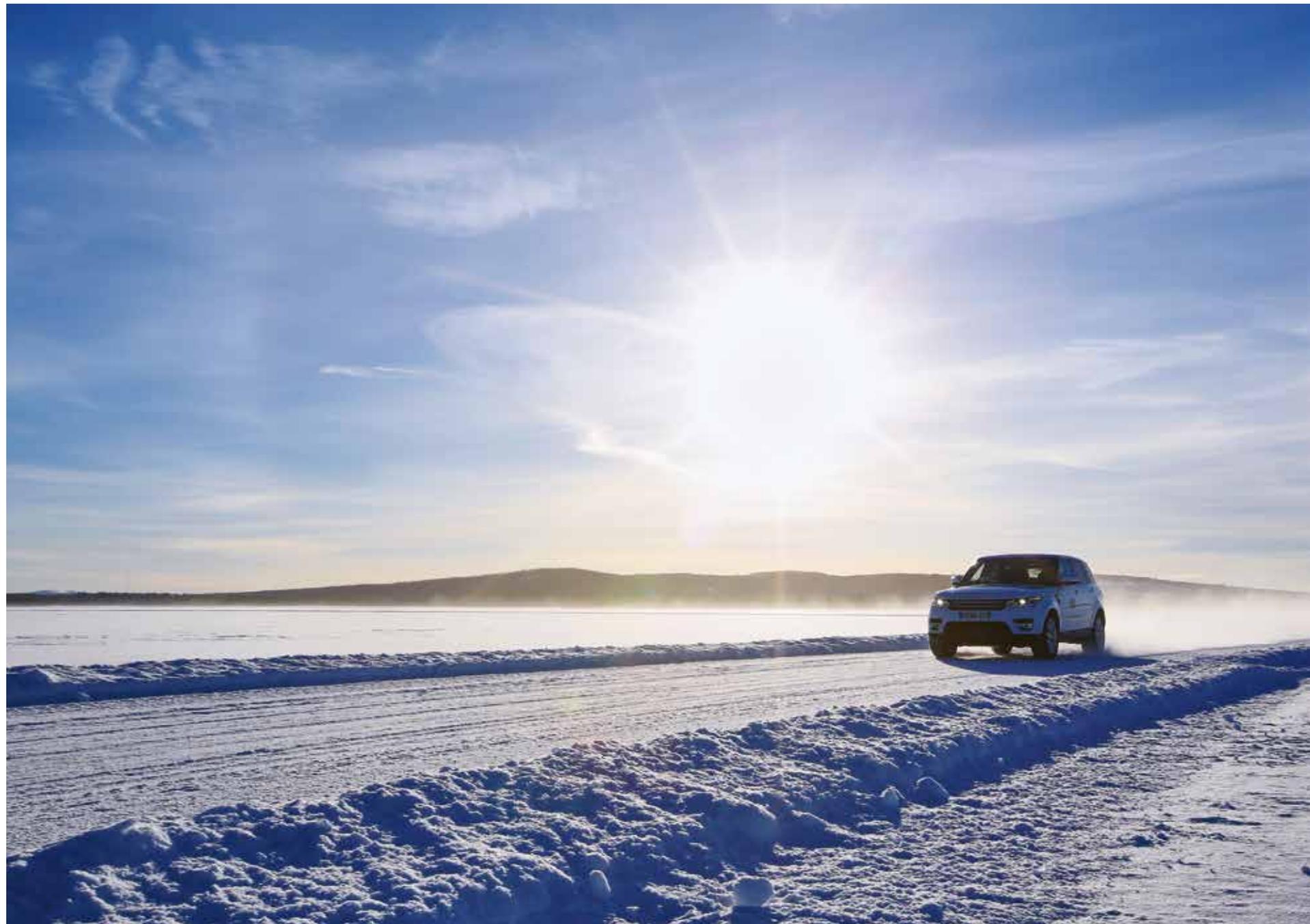


DESTINATION

LAPLAND, SWEDEN |

66.0515° N, 17.8901° E



BREAKING THE ICE

JANE CORNWELL FINDS SHE'S BEST AT DRIVING SIDEWAYS.

Day three of the Jaguar Land Rover Ice Academy and I'm at the wheel of a blue V8 Jaguar F-TYPE R, fanging sideways at 120km/h on a frozen lake in Swedish Lapland, just 60 kilometres from the Arctic Circle, on the upper outskirts of the European continent. It's hungry work, powering out of corners, wiggling through chicanes, drifting at impossible angles on 50 centimetres of snow-covered ice.

This all-wheel drive beauty is among the most practical of luxury

sports cars, but cultivating elite driving skills demands concentration – and gourmet-level sustenance.

Happily, it's moose on the menu tonight at Hotel Silverhatten, a swish hilltop retreat in the village of Arjeplog, a 20-minute convoy away and the ice-driver's hotel of choice. Up here, in a dining room looking over a Narnia-esque landscape that's lit up on occasional nights by a flaring green-and-purple aurora, Polish chef Wojciech Latyszkiewicz serves up local game with a twist: moose entrecôte with colcannon patties, red onion relish and a dollop

ABOVE: Instructors at Jaguar Land Rover's Ice Academy will help develop your skills for confident high-speed ice driving. BELOW: Jane Cornwell in action behind the wheel.



STEFAN BALDAUF

of Mackmyra (Swedish single malt) sauce. Free-range reindeer steak is served with earthy roasted parsnips. The flavour is intense, the aroma sweet.

CHEF WITH A MISSION

“My mission is to search for great tastes using local producers,” says Latyszkiewicz, 29, who relocated to Sweden from Poland three years ago; Polish cuisine is an influence on his kitchen but local Swedish produce is paramount.

“So on the menu, we have fresh salmon from the Norwegian Sea, served with fennel and tomato; spaghetti carbonara with smoked moose instead of bacon; prime rib with artichokes, chanterelles and sunflower seeds.”

On the wine list, there’s Le Fleur Solitaire Côtes du Rhone Blanc from France or Gran Bajoz Tinta de Toro from Spain, both served in moderation. “Due to the level of driving involved, alcohol is only included with your dinner and will be limited,” the Ice Academy FAQ forms state. Which, given we’re spending our days practising precision car control in some of the most testing conditions on Earth, seems eminently reasonable.

SAFETY FIRST

Out on the ice, in the middle of that vast blue-grey, rock-hard lake – an expanse that can handle the weight of a 20-ton truck in the butt-freezing winter months – safety is paramount.

The drill is explained on the first morning, after a breakfast buffet featuring muesli, salami, and smoked cod roe spread – Kalles Kaviar is the Vegemite of Sweden – plus local cloudberry juice.

We down our morning coffees in the Ice Academy Lounge, an octagonal extension kitted out with low tables and armchairs covered with reindeer pelts, as we listen to lead instructor Chris Shortt, an Englishman who like most of the instructors has a clutch of motorsport championships under his slim-hipped, possibly thermal belt. “Over the next few days, we’ll be creating wonderful memories for you,” Shortt promises.

But first, a few pointers: the main ice-driving pitfalls are apparently understeer – the car doesn’t turn enough and leaves the track – and oversteer – where it turns too much and may spin – both of which



FROM TOP: In the heart of Swedish Lapland lies Arjeplog with its breathtaking Scandinavian scenery and the Jaguar Land Rover Ice Academy; the Ice Academy Lounge is kitted out with low tables and armchairs covered with reindeer pelts; fresh salmon from the Norwegian Sea; Polish chef Wojciech Latyszkiewicz serves up local game with a twist.

I will go on to excel at. Controlled accelerating will right most wrongs, but braking is recommended if you’ve lost control of the car.

We are each paired with another driver from the group. I’m with car-mad, 30-something Craig, whose shouts of “Power on Jane – power on NOW!” each time we take a corner will go on to ring in my ears at night. Safely ensconced in our automatic Range Rover Sport, we depart Arjeplog for the frozen lake.



Tall fir trees stand sentinel in the white-carpeted forests, while yellow road signs with a Bullwinkle-style outline and “Next 20km” prompt twinges of guilt. But in the end, the only moose I spy is on my dinner plate.

Ice driving is a new venture for Jaguar Land Rover, the United Kingdom’s largest car manufacturer. During our four-day stay, we visit the group’s secret, extreme cold climate testing facility on the proviso of no photos, which is a shame since all the prototypes in the vast warehouse are masked by fabulously psychedelic black-and-white camouflage.

Luxury car makers including BMW and Porsche have long offered ice-driving experiences elsewhere on the lake – it’s a big lake – whereas our Jaguar Land Rover cabin, where we lunch on pulled pork and tossed salad,



is so new it feels like a show home.

“We’ve got a waiting list,” says another instructor on Shortt’s team, Stuart Clarke. “People want to come for various reasons: some want to test-drive our cars before they buy. Racing drivers want to improve their control. Mostly people want to learn a new skill and have an adventure.”

To celebrate the opening of the Ice Academy in January, the instructors zoomed around a cut-out of the Leaper, Jaguar’s iconic big cat insignia. It was reportedly spectacular, but virtually all of them came undone in one of the paws.

By contrast, our specially prepared ice tracks, marked out with ecologically friendly sturdy twigs, are easily navigable once you know what you’re doing.

SPINNING AROUND

The party starts later on day one when we’re let loose on a handling circuit that includes a figure of eight and an oval track comprising a mix of straight runs and sharp corners. It builds up on the second day when we swap between the sporty Jaguar F-PACE SUV and the retro-modern V6 F-TYPE S Real Wheel Drive. Things really go off on day three when, confidence boosted, we progress to the mighty Jaguar F-TYPE R All-Wheel Drive, a coupé fashioned from lightweight aluminium that can sprint from 0-100km/h in 3.9 seconds.

For my final drive, Clarke sits in the passenger seat as I take the F-TYPE R onto the track. We’re rounding a bend, fast, and I’m fighting my urge to brake, when the car starts sliding at an angle.

“Give the accelerator a little push like a heartbeat,” says Clarke, and there it is: with the front of the car pointing at the centre of the track, the steering wheel steady, I’m suddenly drifting at breakneck speed, sliding across the ice in one long blue blur. “Woo hoo!” I yell, before vrooming victoriously back to the group.

Later that afternoon, we’re given certificates testifying to our newfound skills in high-speed ice driving, which feels overly optimistic. I can be confident of one thing: I’m definitely a better driver sideways.

The writer was a guest of Jaguar Land Rover. Ice Drive Academy was priced from €2490 (\$3622) a person in 2017 (including accommodation), Friday to Monday. Please inquire for 2018 prices.