

Cross-country skiing in Sweden

by Jenna Walton, aged 15

Last year, Mum and I wanted to try a winter sport called cross-country skiing – travelling on skis across the countryside. And pictures of one area in Sweden, with people skiing along through forests on wonderful white snow, persuaded us that destination was a good choice. We hadn't done much skiing, though, so weren't sure how difficult cross-country skiing was, compared with skiing fast down steep mountains. But we signed up to join a group of people, of all ages, plus a guide. We'd read about the place we went to before we left, so we knew it was close to where Sweden ends and Norway starts. And our family knew we couldn't text home, as there was no internet connection – and actually, it was relaxing to be far from anywhere, or anyone. What we hadn't realised was that from there, we'd be able to see amazing coloured lights in the sky, which appeared at certain times of year, called the Northern Lights – what a sight!

On our first day there, I hated getting up in the dark, but it meant I saw the sun come up over the forest, so I was glad I did. And sunshine was forecast for the week, I was delighted to hear! But the real problem was my 15kg rucksack, full of food and clothes – I had no idea it would weigh that much. Anyway, we skied for hours across mainly flat snow. Having special light skis was supposed to help us climb the few hills there were – although I still couldn't do it!

Finally we stopped for the night. It wasn't until we'd reached our hut that our guide mentioned we'd just crossed a frozen lake to get there – but nothing surprised us by that point! Anyway, he gave us all jobs to do – cutting fire wood and cooking food – and soon we were having dinner, made from whatever food we'd brought – a strange mix, but it tasted delicious. And everywhere was so peaceful outside that none of us stayed awake long.

Mum and I want to try another winter sports trip, maybe snowboarding. But we'll probably end up just as exhausted as we were after this trip!

1 Jenna and her mum decided to go cross-country skiing in Sweden because

- A they wanted a change from mountain skiing holidays.
- B they'd heard the sport would be easier than skiing down hills.
- C they'd met a group of people who wanted to go, too.
- D they found a place there that they were keen to visit.

2 After their arrival, what did they discover about where they were staying?

- A It wasn't far from the border with another country.
- B They could get great views of a spectacular natural event.
- C It was at a point where they couldn't use technology.
- D They weren't near local people of their homes.

3 How did Jenna feel about the long trips through the snow on skis?

- A surprised she had to carry such a heavy bag
- B pleased about the weight of the skis she was given
- C glad that going uphill wasn't as hard as she'd thought
- D worried the good weather they were having wouldn't last

4 Regarding their accommodation, Jenna says everyone

- A had difficulties getting to sleep there.
- B was unhappy at the quality of the food.
- C had to help out with all the housework.
- D was shocked to hear details of their journey there.

5 What would Jenna text to a friend about her trip?

A One reason we chose this trip was that we thought we'd be among loads of trees, which we love – but that hasn't happened so far.

B The people in our group were really friendly – but they were all Mum's age and older, really.

C I'm not used to getting out of bed so early to do things! But it was worth it, as the sunrise was wonderful.

D Mum and I have agreed that although the trip was great, we might attempt something less tiring on our next winter holiday.