing the reins.

'Slow down!' I cried, as he giggled away.

Suddenly, the sleigh started swinging from side to side. Losing my grip, I felt myself slipping, and tumbled sideways, smacking straight into the soft snow!

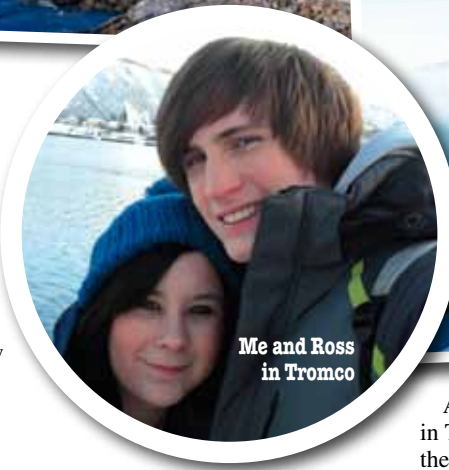
Laughing hysterically, I fumbled through five inches of the white stuff, struggling to stand. Finally, I gave up and collapsed backwards, making snow angels with my arms and legs.

'Come on!' Ross laughed, yanking me back on board.

We'd had such an action-packed morning riding the huskies, but the first few days of our holiday in Norway had been a lot slower-paced.

Two days earlier we'd flown into Tromso – the largest city in northern Norway. No one could have expected the welcome we'd got as we headed towards the city, though. Just before landing, the pilot's voice had come over the tannoy.

Lofoten, where you can see the northern lights



Me and Ross in Tromco



Me on the ship



Ross with a husky

An hour later, we'd landed in Tromso, just XX miles from the North Pole. Strolling across Tromso Bridge – which was the longest in northern Europe when it opened in 1960 – we wandered round both sides of the lively city.

As the locals had gone about their everyday lives, we'd nibbled on our sun buns. The Norwegians make the raspberry jam-filled buns in February as a way of celebrating the arrival of the sun coming back over the mountain peaks.

After a day out in the cold, our cheeks had been so rosy, we'd headed back to the Radisson Blu Hotel where we were staying.

The next morning, we'd boarded the ship we were going to be calling home for the next two days.

Setting sail in the direction of the Russian border, we'd

'If you look to your left ladies and gentleman, you'll see the northern lights,' he'd announced.

It was the most amazing sight – a colourful rolling curtain of red and green light dancing mystically across the blue sky. I'd read about these natural light displays in the guidebook before we'd arrived, so had been keen to impress Ross with my knowledge.

'They're also known as the aurora borealis after the Roman goddess of dawn Aurora and the Greek name for the north wind Boreas.'

'I see...' Ross had said.

'In fact, the northern lights stretch from Lofoten in Norway all the way along the coast to the North Cape XX miles away,' I'd added.





The northern lights over Tromsø

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## The facts:

- We travelled to Norway with Thomas Cook. The eight-day package, which included flights, hotels, cruise ship accommodation, planned activities and food cost £2,800 for two people. Visit [www.thomascook.com](http://www.thomascook.com)
- For individual bookings at the Kirkenes Snow Hotel, which is open from December to February each year, call 00 47 7897 0540 or visit [www.norway-travel.com](http://www.norway-travel.com)
- For more information on the Radisson Blu Hotel in Tromsø, visit [www.radissonblu.com](http://www.radissonblu.com)

## Wish I'd known before I went...

Insider tips from those in the know:

- ✓ Take more Norwegian Krone than you think you'll need because there are lots of extra activities which can be added on to your holiday, and food is notoriously expensive!
- ✓ With such a cold climate you'll need lots of warm layers, so it's a good idea to keep your eyes open during sales and buy in advance.
- ✓ Take a camera - those northern lights really do create that once-in-a-lifetime perfect picture.
- ✓ There's ample opportunity to hire sledges, but most locals just use plastic bags to slide down the hills... so why not pack a few bin bags!

Edited by Laura Hinton. Photos: Andrea Ghibelli and Bjorn Jørgensen/Innovation Norway



In the ice hotel

buffet service cruise we'd just come off... We were about to spend the night in a snow hotel! Strolling through the doors, we were welcomed with a crowberry shot, known as Rudolf's Revenge!

'Crowberries look a lot like blueberries,' said the hotel manager. 'They're the edible fruit from an

evergreen shrub found in the northern hemisphere.'

As the purple liquor warmed my insides, I gazed round this mystical place. It was hard to believe the walls, fixtures and fittings were made of ice! It looked like a film set.

'Everything's held together using a substance known as snice,' the manager revealed as he showed us round the 12 bedrooms. 'It's a type of frozen water that's the inbetween stage of snow and ice.'

Each November the hotel's created by artists from Finland and Japan, so it looks different each year.

Our room had two small beds made of giant chunks of ice and a mattress of reindeer pelts. Green lights were dug into the walls,

creating an eerie glow. 'I suppose it's so cold we won't know if there's a draught,' I joked, pointing at the sheet of animal hide draped across as a door into our room.

Before settling down for the night, it was time for food! We headed to the Gabba Restaurant next door. Once inside, we were handed a couple of skewers loaded with cooked meat. 'Dinner tonight is reindeer!' smiled our waitress.

'You what?!' I gulped.

'When in Rome...' shrugged Ross, taking a bite. As my belly grumbled, and the smell drifted up my nose, I couldn't resist. I felt guilty, but it was delicious, and a memorable end to our last day.

Next day, we'd be sailing back to Tromsø then flying home. But first, it was time to hit the sack. Wrapped up in three layers, I jumped in my sleeping bag, expecting to spend the night shivering in the -9°C room. But all that fresh air meant I went out like a light, feeling snug as a bug.

**Abby x**

Abby Doda, 20,  
Leamington Spa, Warwickshire

# Full House!

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