

# THE ARCTIC CHALLENGE

National  
Literacy  
Trust

Change your story



## An inspiring endurance adventure in the heart of Lapland...

**CHALLENGE SUMMARY:** Set in the heart of Arctic Lapland, this is a land of vast wilderness, frozen lakes, and rivers, the extraordinary Aurora Borealis, herds of reindeer, the occasional moose, snow dusted tundra and endless Boreal Forest. Ice and snow are the norm for many months of the year and the dog and ski are still essential for everyday use during the long winters. Here, just north of Kiruna (67°51'N 20°13'E) and 150 km into the Arctic Circle is where the Arctic Challenge is held.

The Arctic Challenge is an inspiring wilderness endurance challenge, held over a long weekend, which incorporates a 35km dog sled race, 20km Nordic ski, ice fishing, orienteering, woodland fire lighting and a lighthearted Swedish quiz. Participants need have no previous experience of any activity, as all instruction will be provided in situ by your guides. The Arctic Challenge is open for up to five teams of four persons, each event being scored to encourage healthy competition! The Challenge concludes with a visit to the bar at the Ice Hotel at Jukkasjärvi, a well-earned finish to your efforts spent in this unique and unspoiled landscape, followed by the Endex Dinner and prize giving to the winning team.

**DATE:**

10 – 13 January 2025

**DURATION:**

4 Days

**COUNTRY:**

Sweden

**START/FINISH:**

Kiruna, Lapland

**GROUP SIZE:**

Teams of four

**EVENTS:**

Orienteering  
Dog sledding  
Nordic Skiing  
Ice Fishing  
Fire lighting  
Swedish Quiz

**COST:**

£2,000 min fundraising  
per person

£300 reg fee

(excluding flights)



*“ I will never forget this trip, it has been  
the best experience of my life.”*

*“I loved having my very own dog team – they  
really felt like part of the family.”*

*“Every day I just stopped and stared at the scenery.  
It was like a magical wonderland”*



## PROGRAMME:

### Friday 10<sup>th</sup> January

An early start to catch the flight to Stockholm and onwards to Kiruna, Sweden's most northerly city, located in the province of Lapland. At Kiruna, the group will be met by the in-country team and a short transfer takes us to our base camp lodge. After coffee and a safety briefing, you will be issued with arctic clothing and given an introduction in driving and sled dog handling before helping harness your dogs and heading to the wilderness camp by the light of your own head torch.

Once at the wilderness lodge, you'll be given map reading instruction, and we'll all have dinner, wine, and a chat about tomorrow's events to complete the evening.

### Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> January

Your day starts with a short (1/1.5 hr.) orienteering challenge, finishing on the frozen lake where, armed with an auger you drill a hole through the ice and try your hand at fishing Arctic style. You return to camp for a quick coffee where teams will again harness their dog teams and compete in time trials over a 35km circuit across frozen lakes and through arctic forests.



There will be a brief midday break for refreshments and recuperation before the time trials continue in the afternoon under torchlight. Your group will arrive back at the wilderness camp by early/mid-afternoon. After a brew and warm up, there's a fire lighting challenge using only naturally occurring materials and a box of matches. The day finishes with a sauna (and optional snow roll), Swedish quiz and dinner.

### Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> January

Today is the 'Big One'. It's time to fit the skis and commence onto the Nordic ski event. Teams will have a lesson in technique, after which you will set off on a 20km race, setting off at intervals from the wilderness camp. The marked route will take you through the back country via Karpasjarvi and finish back at the base camp lodge some 3.5 – 5.5 hours later. With all groups safely back in the warmth, you'll be given hot soup and showers, and we'll visit the Ice Hotel for some decidedly chilly cocktails in ice-sculpted glasses. Finally, back to base camp for tallying scores, prize giving and a celebration dinner.

### Monday 13<sup>th</sup> January

A relaxed breakfast and transfer to Kiruna airport for the flight to Stockholm and your onward connection to the UK.





### CONDITIONS:

The Arctic is a harsh environment and temperatures can drop to as low as -35 or more. In the event of a light breeze, it is likely to feel even colder. The sun doesn't rise above the horizon from late-November to mid-January and we will have approximately five to six hours of twilight per day. As a result, a large portion of the main events will be undertaken in near darkness, adding to the challenge. However, on the plus side, this is also the best time to see the extraordinary Aurora Borealis, or Northern Lights.

### DIFFICULTY:

Participants need to have a reasonable level of fitness with good endurance and stamina. A sense of humor always helps too! As in all challenges, the fitter you are and the more you get involved, the more enjoyable it is!

### FITNESS:

Although the days will be relatively short, the activities you take part in will test you physically - especially the ski race. Therefore, some pre-challenge fitness and endurance training is strongly recommended, such as time spent on the cross trainer and hill walking / running.

**INSTRUCTION:** The Arctic Challenge will be led by John Howie, a military and civilian expedition leader who has more than 30 years guiding experience. Local guides and a back-up team will support him throughout the challenge. Instruction will be provided by the guides in all disciplines. This is a challenging weekend with a steep learning curve. However, it's eminently achievable and will provide you with a huge sense of personal achievement, as well as an opportunity to build some lasting friendships.

## THE MAIN EVENTS

### DOG SLEDS:

These are one-man sleds that you drive with a team of three or four dogs, mainly Greenland dogs and huskies.

### NORDIC SKIS:

These are Swedish Army wooden skis with pine tar base and fitted with Trapper/Hunter bindings to accommodate the cold weather boot. Depending on snow and ice conditions, the circuit will be across frozen lakes and rivers and along forested tracks, with the odd sporting hill thrown in.

### FOOD & SHELTER:

You will spend two nights at the wilderness lodge where you will be sleeping in team dormitories lit by candlelight and kept warm by wood burning stoves. There will then be one night spent at the base camp lodge where there are showers, electricity, and again team rooms or dormitories. The food provided will be typical for the region, including moose or reindeer and salmon. Vegetarians /Vegans are easily catered for.

### IN COUNTRY TRANSPORT:

Pick-ups and drop offs by minibuses or other suitable vehicle equipped with snow tires will be provided. Skidoos are used by safety staff.



# ARCTIC CHALLENGE ITINERARY

## FLEXIBILITY & SAFETY:

At times we shall be in a remote wilderness area with poor communications. Issues such as natural disasters, political disturbances, mechanical breakdown, poor acclimatisation, client fitness or accidents can occasionally delay or interfere with the challenge. The weather can be unpredictable, and, where necessary, the programme may have to be changed to suit the conditions. The guides and instructors have the final say on whether individual participants are able to continue in any of the activities for safety reasons. Although every effort will be made to ensure the smooth running of the Arctic Challenge, you must be aware of the above and accept both the risks and possible delays and take all necessary precautions yourselves.

## THE PROGRAMME

**Includes:** Kiruna airport transfers to and from base camp lodge at Kaupinnen, accommodation and all meals from dinner on Friday up to and including breakfast on Monday. All activities during the Challenge, guiding, equipment and instruction as per the programme.

**Not Included:** Flights to and from Kiruna, lunch on days one and four, drinks at the Ice Hotel or alcoholic and soft drinks other than teas and coffee at base camp and wilderness lodges.

## INSURANCE:

All participants must have rescue and repatriation insurance.



DAY / DATE	DAILY SCHEDULE/CHALLENGE	ACCOMMODATION
<b>Fri 10<sup>th</sup> Jan</b>	An early start to Kiruna. On arrival you'll be given a safety briefing, Arctic clothing will be distributed, and you'll be introduced to your dog team. After instruction on how to handle the dogs and sled, it's out into the wilderness by torchlight to the wilderness lodge.	Wilderness lodge. Dormitory style rooms
<b>Sat 11<sup>th</sup> Jan</b>	A brisk start to the morning with some Arctic orienteering, finishing on the frozen lake for an ice fishing challenge. A quick break and then onto the dog sled race from mid-morning to mid-afternoon. Sauna and snow rolls and then into the warm for dinner and a relaxed Swedish quiz. A chance to see the northern lights after dinner amidst the darkness of the Boreal Forest.	Wilderness lodge. Dormitory style rooms
<b>Sun 12<sup>th</sup> Jan</b>	The Nordic ski race. From the wilderness lodge to base camp, 20km across frozen lakes and along forested tracks. Tea, showers and prizes for the winning team. We'll nip into the Ice Hotel for well-earned drinks pre or post dinner.	Base camp lodge. Dormitory style rooms
<b>Mon 13<sup>th</sup> Jan</b>	A morning at leisure before the lunchtime flight back to London.	Home sweet home

Itinerary can vary slightly dependent on conditions at the time of the event

## FLIGHTS

The recommended flight times will be confirmed nearer the time.

**Do not book flights until you have a confirmed place on the trip.**

### Things to be aware of:

- Bags should be checked through to Kiruna (KRN).
- Any alcohol must be sealed in Duty Free, with the receipt readable within the bag.



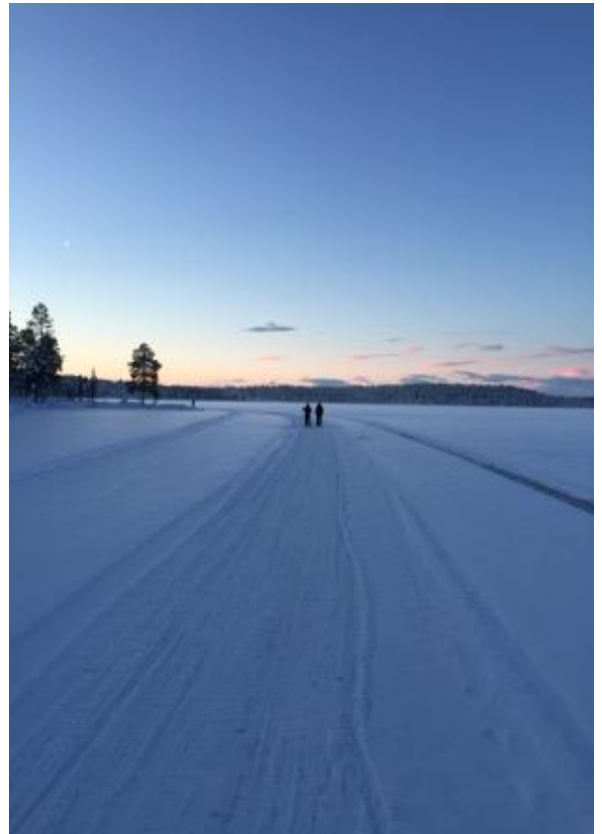
***"When I saw the Aurora it was a dream come true!"***

## CLOTHING & EQUIPMENT

ESSENTIAL KIT	PROVIDED KIT
Expedition duffel/backpack is easier than a suitcase.	Insulated all in one sledding overalls
Sleeping bag liner / single duvet cover	Winter hats and gloves
Daysack / backpack - 35/45L	Sleeping bag
Snow/walking boots	Cold weather boots
Duvet/Ski/down jacket	Skis and ski poles
Winter weight or ski trousers	
Fleece	
Wicking or merino tops to use as base layers	
Thick and long trek/ski socks x 3	OPTIONAL KIT
Thermals/long johns	Hot water bottle
Gloves, mittens (both thick and thin)	Battery /phone charger
Woolly hat/beanie	Personal medication
Head torch & spare batteries	
Water bottle (note that a camelback is likely to freeze)	
Thermos	
Balaclava	
Ski goggles	
Hand warmers	
Lip salve	
Towel	
Wash kit	
Personal first aid kit (including plasters and Compeed for blister treatment)	
Swimsuit/shorts for the sauna	
Day clothing - For travel and in the lodges	
Hut shoes / trainers	
Snacks	

There will be no opportunity to make purchases of alcohol or energy snacks so these should be purchased in the UK before departure. Please keep in mind when purchasing snacks that they are likely to freeze in the cold weather so it's advisable to buy things that come in bite-sized pieces that you can defrost quickly.

The evenings will be spent in a wilderness hut with log burning fires.



*“At times I found it tough. It was hard work, but at the end of the day I had such a feeling of satisfaction. It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience.”*