

Off the Beaten Path

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I spent the past weekend off the beaten path at [Black Magic Kennels](#). What a wonderful weekend it was. I volunteered to kennel sit while Mark, Mary and their handler Tara went to Ely to participate in a sled dog race. Mike had plans to ice fish all weekend, Josh was invited to a friend's house so Abby and I made the journey together.

The drive to their place isn't really too bad, especially in the winter. From Grand Marais it only takes about 30 minutes to get to where the plowed road ends; about half on highway and half on gravel. When you can go no farther in the car you get to hop on a snowmobile for a six and a half mile snowmobile ride to their house.

Their place is a jewel tucked away in the woods with no visible neighbors. Traffic doesn't flow past their house and quiet envelopes their oasis. Only the howling of the dogs or chirps of the birds break the steady silence.

They have solar panels for electricity and an outhouse for a septic system. Water is hauled in from their well in five gallon buckets and a sauna outside is their shower. All Abby and I had to do was keep an eye on the two house dogs, one house cat and the unlucky dogs who weren't chosen to race.

Twenty-two sled dogs looked at us in anticipation as their 16 buddies and three masters left the dog yard. It was a beautiful weekend for caring for outside dogs with temperatures in the 40's. Neither Abby nor I minded mixing up their food in three five gallon buckets with a blender on a hand drill. I didn't even mind scooping poop; fresh or the stuff that kept appearing from thawing snow.

It was a welcome weekend of relative relaxation for me. While staying at someone else's place my unfinished projects or housework couldn't nag at me. The phone couldn't ring for me and no visitors to [Voyageur](#) could find me. If I had left my computer at home and their internet hadn't been working then it

would have been a real retreat.

As it was I spent some time on the computer, did some light reading, played a few games of Yahtzee, took care of the dogs, and went skjoring a couple of times. That's a blog entry for another day. Until then I'll just leave it at it was a wonderful weekend off the beaten path.