

How's your Swedish?

Try this

Right:

vända rätt

Left:

vända lämna

Go on:

förutsätt

Stop: stopp

The Alaskan Husky Breed is not so much a breed of dog as it is a type or a category. It falls short of being a breed in that there is no preferred type and no restriction as to ancestry; it is defined only by its purpose, which is that of a highly efficient sled dog. That said, dog drivers usually distinguish between the Alaskan husky and "hound crosses", so perhaps there is informal recognition that the Alaskan husky is expected to display a degree of northern dog type. The Alaskan husky is basically a mixed-breed dog, in which northern or husky-type ancestry, such as the Siberian Husky or the traditional Alaskan village dog, predominates. Many other breeds have contributed to its genetic makeup, from staghound and foxhound to greyhound and doberman, which accounts for the Alaskan's great variability of appearance.



Alaskan huskies (at least those used for speed racing) are moderate in size, averaging perhaps 46 to 50 pounds for males and 38 to 42 pounds for females. They often resemble racing strains of the Siberian Husky breed (which is undeniably a major component of the Alaskan husky genetic mix) but are usually taller and leggier with more pronounced tuck-up.

Colour and markings are a matter of total indifference to racing drivers; hence the husky may be of any colour and any pattern of markings. Eyes may be of any colour and, as in the Siberian Husky, are often light blue. Coats are almost always short to medium in length, never long, and usually less dense than the coats of northern purebred breeds; coat length is governed by the need for effective heat dissipation while racing.

In the very cold conditions you will enjoy, Alaskans often race in "dog coats" or belly protectors. Particularly in long distance races, these dogs often require "dog booties" to protect their feet from abrasion and cracking. Thus the considerations of hardiness and climate resistance prevalent in breeds such as the Siberian Husky and Canadian Inuit Dog are subordinated in the Alaskan husky to the overriding consideration of functional capability. The Alaskan huskies lack the dense coat required to keep them warm, and they are not as hardy as Siberians, often requiring extra care on the trails.



During a session the dogs can manage up to 5000 km and still be eager to pull. Andre Nadeau says this is the reason his Siberians did so well in the 1998 Yukon Quest, where he led nearly the whole race until being passed by a team of Alaskan huskies.

Christmas is an especially magic time up north, and an added bonus of making the trip at this time of year is that you have a chance to witness the 'northern lights'. When you arrive at Hemavan or Storuman's airport you will be ushered to a cosy mountain hotel where you can enjoy an evening meal of traditional Swedish food. But don't get too comfortable because it is an early rise in Lapland the morning after and around 8am, after a hearty breakfast, you will be transferred to the kennels where you will be able to meet all of the Alaskan huskies. Then with the help of a specialist, you will harness the dogs, pack the sledges and before you can say 'I feel like an arctic explorer', you will have your own team of 5-6 huskies!

Should you decide this is the holiday for you, flights and hotel are plentiful. Check out the Nova Arctic website for more information. The experience is one never to be forgotten!

