

# My internship at the Tromsø Villmarkssenter

09th June – 19th June 2009



*written by Frank Rinas*

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## How did I get the idea to make an internship at the Tromsø Villmarkssenter?

As you maybe already saw on my website I visited Norway two times before I made the internship. In 2007 I cruised with MS Albatros through the Norwegian waters and I used the possibility to explore this unique city of Tromsø. The second time I cruised by Hurtigrute and MS Trollfjord for visiting also Tromsø in March 2008. That time I booked the excursion to the Tromsø Villmarkssenter for the dog-sled ride. There I had for the first time contact with huskies and that wonderful experience moment is in my mind until today. Exactly this moment was the headstone for the idea to make an internship there – the wish to stay there longer time in that beautiful landscape, with that great people and without question together with the huskies. In addition to that, I simply want to live and work at Norway. In the summer of 2009 finally the time was there to start with the internship. Unfortunately I didn't have any vacation days left due to the fact, that one month later there would be another cruise coming up. So I needed to find another possibility and luckily my employer allowed me to use unpaid holidays. After the agreement with my company here in



Germany I needed to get in contact with the Tromsø Villmarkssenter again to talk about the details. The agreement with the owners Tove and Tore was very friendly and as it's often in Norway, simply uncomplicated. Well, so all was resolved and I was able to book the flights. The outbound flight I booked with SAS (Scandinavian Airlines) due to the fact that Norwegian only offered one flight per day from Cologne with which I wouldn't have a connection to Tromsø from Oslo at the same day. As a result I booked the flight from Dusseldorf to Oslo (SK 8572) and the following route from Oslo to Tromsø (SK 4416). The return flight was less expensive because I could book it completely with Norwegian. The flight route was the same because the first was from Tromsø to Oslo (DY 245) and the second part of course from Oslo to Dusseldorf (DY 1132). Of course the summer isn't a time when you can experience the actual work at that workplace because it's impossible to make dog-sled rides and also the work is different of course. Nevertheless that wasn't a reason for me not using this possibility because there are of course also a lot of tourists coming there from the cruise ships as well as some basic work with the dogs anyway. In addition to that I had more time to get in contact with all the huskies and also the workers there had more time to explain their work than in busy winter. There was still enough other work to do, but about this I will tell you more a little bit later. After I booked the flight tickets the preparations were done and now I was just looking forward to the 09.06.2009 with much pleasant anticipation and also of course some excitement because that will be my first working activity outside of Germany. Let's go to the huskies! :-)

## 9th June 2009: My journey to Tromsø

Today the day has come to start a new kind of experience – collecting my first work experience at Norway. My luggage isn't really much because luckily I only need to put in my clothes. Working clothes, water, food and also a room will be kindly provided. As a reward I will of course do my best to be a good worker there ;-).

My night is really short due to the fact that my flight from Dusseldorf will departure early at 7.10 am and without question, I have no possibility to go by public transport to the airport. Anyway I wouldn't feel that comfortable to use it for that very important flight. For that reason I also use that time the transfer company "NRW Shuttle" to bring me from my home to the airport. I used this transfer service often for my past holidays (especially cruises) and it was simply relaxing from the beginning on. Also today the day starts with me very tired but also relaxed. As booked the transfer car arrives at 4.30 am and the other kind of journey can start. I am really a person who wants to be early at the airport and with "NRW Shuttle" that always works well – also this time because I am now arriving at the airport at 5.00 am. That is really a fast transfer! That early in the morning it looks a little bit like a "ghost airport" because there aren't many passengers to see at the moment. After arriving at the airport I go to the self-service check-in kiosk of SAS to print out my boarding card. It was the first time I printed it out with using that self-service but it's really not complicated. At about 5.30 am also the check-in desk is staffed and I can finally check-in my luggage – I really like that if the luggage is handled over to the airline and I don't need to care about it until arriving. Next I am going now to the security check. The first time in my life the alert sounds but of course no reason to get nervous because I don't have anything to hide. Fast we found out, that the shoes are the reason and after a short separate control everything is ready to pass the control.

Due to the reason that I left my bed early in the morning (I guess it was about 3.30 am) I feel already hungry and I decide that it's time for a breakfast. To handle that problem isn't no problem at the Dusseldorf International Airport. I have still about one hour time until it's time for boarding and so I permit myself two sandwiches and a cup of coffee. That is really a great way to straddle the waiting time in useful way. After that relaxing breakfast I am walking to my gate. The aircraft is already parked in front of the gate and at about 6.40 am the boarding starts. Without detours I am entering the aircraft of SAS and find my seat at the window very fast. Flying without a seat next to the window would be horrible to me because I really love to fly and I need to look out all the time. Different than with the Canadair Regional Jet (with which I had my first flight) I have enough space for my legs and to sit very comfortable. All passengers are punctually on board of our aircraft with flight number SK 8572 and the aircraft can start to move. Slowly we roll towards to the runway but we have to wait on the next to the takeoff runway a few minutes because there are other five aircrafts that really would like to start. The sun of course already is risen and is shining only sometimes due to some clouds. Now finally we are parking at the takeoff runway and a few seconds later our aircraft starts to accelerate. For me I simply love all parts of flying by aircraft because I really like the moment when the aircraft accelerates and starts its climb, if it's flying turns and also the view of the clouds. Also very nice is the deep blue atmosphere when you reach the travel altitude as well as the landing is really interesting to me. I really would like to fly more often.

The departure from Dusseldorf takes place without any problems and soon we are breaking through the clouds. It's nice to view the clouds from above but the first part of the flight isn't really interesting. The flight is getting more interesting as we are arriving the northern top of Germany and we have a nice view on the North Sea and its islands. We are flying over these and also over some Danish islands with almost clear skies at an altitude of 9,000 meters. About 20 minutes before our planned arrival (9.00 am) at Oslo Gardermoen, I am able to have a first view of the Norwegian mainland. Our aircraft is now already in its landing approach and we are flying above

the well known Oslofjorden at which end I already can spot Oslo. We are flying over the fjord towards eastern direction and with a short manoeuvre we have to get into the waiting line with several aircrafts. In front of us I can see three other aircrafts flying the same turn and afterwards flying another 180°-turn for landing at the airport. Our aircraft is flying the same and we are landing absolutely on time (9.00 am) at Oslo Gardermoen Airport.

Immediately after leaving the aircraft I am taking a deep breath of fresh Norwegian air (even it smells a little bit like jet fuel) and the air is really more fresh than in western Germany. But now I am walking really relaxed into the airport because my connection flight will be at 11.45 am towards Tromsø. Due to the fact that I booked both flights with SAS normally I don't have to check-in again my luggage... BUT, when I am entering the airport there is a sign on which is written, that also transit passengers have to check-in their luggage again for the connection flight. For that reason I was very happy, that I didn't book the 9.45 am flight to Tromsø because that would have been very very stressful. Luckily I have almost 3 hours time to handle the check-in now. I am picking up my luggage from the baggage conveyor belt and bring it to the SAS check-in desk. All that works really fast so that I can go now to the security check. Also that is done and of course I feel already very hungry – time to buy something to eat.

At about 11.10 pm is starting the boarding for my flight to Tromsø with the flight number SK4416. Of course also for that flight I reserved a window seat because I don't want to miss to enjoy the view of Norway out of the aircraft. The departure from Oslo is absolutely on time at 11.45 am and a short time after leaving the airport we are heading to north. Beneath the aircraft I can spot some mountains but soon we are breaking through the clouds which are luckily not that thick. After a few minutes the passengers of the flight can enjoy a wonderful view on the mountainous landscape in southern Norway and of course the fjords. Some clouds are hanging between the mountains and we are also able to spot some snow. I just can recommend everyone who books a flight over Norway to book a window seat because it's simply awesome to view that landscape from above – even it's a little bit more expensive then.

For the reason that the flight from Oslo to Tromsø takes only two hours, we are starting to reduce altitude already after 1,5 hours. The closer we are coming to the mountainous landscape, the more spectacular are the impressions out of the aircraft and we can see the first smaller and larger towns. We are now on the direct landing approach towards Tromsø and the tops of the mountains come closer and closer. Soon we will have the Straumsfjorden beneath us while flying at an altitude of about 2,000 m. A few minutes later the mountains aren't longer beneath our aircraft but next to us and ahead of us I can already see the beautiful located city called Tromsø. Very slow we are flying a last turn to the left and only a few seconds later our aircraft makes its touchdown on the landing strip of the Tromsø Airport. The aircraft stops not far away from the end of the runway because the runway isn't that long as we know that from Germany. I am sure that for a lot of Norwegian airports it needs very well trained pilots. Anyway the landing approach to Tromsø is spectacular with the close mountains and of course the fjord beneath. Actually I finally arrived at Tromsø and of course also here I am taking a very deep breath of that fresh air! The weather is simply great because the sun is shining with almost blue sky (only a few clouds are visible) and the temperature is very like summer with 15 °C.

**9th June 2009:**      [My first day at the Tromsø Villmarkssenter](#)

After taking the deep breath I am going inside the very overseeable airport of Tromsø following the signage to the baggage conveyor belt. I need to wait only a short time to pick up my luggage and I am going back to the entrance area of the airport. As appointed a very friendly worker named Torkil (the son of Tove) of the Tromsø Villmarkssenter is already waiting for me there. While making my journey to Tromsø I was really thinking if my English is still good enough to communicate (because sadly in Germany even as travel agent there aren't so many possibilities to speak English) but actually I am really enjoying it to speak English and it's only positive to me. On our way to the Tromsø Villmarkssenter we are stopping at the city veterinarian to pick up two dogs that got patched up there. Then we are driving out of the city while using the underground road network. That is a very impressive construction where you also can find a illuminated roundabout as well as traffic lights. After leaving the underground we are driving with the two dogs alongside the Sandnessund and are passing the towns Kvaløysletta and Eidkjossen. The complete drive takes only about 40 minutes and you have all the time a great view on the fjord and the surrounding mountains. A few minutes later we are turning right onto a gravel path which guides us directly to the Tromsø Villmarkssenter.

I really have to say that I feel a little bit nervous because I never worked outside of Germany and I hope all will work well with the communication in English. I really would feel better if I could speak at least some Norwegian but that would have need much more preparation time for sure. But I have to say that the conversations with Torkil while driving here make me much more relaxed. Immediately after arriving I feel very positive with my new home / workplace for the next days and I like it very much that the houses and cots are optical really comfortable but also not too modern. If someone wasn't already here, he / she will be wondering about the fact, where all the dogs are (if they are silent in that moment of course). After I was here in March 2008 I know that they are behind the longer main house in the "dog yard". Now after leaving the car I get a very warm welcome by Tove and Tore but also get to know a few of the workers. The conversations are very nice and positive and you simply feel home there immediately after arriving.

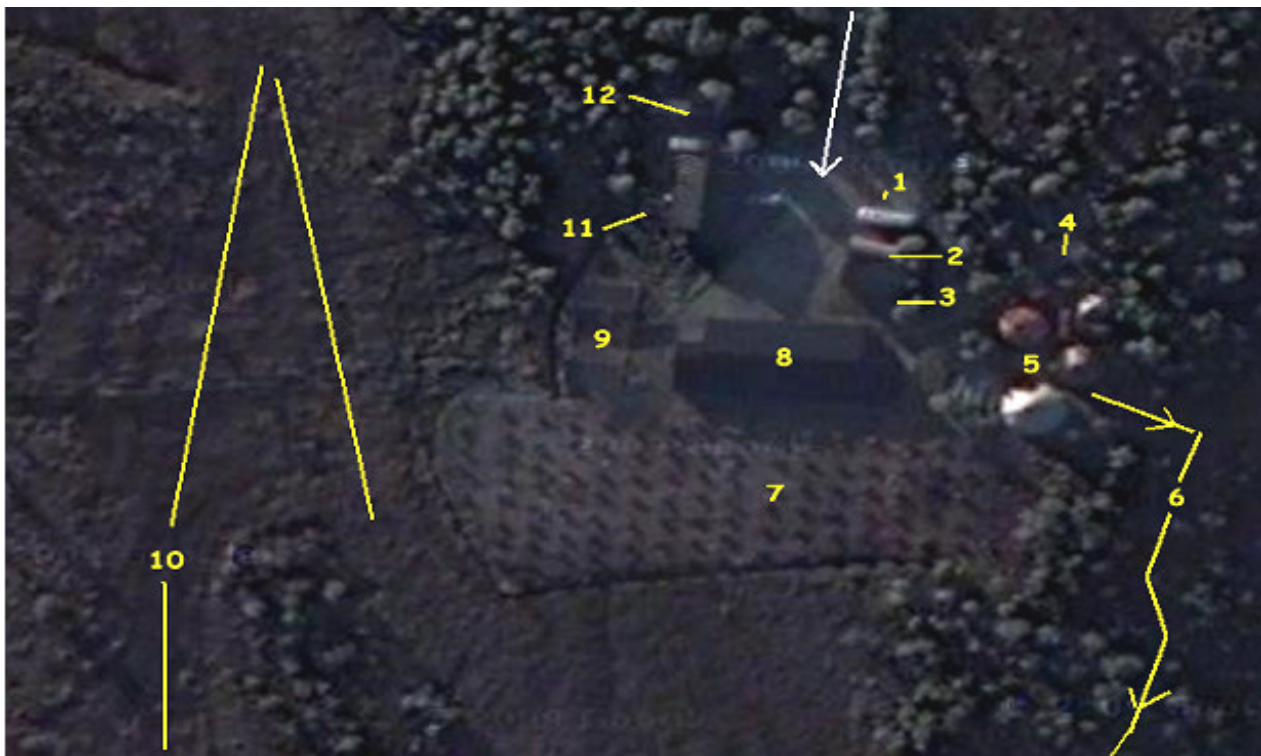


All people there are very pleasant and friendly and it's possible to make conversations in English there with everyone. The workers there aren't only from Norway and we also have workers from France and one from Great Britain. In addition to that there are also three workers from Germany and of course also with them I am having great conversations. In my opinion the working together from different countries makes the general atmosphere even more positive because you simply feel that everyone is welcomed and at one level – something that I really miss often in Germany. It's also really interesting to make conversations because everyone speaks a little bit different English. But no need to be worried due to the fact that there is always a way to explain if you want to and the English isn't luckily not much like business English ;-). In emergency there will be also the way to describe by "hands and feet". First of all I'll get so see my accommodation for the next days. It's a small but comfortable red cottage with a bed and desk inside. So finally I can store my luggage. For

the reason that it's already in the afternoon and the workday slowly goes towards its ending I have no work to do today. I use the free time to walk around and explore the Tromsø Villmarkssenter and of course there is one activity I really have to do immediately: Saying hello to the about 250 huskies in the "dog yard"! ☺ It's the same feeling like in March 2008 – I feel very very comfortable and positive to be in contact with the dogs. Of course I am also happy that all today worked simply great. The arrival, the communication here and that I am finally here as planned. I simply have forgotten already all sorrows that I have in mind during my daily life in Germany. Now I am really looking forward to tomorrow when I will have the first work day of my internship.

### [A short tour at the Tromsø Villmarkssenter \(2009\)](#)

Now I will make a short guiding tour for you to explore the property of the Tromsø Villmarkssenter. This will also help later with the travelogue here to have more clear, where activities are happening and where the location of the pictures is. Due to the fact that my internship there was in 2009, today in 2017 the Tromsø Villmarkssenter will surely look different. I will put in at the end of the tour a textpassage where I will try to make a kind of upgrade, if I can find out in detail how it looks like today and what the differences are. Now let us start with the tour:



On the picture marked with a white arrow you can see the entry to the Tromsø Villmarkssenter. I will describe this tour from the perspective of the white arrow. If you arrive on the forecourt you will see a small parking area (“**yellow 1**”) on the left hand side. Next to the parking area there is a wooden cottage (“**yellow 2**”) where you can find washbasins and toilets which are separated in women and men of course. Next to the cottage also on the left hand side there is a kind of garage (“**yellow 3**”), where equipment for other excursions offered by the Tromsø Villmarkssenter is stored. If you go pass the garage you will find four tents behind which are called “Lavos” (“**yellow 5**”) and which are typical for the culture of the Sami. The Lavos are used for the tourists to show interesting movies for example during the offered tours. Due to the fact that it's so comfortable inside of them, they are in general used to sit together with the tourists. In the middle there is often a campfire to keep the visitors warm or simply to make the atmosphere even more comfortable. Together with a fresh brewed

coffee and some cake (really popular homemade chocolate cake → you have to taste it !!!!) the atmosphere couldn't be more relaxing and also not more informal. Behind the Lavos there are 2-3 hot tubs ("**yellow 4**") which are heated by wood. These are used mostly in winter by tourists because even it's cold around, inside the hot tubs it will be comfortable and warm anyway. You can also rent them for your own celebrations or special events. They also used sometimes during nights while the Northern Light is dancing above. If you now pass between the four Lavos you will notice a small trail which is also used during the tourist tours here in the month of summer. The nature trail ("**yellow 6**") is a small but very interesting trail to get to know interesting facts about the vegetation in Northern Norway in short time. Here you can see for example downy birches (which are very widespread here), some little bushes and if you are really lucky also the popular cloudberry (*Rubus chamaemorus*). There are also a lot of blueberries. Remarkable is also the variation of mosses and plaits which are growing very well in the whole region because of the moist ground. The nature trail ends then after some time but you can continue to go until you are reaching the southern end of Kvaløya to relax and enjoy the water of the fjord around.

We go back the small trail between the Lavos and then turn to the left hand side to arrive at the "dog yard" ("**yellow 7**"). Here you will be welcomed by about 250 Alaskan Huskies which are also happy, if you say hello to them (if possible, to every single dog of course :D). As you can see on the picture above the kennels are positioned with two next to each other for of course also two dogs. Additionally they are ordered in lines. At every single kennel you can find the nameplate of the dog who is chained there with a solid chain. First that doesn't sound really nice, but the chains are long and the dogs can move around very well. Without any question that is also for safety reasons so that there isn't any conflict with the other dogs. During the winter the huskies aren't very often nearby their kennels because then it's time for doing dog-sled rides. During the month with not enough snow the huskies shouldn't move much because they need to gain weight and energy for the upcoming winter.

The building immediately next to the "dog yard" is one of the most important ones because here the food for the huskies is being prepared – for that reason, that is surely also the meaning of the dogs. Also dogs that got hurt will be doctored here and so you also find here some small enclosures for these dogs. The other part of the building which is not in the direction of the "dog yard" housed other important locations. You will find here the gift shop, toilets, the kitchen and the dinning room for the workers.

If you continue to walk between the "dog yard" and the mentioned building you will find additional enclosures ("**yellow 8**"). These are the ones which are (in general) the most popular ones for tourists because here you can often see the puppies or pregnant she-dogs.. These need to be separated of the pack for safety reasons. The puppies are sometimes only a few days old and I think it's impossible not so say kind of "oooooooooooooh" because they are really really cute. There is also a little bit larger enclosure for the puppies which are already a little bit older. Here they have there first place to play and jump around but they also learn here there first commands from the workers. Sometimes also dogs which got hurt can stay here.

On the picture above on the left hand side you can also see the tracks where the dog-sled rides are taking place ("**yellow 10**") during the colder months. These areas are also very good visible in summer and then it's getting clear very fast why they can't use it for the vehicles in the summer. The landscape is very uneven and with all that moist grounds it's simply too dangerous and difficult to coordinate.

The main building of the owners ("**yellow 11**") is also visible on the picture and it'sn't far away from the cottages for the workers ("**yellow 12**") who have no own house or flat nearby. For the workers there are two comfortable log cabins which are again separated into two living areas. As a reasult you have four small living areas which



simply have what you need while working at daytime. Due to the fact that you are almost all day outside for working, it doesn't need much inside there.

That is the tour that I am remembering and I guess I marked all important locations. While I was there in 2009 it was already mentioned that there are new plans for the property but I hope it helps to get a little bit of orientation.

## A workday at the Tromsø Villmarkssenter: *What is a workday in summer like?*

With the following text I will try to bring closer to you a typical working day at the Tromsø Villmarkssenter in summer. During my stay there the days weren't so much different and for that reason I will not divide the explanations in several passages for each day but in one text. Please note, that these information are also based on 2009 and maybe aren't that up to date. Additionally please keep in mind that every day can be also different of course if something unexpected happens. But I guess it will be interesting anyway to have a general impression what a day is like.

The always bright working days during the Norwegian summer at the Tromsø Villmarkssenter mostly start around 8 am. I was getting up most of the time already at 7 am to have enough time to prepare myself a little bit and of course to have time for a breakfast which gives energy for the day.

After the breakfast there is a meeting with the owners and the workers. During that meeting the important tasks of the day are getting distributed to the workers and they get to know, who has to do what on that day. The language here is of course English for the international workers but of course no one has a problem with it, that the native workers get their explanations in Norwegian. These meetings are very important especially for the days in summer, on which not only the Hurtigrute brings guests to the Tromsø Villmarkssenter. During the summer month Tromsø is of course really popular and sometimes there are additional 1-3 cruise ships with excursions to the Tromsø Villmarkssenter. Then it can be really stressful to handle also the general daily work. Subsequently I will describe a workday to you (18th June), on which there are many guests coming here from several cruise ships.

After the team meeting the first activity every morning is to clean the "dog yard". Of course that task doesn't sound nice and it won't be the favourite activity for anyone if there wouldn't be the 250 huskies. They really make even this task early in the morning simply positive. You really can't imagine how happy the dogs are when in the morning the first workers are entering their area. The acoustic level is accelerating skywards and they jump at you very happy wherever you are in the area. They want to get their "morning-strokes" or just want to play. Due to the amount of dogs and the size of the area that has to be cleaned there isn't that much time you can spend with each dog, but every single husky gets greeted very personally. Beside the cleaning of the area you have to make clear, that no chains have been twisted or slipped under a main pillar of the kennels. After the "dog yard" has been cleaned, what mostly took about 30 minutes, the next task was to clean the enclosures of the puppies and the other younger huskies. In general also that was done after about 15 minutes.



Today (18th June 2009) it's a really stressful day because there are expected especially many visitors at the Tromsø Villmarkssenter – a good example for a day, that has to be very well planned during the meeting in the morning. The reason for the increased number of visitors is the fact, that the cruise ships MSC Lirica, MS Princess Daphne and also Costa Magica will visit Tromsø today. Luckily not all at the same time :D. During the midmorning the first visitors of the Costa Magica arrived already (the ship arrived at Tromsø in the morning at 8 am) and in the afternoon we expect the visitors of the other two cruise ships as well as the guests of the Hurtigrute at about 3 pm. For these number of guests there need to be made a lot of preparations: Boiling the special norwegian berry-juice which is most of the time the task of our cook from France. While the juice is being prepared he's backing also the extremely tasty and well known chocolate cake for the guests. I am sure I am repeating this because I mentioned it before already – but you really have to taste this awesome cake! There are also some lucky days for the workers when at the end some cake is left and they also are getting a piece :D.

Meanwhile we have to prepare two Lavos for the screening and the camp fire with coffee and cake. For this we need to configure and prove the projector. the reindeer-coats have to be put onto the wooden benches and many tealights need to be placed on the tables. One more task is to clean and prepare the camp fire. These tasks need be to done of course in each of the two Lavos.

At the same time two workers are preparing the exemplarily dog team on which the guests can have a look next to one of the Lavos to get an idea how that team and a sledge look like. That is also very great while the guide gives explanations about the dog team because showing always is better than explaining only by words. The dogs need to bring out of the "dog yard" which can be very exhausting. On one hand the huskies can be very strong and on the other hand if you pick up one dog from its chain, the others are jealous on this dog because they think he will be used for dog-sled riding. The other huskies want to do that of course also and can get aggressive to the chosen dogs – so you need to be careful and if possible fast while bringing the dog to the sledge. No question about it, that it's simply the same during the winter when they really are doing dog-sled rides at the Tromsø Villmarkssenter. Most of the time they take about 6 huskies for the sledge next to the Lavo to have two dogs for each needed component of the team. I will give you an



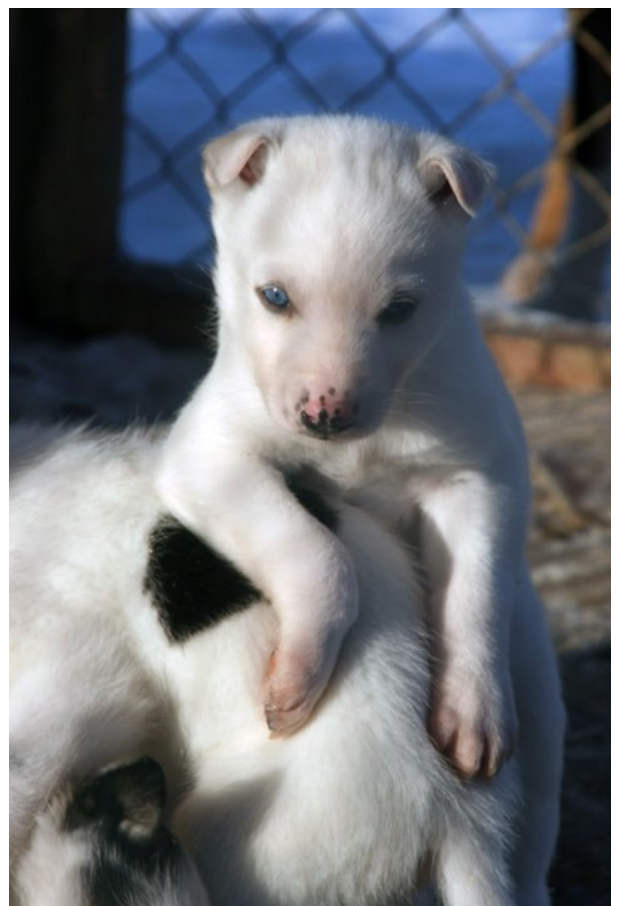
idea of the needed components now in very short: At the front of the group you have the "lead dogs" which are very intelligent because their task is to find the correct way and they are leading the team. I learned that these dogs are most of the time she-dogs – luckily not always :D. Immediately after the "lead dogs" (and here in the middle of the group) you will find the "swing dogs". As the name already mentioned these dogs are mainly responsible to help the team for coordinate riding turns or twists. Due to the fact that for the tourists there is in the summer just a small team, the next component of a normal team is missing. Behind the "swing dogs" you normally will find a group of "team dogs" which are responsible for the additional power and speed. Directly in

front of the sledge you always find the “wheel dogs”. These dogs are very powerful because their main task is to brake the sledge but also to make it starting to move at the beginning. Without any questions also the other members of the group are helping with that. The “wheel dogs” are most of the time male dogs. This explanation here is very simple but I guess for getting a good idea it's enough. For getting to know more, feel free to visit the Tromsø Villmarkssenter to get more detailed explanations ;-).

Then the first busses are arriving at the forecourt of the Tromsø Villmarkssenter. First of all the guests are getting warmly welcomed of course. Most of the time there is also a translator with the tourists for Italian, Spanish or French. The part of talking in English is taken of course by the guides of the Tromsø Villmarkssenter. Sometimes they also help with the other languages but that of course also depends on the nationality of the workers. Due to the fact that most of the guests are Germans the information that there are often also German workers can be helpful, because due to that you often can also find a German speaking worker. But I know that the shipping companies most of the time take care of their guests by sending a German translator on the excursions. Even if that isn't the case and you can't understand all, the Tromsø Villmarkssenter is definitely worth a visit. In 2009 it was easy to spot the workers of the Tromsø Villmarkssenter because they all donned red waistcoats or jackets.

Now I will make a general description, what the visitors can expect when visiting the Tromsø Villmarkssenter during an excursion (from 2009):

First of all the guests will be brought inside one of the Lavos. While going from the forecourt into the Lavo you often can already hear the huskies getting happy and excited because they of course already heard that there was coming a bus. Inside the Lavo you can taste the very tasty Norwegian berry-juice which I only can recommend to everyone. Then the workers will show you a very interesting movie with general information about huskies and of course about the worlds longest dog sled race called "The Iditarod". After watching the movie (I guess it was about 15-25 minutes long) the guests will be guided outside the Lavo and to the exemplary sledge with the small dog team in front. Here they get information about the team in front of the sledge as well as also information about the sledge and its equipment. Most of the time during that explanations you can already hear the dogs in the "dog yard" which is only a few steps away. They are very excited and want to be greeted by the guests.



Right after the explanations the guests are able to visit the about 250 huskies in the "og yard" – of course also some workers are with them to answer to upcoming questions and for general taking care. It's really nice to note, that the visitors are very interested and asking questions. Justifiably there are always a few guests who don't like to be jumped on by a dog and for that the workers can show you paths with dogs who don't jump and don't have that wild character. All in all that jumping is of course simply showing that the dog is excited and happy to see you. Inside the "dog yard" often most of the visitors don't spend most of the time during their visit. The reason for that is the next stop on the excursion – of course that is visiting the puppies and younger dogs. Without any question that stop is most wanted for adults and of course especially for kids. Often you can see here puppies in different ages – from a few days up to a few weeks. During my internship I didn't spot a visitor who didn't say "oooooooooh" or at least had this in his / her view, simply because they are really very cute. If there is the possibility, you can also take a puppy on your arms. Even the younger dogs who are already a few weeks old are simply great while they run and jump around. If you forgot your camera, at latest now you will notice it. Even these dogs are very cute, you never should miss also to visit the older dogs inside the "dog yard" because also that is very very positive and they are really happy to get visited. Then when the workers managed to tempt away the guests from the young dogs (sometimes it works only in that way :D) it's worthwhile to join the walk on the short nature trail which I mentioned already before in my travelogue. Without any question there is also a guide with you who will tell you very interesting facts about the nature of Northern Norway. If you are really lucky, you will also be able to see the most popular Norwegian berry – the cloudberry (*Rubus chamaemorus*). The footpath is a little bit uneven and you should maybe prove if it's okay for you if you have any limitations for walking. After that short but very informative walk (most of the times not more than 20 minutes) the guests can take a seat in the smaller Lavo where the workers already prepared fresh coffee and tea as well as the famous (homemade chocolate cake that I mentioned several times before. And again: Don't miss to taste it :D! That is of course another good time to bring in upcoming questions or own experiences and to share all this with the other guests.



The last stop you should do is to visit the gift shop where you can buy for good Norwegian prices articles about Norway, Tromsø, the Tromsø Villmarkssenter and of course the huskies. Here you can find interesting stuff for young and old. I bought in 2009 a cup there and the quality is simply excellent! I am using this cup daily (now for almost 8 years) and it didn't lose any colour or got any other wear marks. I use it for drinking tea and there are also no discolorations inside. I bought several times souvenirs at different locations but often it was bad quality (especially also cups) – not here ☺. In 2009 you were also able to pay with Euros at the shop. Then finally it's time for the guests to go back into the bus and after a warmly goodbye by (most of the time) one of

the workers (the others are already working again to prepare for the next visitors) your exciting visit at the Tromsø Villmarkssenter will come to an end.

For me it was simply great to be the guide for the tourists and I enjoyed it so much! That is also one of the reasons why I learned the information I had to talk about so fast because it was also very interesting for me. But the combination of the informal atmosphere with the team at the Tromsø Villmarkssenter, the landscape around and the interested tourists made it simply positive and great for me. I also liked it very much to speak in English, some French but also German sometimes. The nature trail was also easy to learn for me because nature is of course always interesting for me. With the internship I got the confirmation that guiding tourists makes me really happy and I really hope I can do that in Norway one day in future for longer time.

After the tourists left the Lavos have to be cleaned and prepared for the next group of tourists. That sounds a little bit like mass processing but it'sn't. All tourists get a informal and very personal atmosphere here but of course with so many excursions on a day and in addition to that there have to be done the daily main tasks for caring the dogs, all has to be prepared immediately. The preparing of the Lavos is most of the time the task of one worker for each Lavo.

Now it's almost noon and the same we have, the huskies are hungry. That brings us to the next daily work at the Tromsø Villmarkssenter → the feeding of 250 huskies. Due to the fact that the huskies are running so much in the winter they are getting two meals then. During the summer they run very less and for that reason they only get one meal at about noon.

For all 250 huskies it's necessary to prepare about 30-34 buckets of food. The food consists of dry food and deep-frozen meat scraps (for example rumen and other organs) which are getting mixed up with water for being served to the dogs then immediately. I really had to get used to that, but it was getting normal for me after the doing it two times. I noticed very fast that the huskies already are "freaking out" if they hear anything of this preparation from inside the building :D. Often up to six workers are working on that task so that all dogs are getting their food almost at the same time – of course that is not always possible. Sometimes they are also getting a desert which they really love → ribs of reindeers. That need to be hooked with an axe by the workers and that can be a little bit exhausting. You need to be careful because the parts of the hooked ribs are flying through the whole building. When you are serving dainties like this to the huskies it's extremely important to serve it at the same time in front of the two dogs (chained at one kennel) because if not, there can be fights because of jealousy about the food. The feeding can be very stressful but anyway not rateable as negative part. You have contact to all the dogs again and they are able to get to know you better. It's also important for especially new workers to do that work in order to get a member of the pack and to get even more accepted. There are some dogs who really wait with starting to eat until the food is inside their food bowl or until you make a command which allows them to start eating. That even sometimes worked until the neighbour had something in its food bowl. But a lof of dogs weren't able to wait even until the food is inside their bowl or simply wanted to have all what is inside the large bucket :D. Honestly I have to say that this is also the way some humans are acting and it's about food ☺.

For today the task about feeding the dogs is done and the buckets get cleaned by hose pipe. Immediately the buckets are filled up with water and dry food again so that this work doesn't need to be done tomorrow. There we only need to put in the meat scraps and stir up the all that.

After doing the cleaning, the preparations and that the dogs are saturated and happy, it's also time for the workers to get even more happy. It's time for a short lunch and the cook of course has already prepared a meal (during my time that was always very tasty and saturated – perfect for in between times).

After a little bit relaxing while eating now it's getting busy again with the next visitors – in positive way of course. Sometimes there are arriving about four busses and then it's extremely important to be well organised. But I noticed when I was there for my internship: If every workers is doing his / her allocated tasks all worked great! Daily at about 3.30 pm the guests of the vessel of Hurtigruten are arriving. A lot of them are of course Germans and they will spent about 1,5 hours at the Tromsø Villmarkssenter then. That is part of the daily routine but as today on the 18th June, in addition to the guests of the Hurtigrute there were two more ships with excursions from afternoon until evening. The result is a positive but busy day for the workers and a great day for all the dogs being visited by so many people. While the guests of the Hurtigrute-excursion are leaving again daily at about 5.15 pm, the workday today is of course longer with the other cruise ships. When all guests have left in the evening, there is still work to do for the workers at Tromsø Villmarkssenter. The Lavos are getting cleaned, tidied up (tealights have to be collected again, reindeer-coats need to be consolidated) and some preparations for the next day have to be made. The dog team next to the Lavos has to be brought back to their kennels and the sledge has to be put away. When all this work is done, it's time for the dinner. I really loved that daily routine and the fact, that the whole team of workers will sit together for dinner every single day. The atmosphere was really relaxing, informel and we used the time often to talk about the daily happenings and impressions. Sometimes we also collected then ideas for walks or made appointments to meet later again.

In general the workday ends for the workers at about 7 pm, what depends of course on the course of the day and the tasks that have to be prepared for the next day. During my internship I guess that I finished the workday always around that time, even on that more busy days. That means that you have workdays that last up to 12 hours – but not all the time it's exhausting hard work as you noticed while reading. For me personally I never noticed that I was working almost the whole day, because I simply enjoyed it. The work with the dogs, with the other workers, the tasks, guiding tourists and also the landscape around makes that all just positive and I really miss that even today in 2017. There was really no day where I got up with a bad mood or anything negative, like it's quiet often here in Germany. If I could exchange with someone doing that work instead of my office job, I would immediately do it! ☺. During my stay I noticed, that I wasn't even tired after the workday ended in the evening. Due to the fact that I was there in summer, the midnight sun of course invites for walks into that great landscape with fresh Norwegian air instead of sleeping early. During the winter of course the workdays can get much longer because the dog sled riding can take place until late evening and there are also other offered activities for the late evening or even for the night. But I guess even then I would use some time after working for hunting the Northern Lights :D instead of going to bed immediately.

Often in the evening hours (but also sometimes during the day) you can have the honour to get to hear the "singing of the huskies". You can compare this with the howling of wolves and it's really impressive and simply beautiful when all these huskies are joining this "singing". I will tell you a little bit more about this great

experience later in the text about my personal impressions of the Tromsø Villmarkssenter. Either directly after the dinner or after the relaxing free time in the evening with walks or other activities, a summer day as I have experienced it at the Tromsø Villmarkssenter ends and it's getting very silent all around there... but only until the next morning of course 😊.

I only can recommend to you to visit the Tromsø Villmarkssenter in summer or of course also in winter, when you can experience the dog-sled ride. All seasons have their features and only the reason that there is no snow in summer to do dog-sled rides doesn't mean that there is nothing interesting to see and to experience at the Tromsø Villmarkssenter. The prices for the excursions (it doesn't matter which season) always look a little bit expensive, but we really never had any guest during my time there who wasn't happy to have done this excursion. In general you can say that the prices of excursions during cruises always are a little bit expensive. I also visited here in March 2008 as a tourist for doing dog-sled riding and I also had a very pleasant stay and now I really know, that the organisation of all tasks and the great team of workers as well as the owners and for sure all the huskies are the key of the wonderful experience all guests can have there.

As I mentioned before for me it was simply great to be guide for the tourists that visited there daily and to be a member of the team. I was also very happy to get positive feedback during my stay there from several tourists that they also had a very nice time there during their visit. In addition to the workers who are happy to welcome you, of course also the about 250 huskies would be very happy to meet you at the Tromsø Villmarkssenter 😊.



## Activities during my stay: Enjoying the midnight sun

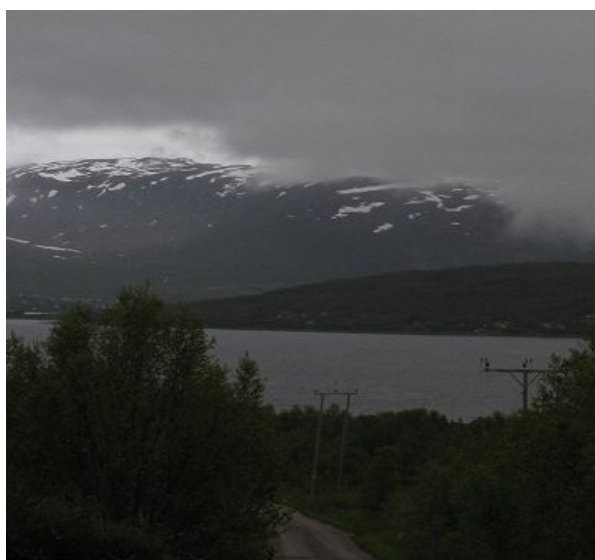
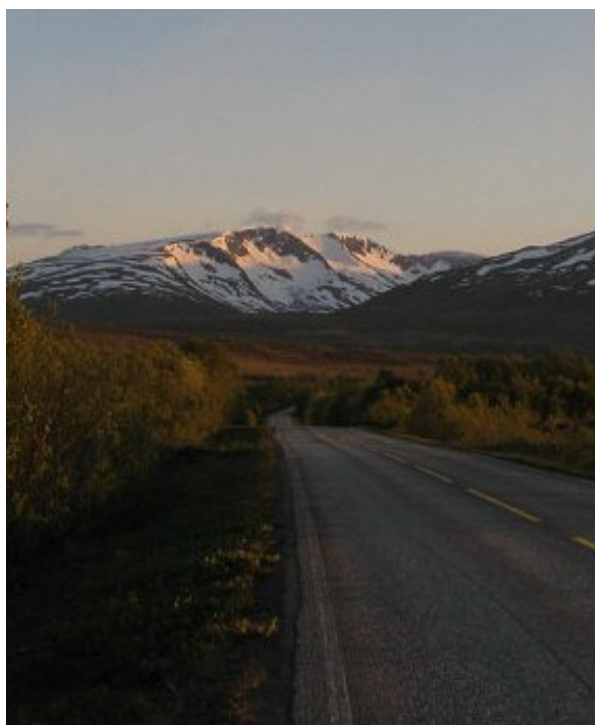
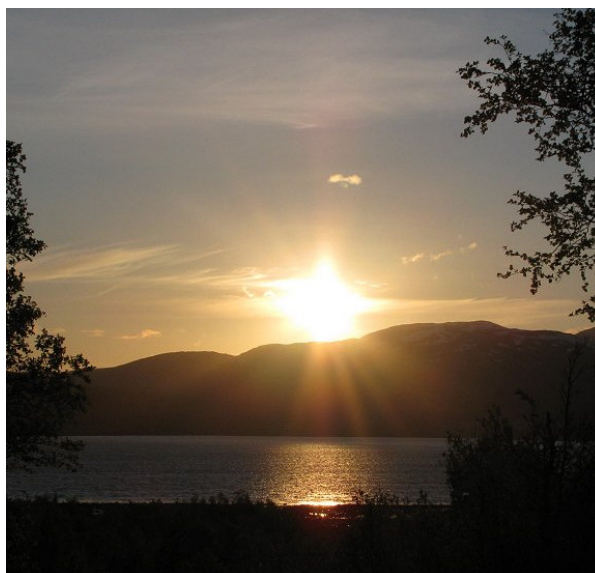
Even due to the positive effect of working outside in that fresh Norwegian air (and of course for the fact that I wasn't getting tired in the evening fast) I wanted to enjoy the fresh air even after finishing my work in evening. For that the midnight sun was simply perfect because I was able to use even the late evening for make some walks outside. I will now give some short expressions how that was like:

The weather at the first evening (9<sup>th</sup> June) was great because there were only a few thin clouds at the sky and the sun was shining continuously. For the reason that I was a little bit exhausted from my arrival, I decided to make only a short walk alongside the street today to have a look at the area around the Tromsø Villmarkssenter. Soon I found a very small hill in the middle of a area which was a little bit swampy which offers a great view of the landscape, the surrounding mountains and the island Tromsøya. I notice immediately that this place is my place to relax, to enjoy the fresh wind and to collect the rays of sunshine send by the midnight sun. Today I am staying here until 9.30 pm and afterwards I am going back to my accommodation, accompanied by beautiful reflections of the sunlight on the surface of the fjord.

Several evenings I am sitting there even until after midnight and sometimes I am looking at my watch to experience the lowest solar altitude and to experience the moment of the midnight sun. That special moment I am often eating toast with cheese and mustard, a combination that I got to know from the German worker Nadja. I really loved that combination which was unknown to me before and even today in 2017 I still love to eat that – of course even more when I am remembering that special place then.

Even the sun is shining the whole night (if the weather allows), you never should underrate the dropping temperature of the late evening and night. For the reason that the sun is low at the sky, the temperature can drop down to 5 degrees or less even it was 18 degrees during the day. Especially when there are windy conditions the temperature can actually feel more cold.

Even if the weather isn't that good I am going outside every evening after finishing my work and I am using the



time also for being close to the less good Norwegian weather – for me who is voluntary active with meteorology - that is normal of course. On the 14<sup>th</sup> June I am observing the low and upwelling clouds and on 16<sup>th</sup> June I also get in contact with some rain showers, which are coming in with much more water and therefore have most of the time stronger intensity. Also here the clouds look really spectacular while touching almost the water or the mountains. You can also easily spot the virga of the rain what shows that the shower is a little bit stronger. One evening I also can spot a small rainbow which fits perfectly to that wild nature and to the weather conditions. In the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> June I am making a walk alongside the road until I reach the small village called Tisnes and during the walk to there I often have beautiful views of the fjord, the area around Tromsø and also the mountainous landscape. Especially the road looks really impressive while going uphill and downhill several times. Also the departing and arriving aircrafts look great with this landscape in the background.



The island called Hakøya is also a great place for making a walk. On the 12<sup>th</sup> June the friendly German worker Nadja takes me by car to the bridge which connects the island with Kvaløya. She has an appointment at Tromsø and will pick me up again when she is driving back to the Tromsø Villmarkssenter. The island Hakøya is a really beautiful place to relax and I have time from 6-7 pm to walk around a little bit. I walk alongside the stony beach and alongside the more sandy beach on the other side of the small bay. The water has a deep blue colour because of the blue sky above and I also can see some really nice shells between the stones at the beach. The view of the surrounding landscape is really beautiful because you can enjoy the silence of the fjord, the small bays with also green colours in the background and without any question the mountainous landscape in the background. If you cross the bridge over the fjord to reach the island there is also a warning sign for mooses, which is a great motive to take a picture of. Of course here are also other animals in that region and I also see two oystercatcher which enjoying the evening sun while sitting on a stone.



## Activities during my stay: Mountain hiking on the island of Kvaløya

During my internship I made in total two mountain hikings. The first one I've made on the 13<sup>th</sup> June and the second one on the 18<sup>th</sup> June. The weather wasn't that nice during my first hike but the experience was simply great. The second hike had perfect weather conditions and I will of course give you an idea of both hikes with the following text:

On the 13<sup>th</sup> June 2009 after the dinner I am asking my colleagues for a possibility to make a hike in the evening because even while working today, the urge for more activity is there and I have the feeling that I have enough energy to make a longer tour. A worker recommend a mountain, which name I unfortunately don't remember. The mountain has a height about 800m and has its beginning almost next to the Road 858. I am starting my hike at about 6 pm with very cloudy sky but there shouldn't fall any rain – of course that is difficult to say if there is water all around. From the Tromsø Villmarkssenter I am following the Road 858 for about 30 minutes until I am reaching a small parking area on the left hand side. From here starts a small path into the wild nature. Often it happens that there is no footpath where you can go what is really unfamiliar when you are coming from Germany where all people should follow marked paths. For the reason that there is no path which I can follow, I need to reach the top of the mountain while hiking through the nature. That is allowed in Norway due to the everyman's right which includes a lot of great guidelines. The fact that there is a law like that, shows that the Norwegian people really care about their nature. For example in Germany it would be impossible to make a law like that because the most of the people there don't care much about the nature. Walking straight through the nature is really great and I am enjoying it very much. If you are a person who has a little bit sense of direction it's impossible to get lost in the nature here. Sometimes there appears a footpath again but because this path guides me away from the top of the mountain, a few minutes later I am walking again pathless through the wild nature of Kvaløya. It's really important to be careful where you go – not only because of the animals – but also because of plants and the swampy landscape.



On Kvaløya most of the landscape is swampy which makes this part of Norway very interesting as well. A lot of wildflowers, ferns and mosses are visible during my walk uphill. At a height of about 500-600m I can notice the beginning treeline and you can spot only a few small bushes and no trees at all. On the left and right hand side I can visit small waterfalls and I also have to cross stream courses what makes me enjoying that excursion even more. After the last trees are left behind, I decide to make a break and I take a seat on a comfortable stone. While I am relaxing I try to call home to hear if the house is still okay :D – luckily it's. After relaxing about 15 minutes (longer time isn't good because (the longer you are sitting, the more difficult it is to continue). I continue my hike uphill and I am reaching the first snowfield. Immediately I have the idea to build up a snowman and who can say that he built a snowman in the middle of the summer?

Thought and done. I am building up a small snowman which you can see on the pictures of the 13<sup>th</sup> June. To my right hand side I can already spot the top of the mountain but before I will reach there, I need to go uphill a little bit steeper. With reaching the transmitting station I finally reached the top of the mountain (9.30 pm). From here you have an outstanding view of the whole region! The region around Tromsø, the island Hakøya as well as the mountains and fjords around are looking very impressive. Unfortunately the weather really is looking for rainy conditions because the clouds are getting darker and lower. Therefore I decide to head downhill again after a few minutes enjoying the view from the top of the mountain. While walking downhill I have the pleasure to spot a frog in the grass which you can also have a look at on my pictures.



I am reaching the Tromsø Villmarkssenter again at about 9.45 pm so that I needed about 3 hours and 45 minutes for reaching the mountain, visit its top (on about 800m) and going back to my starting point – sounds not bad ☺. I am relaxing a little bit in my accommodation because my legs are really tired after that tour. Nevertheless I am not really tired and because the sun is shining again, I decide to make my daily short walk alongside the street to my chosen “relaxing-point” on the small hill. There are only a few clouds and the midnight sun helps me to relax while looking at that wonderful landscape. I really feel like home here and all the time forgot all the sorrows which are waiting in Germany for me. Now we have about 0.30 am and I decide to go back. After reaching my accommodation again I fall asleep immediately while looking forward to a new day at this wonderful place here.

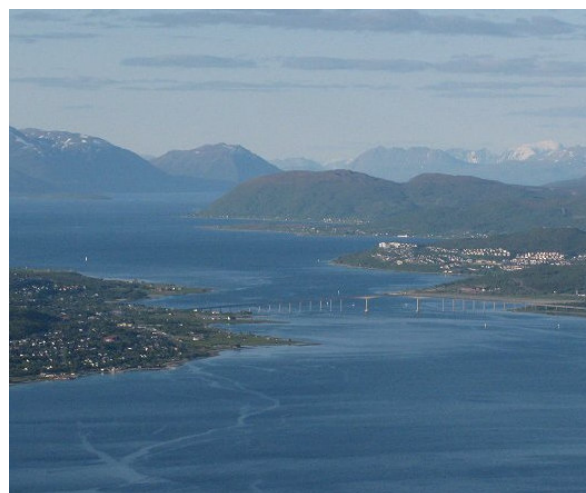
Today on the [18<sup>th</sup> June 2009](#) I now finished sadly my last day of the internship. Before I am heading home tomorrow, I decide to enjoy this unique landscape again while making again a hike the top of the mountain which I visited already on the 13<sup>th</sup> June. This time I am sure it will be even more positive and the reason for that isn't only the sunny weather but also the fact, that Nadja (a German worker) decided to join me on that tour. I am really happy about that and we are starting our



tour from the Tromsø Villmarkssenter in the evening sun at about 6 pm. The ascent which I already described in detail for the 13<sup>th</sup> June is really beautiful and I am happy that I have someone to talk with and we really get on well with each other. While we are hiking uphill we also look often back because the view of the landscape is getting better and better with more height. Now we are almost reaching the top and suddenly we notice, that we are not alone there. We can spot a pack of reindeers a little bit higher than we are. Due to the fact that there are also young animals we stop walking and wait, what the reindeers are doing.



Normally there isn't any conflict between the hikers and reindeers but you have to be a little bit carefully if there are also younger animals because the adults maybe think they are in danger and want to protect them. Now we are heading slowly the last part of our hike uphill and we can notice, that the reindeers changed the place more far away from us. We can continue our walk to the transmitting station on top of the mountain and there we are enjoying the warming evening sun, even the wind makes it feel a little bit colder. The view today is really indescribable because the sky is vivid blue, the water has a deep blue colour and the landscape surrounding us shows so many beautiful colours and details. The visibility today is simply spectacular and much better than 5 days ago due to the fact that we are able to look towards the open sea in northwestern direction. Simply beautiful is the view of the mountainous landscape around which are often still covered with snow. On the mountains there are also small lakes originated by the melting snow which have a turquoise colour. Behind the area of Tromsø the impressive Lyngen Alps are also clearly visible what makes the location of Tromsø so unique. It's impossible to describe that view of the landscape more detailed – you have to look the pictures ☺. Due to the

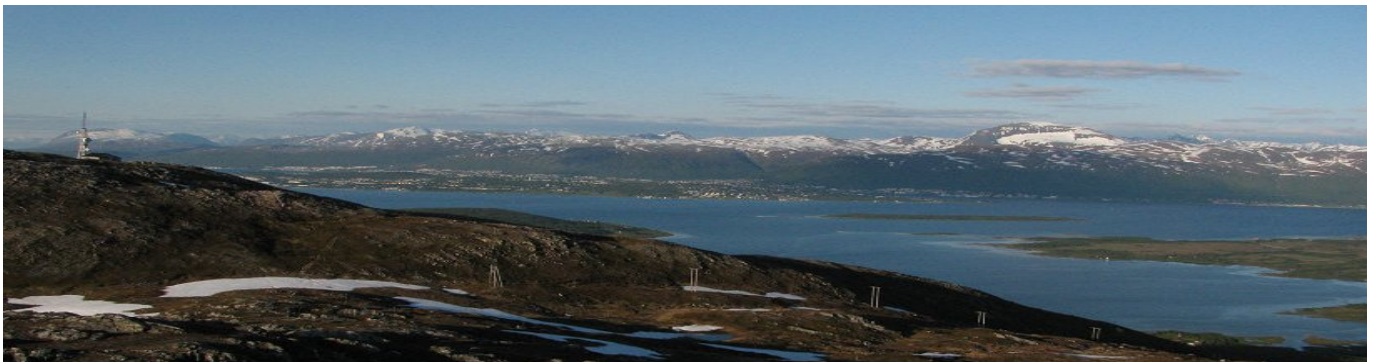


fact that the weather is so great today, we decide to continue a little bit and walk more uphill another hill not far away. But we aren't going up to the top because the underground gets to stony and uneven for normal equipment and we also feel of course a little tired from the workday. In addition to that the temperature drops with every meter of height and we only have clothes for a normal hiking tour – being reasonable is in that case the most important of course. Even the Tromsø Villmarkssenter is visible from here and if you have a camera with zoom or a binocular with you (you have to – I can only recommend ☺) you can also spot the "dog yard" with the kennels and even the huskies as small and white dots. It's also possible to hear them from the top of the mountains around during the "singing of the huskies". You also have a good view of the Tromsø airport located on the island Tromsøya and it's interesting to observe the departing and arriving aircrafts with that

impressive landscape around. My last picture of that awesome hike is a light plane in front of the massive mountains behind Tromsø. After having a last view around from the top of the mountain, we are now heading back to the Tromsø Villmarkssenter. We are reaching our accommodations at about 10 pm and of course we feel a little bit exhausted. I am very happy that Nadja joined me on that hike because and we talked and laughed a lot and I couldn't have imagine a better last evening of that wonderful experience making an internship here.



Due to the reason that I am not feel tired enough to sleep already (maybe it was just the feeling "I don't want to go home tomorrow!") I enjoy the last midnight sun of my journey shining through the window. It was a great last day of working, a magnificent hiking tour and a warming midnight sun.



## My day off work (15th June 2009): A day trip to Tromsø

Even the work at the Tromsø Villmarkssenter is absolutely the most positive work I have ever done, you need to have a day off work during the week. For me that day is today on the 15<sup>th</sup> June 2009 and after I have visited Tromsø already in 2007 and 2008, I want to use that possibility to have a detailed look at the beautiful and international city. During excursions you never have the possibility to enjoy the city completely because the busses driving you from sight to sight and you also have no contact to people there what is really sad and negative to me. Of course to have a first look at a city it's okay, but especially for cities like Tromsø, Bergen or Trondheim that isn't really enough to get the detailed atmosphere of these places.

Due to the fact that I don't have a driver license I am dependent to the public transportation by bus for driving to Tromsø. Luckily nearby the Tromsø Villmarkssenter there is also a bus station which has the name "Hakøybotn snuplass". The departure times of the busses are really okay and almost constant with departures at 7.10 am, 7.40 am, 9.14 am and 10.25 am. Because of the opening hours at Tromsø I decide to take the bus at 9.14 am. The travel time to Tromsø is about 34-42 minutes what depends on the bus you are taking (bus number 420 or 421). The busses also stop in the city centre of Tromsø and the central bus station is named "Tromsø Prostneset". "Tromsø Prostneset" is located perfectly almost next to the quay of the Hurtigruten and only short walks away from the most important sights of Tromsø.

After riding by bus alongside the Hakøybotn (by the way the bus was punctually on time and the bus driver was really pleasant) I am reaching the station "Tromsø Prostneset" as planned at 9.48 am and my walk through Tromsø can start. The weather isn't good because the clouds are low and it's raining from time to time, luckily not too heavy. But the weather hasn't any influence on my mood because first of all also that weather belongs to the region here and secondly I am happy to have time to get to know my current favorite Norwegian city in detail. First of all I am walking alongside the quay in direction of the Tromsøbrua but I decide to turn around to visit first the museum Polaria because it will open at 10 am. At 10.10 am I am standing already in front of the Polaria and take a first picture. The Polaria has a special construction which shows ice floes which were washed up by the rough Arctic ocean. The entrance fee is 100 NOK (about 11 Euros) and in my meaning that is really not too much for all the interesting information you will get to know inside. Inside the museum you have the possibility to get to know better the Arctic habitat in very pleasing way. Very impressive is the movie about Svalbard by Ivo Caprino which you can watch in the integrated small cinema. In that movie a little auk takes you on a journey alongside the coast of Svalbard with visual and also acoustic impressions. Impressive pictures as well as suitable and enjoyable music make a great movie. Without any question you also are



coming close to the polar bear. In addition to that wonderful movie the Polaria offers several aquariums with several Arctic marine creatures. But the main attraction is the central and huge basin inside you can observe a few bearded seals. They are a pure Arctic seal species and very popular here for visitors of all ages. After about 50 minutes I finished my visit here and I am going outside again into the fresh rainy weather. Next to the Polaria you will find the museum of the ship "M/S Polstjerna" which is also to be worth visiting. Afterwards I am going back to the quay of the Hurtigruten and continue heading towards the Tromsøbrua. While walking here you often have a great view of the fjord next to you but also to the Arctic Cathedral (Ishavskatedralen) with the mountains in the background. At 11.15 am I am arriving in front of the Polarmuseum which you should visit definitively during your stay at Tromsø. At a comparative small area you will find a lot of interesting information of the polar region as well as historical exhibits of Arctic expeditions and also several pictures. I am leaving the museum after about 30 minutes with a lot of interesting information inside my mind.

I continue to walk alongside the fjord with old wooden houses and I notice that the rain has stopped. I am really okay with the fresh light rain but it's also nice to have some time without rain of course. Now I finally reach the impressive Tromsøbrua. To cross that bridge you have to walk 1,016 meters and the highest point of the bridge is about 38 meters above the ground. The bridge connects the island called Tromsøya (where you find the city centre) with the mainland. 1,016 meters doesn't sound much distance but if you walk on the bridge, it feels like a longer walk. If you reach the middle of the bridge, you should make a little break and enjoy the view down to the fjord and the surrounding landscape. Due to the low clouds I am unfortunately not able to see that much but I am sure if you have good weather conditions you can look very far into distance.

For all who have fear of heights I can say that this bridge is very safe and you have high handrails out of iron to feel more comfortable. After about 7 minutes I am reaching the Norwegian mainland at the other side of the bridge and in front of my I can see a lot of colourful wooden houses and also the northernmost cathedral of the world – the Arctic Cathedral.





The cathedral is really popular for tourists and for the reason that I was already inside there in 2007, I decide to skip it now. But if you weren't inside there when you visit Tromsø next, go in there and enjoy that impressive and unique building.

I am turning right next to the Arctic Cathedral and follow the signs on which is written "Fjellheisen / Cable car" because today I finally want to ride up to the top of the city mountain Storsteinen for enjoying the view from there. While looking up from the ground the top is shrouded by clouds and I am thinking about skipping that activity also. Thinking positive is also useful with the Norwegian weather (also sometimes even that doesn't help) and I decide to ride uphill by the cable car. I am reaching the top after a few minutes at about 12.38 am. On the top you can walk around and also find some hiking trails. Luckily the clouds are not that thick and I can at least have sometimes a short view of Tromsø already at the beginning. On top of the Storsteinen you also find (as almost everywhere in Norway) small figures made by stones and I also build up one next to a footpath. Then my mood is getting even better than it's already is because the clouds are getting more and more gaps. Relevant to the colours the view isn't perfect today of course but I am already happy that I have the possibility to enjoy the view of Tromsø even the weather isn't good. Almost like a kind of dramatic the low clouds are moving over Tromsø and bouncing onto the surrounding mountains. From the restaurant you can go to the left and also to the right hand side and you should take your time and try out both directions ☺. If you go to the right you will have a spectacular view of Tromsø and the mountains in the background and if you walk to the left you can enjoy a great view of a valley. You can also spot a few waterfalls. At 1.23 pm I am going downhill again by the cable car and due to the weather of course there isn't any waiting time because I was almost the only person on Storsteinen at that time.

After reaching the ground again I am going across the Tromsøbrua back towards the city centre. I have luck because now at 2.59 pm the northwards cruising ship of Hurtigruten is arriving at Tromsø – only a little bit delayed. Today it's the historical MS Nordstjernen and also the cruise ship MS Vistamar is visible just behind the Hurtigrute.



For taking better pictures I am going back onto the bridge and the weather is getting a little bit better – at least it looks more bright now and I am taking a few more pictures of the bridge and the city. After all this walking I am really getting hungry and I decide to go to Pizza Peppes to allow myself a tasty pizza. My hunger is really strong that I order a bigger pizza but I never expected such a big pizza :D. I choose the “American Way” with extra cheese inside the edge of the pizza and I really need long time to eat all the pizza! That



here is also a great example, that it's very important to inform yourself about the country where you are going before the journey. I am sure a lot of people would have been really shocked if they would see my invoice after eating this pizza and drinking just one Cola. The total amount was 275 NOK (which is about 35 €, and you can order almost five pizzas in Germany for that price) but I have to say the pizza was really big and very tasty. In addition to that I feel full for the moment and no more hungry so that I am okay with paying that anyway. After this relaxing meal I ride the bus at 5.08 pm from “Tromsø Prostneset” back towards the Tromsø Villmarkssenter where I am arriving at the bus stop “Hakoybotn snuplass” on time at 5.40 pm.

Back at the Villmarkssenter I have the possibility to join the dinner of the workers and I am doing that of course. While we are eating and relaxing we talk about the happenings of today and I have to report in detail about my impressions of Tromsø. I only can say that Tromsø was and now still is even more my absolutely favourite city of Norway that I have visited 😊. It's my dream to live here one day without any question and I hope that I will be able to realise that sometime in future. Today I am going to bed earlier because tomorrow another day full of work is waiting for me – normally that would make me have a bad mood for the next day, but here I am simply looking forward in only positive way 😊.

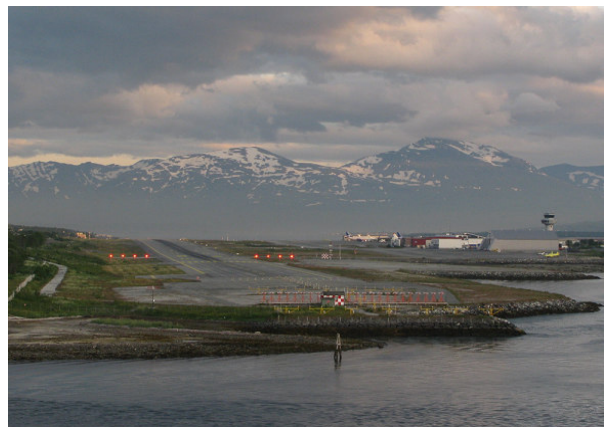
## 19th June 2009: Leaving the Tromsø Villmarkssenter

Today sadly the day has come to leave the Tromsø Villmarkssenter and unfortunately I have to say goodbye to all the huskies and my colleagues. For me it's really a sad day because after these 10 days I really felt home here and completely positive with that work.

It's really not difficult to describe my feelings because all in all I simply just wanted to stay here for continuing my work and staying at Norway. I never felt that positive with a work and all around so that I simply felt totally comfortable here. Very noticeable in positive way was to me the teamwork of the workers here even they were so different (different countries, different characters, different interests, and so on) but they worked together, respected each other the way he/she is and as a result we all had a great time and managed all days, even if they were sometimes very stressful. With that working together every single day was simply wonderful. Unfortunately I have to say that this conditions (at work or even just the interhuman relations aren't often to find here in western Germany where I am living. Here in Norway everyone is the same as the others and that makes it feeling very fast like being member of one big family (of course there are always some people who are different). Due to the reason that my character works the same, I really felt home there more than in Germany. But feeling negative or sad with that day won't help of course because I had to go back to Germany anyway today and I am very happy that I got the chance to get the experience to work here at the Tromsø Villmarkssenter. Without any question this 10 days were the most positive time of my life. Even we have now already year 2017, this didn't change.

At about 10 am it's time to say goodbye to the owners (Tove and Tore) and of course also to all the workers that I got to know during my internship. I am not happy to leave, but there is the sentence "you will always see each other a second time" and that really makes me feeling hope to return one day ☺. Kindly a worker picks me up and brings me to

the Tromsø Airport. I am arriving on time and immediately are able to check-in for my flight (DY 245) by Norwegian. Die departure is planned for 11.25 am and punctually the aircraft with me inside departures from the airport. The departure from the Tromsø Airport is very spectacular and not for bad nerves. Very short time after the departure you are flying towards the mountains and even during the ascent the aircraft has to do its first turns. During the flight towards Tromsø there isn't much visible due to clouds beneath us. There are also no



turbulences and it feels almost like going by train (on a very good and not too old track). We are arriving at Oslo Gardermoen Airport at 1.25 pm.

The weather here at Oslo isn't really nice because it's cloudy and sometimes there is also a little bit more heavy rain. Due to the fact that I am inside the airport all the time it has of course no negative influence on my stay. I use the waiting time to eat and drink something because my flight back to Dusseldorf (DY 1132) is scheduled to departure in about 4 hours at 5.25 pm.

Again perfectly on time at 5.25 pm our aircraft is departing from the Oslo Gardermoen Airport. It's still raining and our aircraft disappears into the clouds only a few seconds after the departure. As always I am looking outside during the ascent and I have right wing in my field of view. Then something very unexpected is happening because a lightning strike hits our right wing. I am able to follow this lightning strike coming from above, hitting the wing and then continuing going down into the clouds for maybe reaching the ground. For the reason that the impact happens only a few meters away from the passengers inside, there follows a very loud thunder and I am sure everyone is terrified by that happening. I am simply fascinated by that pictures I was able to see this lightning. Without any question outside in nature that happening would have had bad consequences for me, but now in that situation I could simply being fascinated and enjoying it - thank you to the lightning protectors. After a while the crew of the cockpit gives us the information that there was a lightning strike that hit our aircraft – surprise surprise – I am very sure everyone noticed that already about two seconds after the lightning happened :D. About 20-30 minutes later the crew of the cockpit gives the calming information, that the lightning didn't make any damages to the aircraft – I guess that information could have been given more early. The flight to Dusseldorf is really interesting for me because I am able to observe interesting and massive clouds due to the something strong rain showers or even thunderstorms around. Except from the special event during the departure from Oslo the flight is smoothly and I use the time to have a look at the weather in a safe distance to it. Then it's already time to start the landing approach and there are some faint turbulences as we disappear into the clouds. The touchdown at Dusseldorf Internation Airport is also on time at 7.15 pm.

Immediately after the arrival I am going to the baggage conveyor belt to pick up my luggage. Due to the fact that it's the airport of Dusseldorf and not the chaotic airport of Cologne, I am arriving at the train station very fast and I am able to catch a Regional Express that brings me to Horrem. Here luckily I am picked up (otherwise I had to wait more than 45 minutes) and therefore I am reaching my home very relaxed.

Therefore my just indescribable great internship at the Tromsø Villmarkssenter ends and still today I am thinking about it daily with a lot of desire. In addition to that I feel very thankful to Tove and Tore who made this possible and to all workers there, who made that time also that terrific! Eventually one day I can return to there or even can work at Norway without having to travel back to Germany. I am really excited what the future will offer to me, or better what I can do with my skills ☺.



## **Tromsø Villmarkssenter:** My personal impressions of the Villmarkssenter and the huskies

Here I will describe you my personal impressions that I got at the Tromsø Villmarkssenter and also some of them that are still in my mind afterwards. Please note that the information are from 2009.

The Tromsø Villmarkssenter is beautiful located place at which humanity and the work with the about 250 huskies has a really high importance. This impression you will get immediately, when you are arriving there. The construction of the Villmarkssenter is very good because everything is well thought out and already after a few hours I was able to know where all important places are and where I can find things that I have searched. The location is surrounded by the wild Norwegian nature with a lot of downy birches and swampy landscape with several mosses and ferns. In addition to that you will find a lot of berries here, for example the cloudberry and also blueberries.

With the Tromsø Villmarkssenter I have found a place which is wonderful to spend my holidays but also what is a great place to work for me. The work is sometimes exhausting and can take more than 11 hours, but that was getting positive for me because of the informal atmosphere with the other workers, the fresh Norwegian air all day and of course with all the huskies. I can imagine during the winter season it must be a very hard to work with temperatures dropping down more and more but I think that together with that dedicated team of workers also that time is good to handle. In addition to that I guess the Northern Lights during the darker season also help to feel more comfortable during or after a workday ☺.

Without any question you can spend beautiful holidays in that region here because of the versatile landscape (hiking, kayaking, mountain hiking, ...) and also the Tromsø Villmarkssenter offers a variety of possibilities for activities all year around. During each of the activities the guests are well and courteous cared and will surely have a great excursion or stay. Of course the same is offered during the winter season where you as a tourist can experience the “main activity” of the huskies which is dog sled riding. For me it’s really a desire to point out, that this activity isn’t any negative for the dogs. The huskies are used to that since many many maaaaany years because that far time ago the huskies were addicted to the humans in that northern regions to get food and the humans were addicted to the huskies to have a possibility of transportation. There are definitely a lot of generations now between that started and so the huskies have all they need in their genes. If you don’t believe that the huskies are looking forward to the colder season to be back in action, you need to visit the Tromsø Villmarkssenter during the time with snow cover. The dogs are really crazy to be in front of the sledge what you will realise when you see it in real. In addition to that there are several races for dog sled riding during which they go sometimes hundreds or thousands of kilometres through the Arctic wilderness. For that reason please don’t feel any negative when you are sitting inside the sledge and think about the poor dogs in front – enjoy the ride and the contact to the dogs because also the dogs really enjoy the ride (during the summer they are looking forward to it!). You can also trust the workers of the Tromsø Villmakssenter who always have a view on their dogs if they are okay or if they need to rest because they handle the dogs very well all the time.

I am personally really fascinated by the huskies (here were almost all dogs Alaskan Malamutes) and I noticed several differences to the dogs I know from Germany. Before my internship at the Tromsø Villmarkssenter I didn’t have so much contact to dogs I have to say. I mentioned that also before the internship but that wasn’t really important – when I arrived there I got to know why. Even I visited the Villmarkssenter in March 2008 I

wasn't sure that is the right work for me because there I didn't have the possibility to spend much time with the dogs. When I arrived there for my internship and had contact with all these dogs for the first time, all my sorrows were gone immediately. The charisma of the dogs there is indescribable positive and trusted. They are very friendly to humans but also have a kind of wild appearance with their look. If you look deep into their eyes (it doesn't matter if blue, black, green or brown) you will immediately feel familiar with the dog. That feeling I never had with the dogs around me here in Germany. During my working time there we had several guests who were not sure about their contact to the huskies because they had almost no experience with dogs before. Also they confirmed me that and most of them didn't want to leave the dogs when the excursion was ending. With the dogs here in Germany I am much more carefully because it's almost impossible to feel that familiar immediately – what without any question also depends on the dog owners and their handling of the dogs. I guess with the huskies there it's simply the special relation and the fact, that huskies and humans had to trust each other and work together to survive in that uncompromising Arctic regions.

If you work longer time with the huskies you need to get a kind of "leader" or at least you have to be accepted by the pack. That maybe sounds difficult, but I guess everyone who started to work there managed that due to the fact that they also have to serve the food to them. That is of course enough to get a big bonus by the pack. It's also important to sense and defer to the different characters of the dogs because some of them are really playful and they like to jump, others are more shy and reserved or others are simply familiar with you from the first second on. You never can force them to be another character. One of the dogs had the name "Shy" and that perfectly described the character. The first two days Shy always went into her kennel when I put in the food inside her food bowl and she always came out of the kennel when I was already a little bit more far away. Here it's important to accept this character and not to force the dog being less shy. It was really fascinating to see, how our relation gets better and better during the next days. After two days she already was less shy and allowed me to stroke her without escaping into her kennel. After three days she trusted me already that much to welcome me when I arrived with the food. That shows the relation very well which the huskies and the humans have to each other and that this isn't there always by the first minute – as we know it from humans to humans. Another husky named "Bacon" was very conspicuous to me because he trusted me from the first minute on and we had a very good relation with each other. Whenever I was arriving at his kennel he seems to be very happy and had a special charisma, even when I was arriving without food. It felt like a special together and it's really difficult to describe how that was in detail, but we both were always happy to see each other. Of course I never would say that were "my favourite dogs" there, because the work with every single dog was so positive and I wished to take care of them every morning again and again into future, but these two dogs were very conspicuous to me during that few days.

Something really special and wonderful is the "singing of the huskies". I guess almost everyone at least once the howling of wolves, even when it was only on TV. A lot of people already then are getting a hoorigilation, but if you experience almost the same in nature with more than 200 huskies, you simply don't know what to do and what to feel. You feel simply constrained in very positive way. The huskies are related to the wolves and the "singing" of them isn't that different compared to the wolves. Why are they doing that? Of course I also asked that question when I heard it for the first time. They told me that they use it to strengthen and confirm their solidarity of the pack, but also maybe to say thank you to the workers for their work. I think the truth is made out of both 😊. Normally one dog is starting the "singing" and other dogs are joining soon. The "singing" never

sounds any negative or aggressive and simply sounds like a wonderful and relaxing song melody. If almost all the dogs are joined it's really an indescribable situation and atmosphere. Even during my hiking tours that I described before in that travelogue here I was able to enjoy the "singing" from the top of the 800m mountain and I was just thinking: "Wow, life can be so wonderful and unproblematically. Maybe if it's very quiet at Tromsø, you eventually can hear it even there. But not only the workers are fascinated and feeling well when listening to it, without any question also the guests. At the beginning they are of course a little bit uncertain what suddenly is happening with all the dogs, but all were lucky to have the happiness to be at the Tromsø Villmarkssenter when a new song is starting. If I am remembering correctly that happens 1-2 times per day. One time during the day and daily one time in the evening hours.

Since I experienced that "singing", I am almost sure that the wolves don't howl because of the (full)moon. Also wolves do that almost daily and I guess it's also the reason to straighten the pack and its solidarity. But of course a howling wolf in front of the moon without any question looks really nice :D.

Anyway I wish every guest who visits the Tromsø Villmarkssenter to experience this "singing" of the huskies in real because if you hear it with that special atmosphere you will never forget that special, mysterious and very positive moment.

As I already wrote (I guess two or three times) the work at the Tromsø Villmarkssenter was simply like a kind of dream for me because I was able to work outside in that unique and simply wonderful landscape / nature, that I did take care of the huskies and guided the tourists and at the same time I was able to work in that simply great team of motivated workers. A work that offers all this positive elements and is also paid fair – please show that to me in Germany... Even now almost 8 years later I am thinking about that internship still daily and I wish that one day in future I can do that work, or at least a work like that again ☺. Even I have to say my slim body isn't that great to handle these strong dogs in some situations, I would love to guide tourists and take care of the dogs at the same time. But putting them from their chains in front of the sledge was really marginal for me because of my physique (and I was sorrowed about the dogs if they maybe could get hurt) but all other works worked really well.

I really hope you enjoyed reading this travelogue and that I was able to give you some impressions of the Tromsø Villmarkssenter – also of the work in the background that makes it possible to have that great excursions to that unique place.

Thank you for reading that travelogue and I only can recommend to visit the Tromsø Villmarkssenter ☺.

If you have any questions, improvement suggestions or simply want to give a feedback to that travelogue, I will be happy to receive an e-mail from you to " frankrinias@outlook.de ".

Yours Frank

## These persons I want to say a special thank you relating to my internship:

First of all I want to give special thanks to **the owners** of the **Tromsø Villmarkssenter** because without them this experience never had been possible! In addition to that I was really happy that the plannings and also the outworking worked that well and were simply uncomplicated. Thank you Tove and Tore and I really hope, that we will meet again in future! Take care and please never stop to offer that magnificent homemade chocolate cake :-D.

The next people I have to send an immense thank you are **all the workers / colleagues** who I was able to get to know during my internship. Each of you helped me to have a pleasant and just very positive workplace / stay. Thank you very much for helping me with all my questions and that we had such a wonderful time together. Also the sitting together I will always keep in mind in very positive way as well as the common hikings and walks.

Here then also a great compliment to our **french cook** during that time - I am not sure but I guess he was named Franck. The meals were simply excellent and that includes also the waffles you prepared for us as surprise sometimes. You all together were a great team and I wish the absolutely best to all of you! :-)

Also **to all tourists**, who visited the Tromsø Villmarkssenter during the time **from 10th June to 18th June 2009**, I want to say thank you because with you I got the confirmation that guiding tourists is a really good work for me. I had a very pleasant time with all of you and I am also very thankful for all the positive feedback I got several times after the tours finished. I was really to help you while speaking German, English or also some French. **To all upcoming guests** I can simply say that the visit of the Tromsø Villmarkssenter is always worth to be visiting and is just a great place. I hope that this place will be persists long long time into future with all the huskies and that great team there, who work really hard but I am almost sure they really enjoy their work there. It's really a great place also for all the huskies :-).

Many thanks also to **Christina Heinrich**, who allowed me to use some of her pictures which she was able to take during her stay there. Also the **Tromsø Villmarkssenter** allowed me to use some pictures and I want to thank you also for that!

At the end I also want to thank **Scandinavian Airlines** for the safe and comfortable outbound flight, as well as **Norwegian Air Shuttle** for the comfortable return flights. Without any questions the two airlines were also an important part of the whole construct because without them, I never would have been at Tromsø for the internship.

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Here some additional pictures of the Tromsø Villmarkssenter and the surrounding region:





## ***Further links / websites / contact***

***travels.frankrinas.com*** = *My own travel website (more pictures, travelogues and more)*

***frankrinas@outlook.de*** = *Feel free to contact me for suggestions and feedback to my website or the travelogues. I will reply as soon as possible.*

I hope you've enjoyed to read that travelogue !

Best wishes, yours Frank