

THE ARCTIC CHALLENGE

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Join us on an adventure to the heart of Arctic Lapland, a land of vast wilderness and home to the extraordinary Aurora Borealis, herds of reindeer and endless forest.

This trip is an incredible chance to raise money to help us transform life chances in the UK by empowering people in disadvantaged communities with the literacy skills they need to succeed.

Key information

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Dates

Date 1: 14 - 17 January 2027

Date 2: 18 - 21 January 2027

Location

Kiruna, Northern Sweden

Registration fee (per person)

Please note this excludes flights

£350 early bird until 1 July, £400 regular cost

Minimum fundraising target

£2,200

“ *The Arctic Challenge was a truly unforgettable and unique experience. It’s a great opportunity to step out your comfort zone and learn new skills in a supportive environment – and most importantly, to raise lots of money for such a great cause. I would recommend this challenge wholeheartedly.* ”



About the trip



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The Arctic Lapland is a land of vast wilderness, frozen lakes and rivers, where 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 a once in a lifetime, inspiring wilderness endurance challenge. It incorporates*:

- 35km dog sled race
- 20km hike
- ice fishing
- orienteering
- woodland fire lighting
- sauna
- light-hearted Swedish quiz
- visit to Ice Hotel

*All distances are approximate and can change depending on conditions during the trip.



Itinerary

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Day 1

- 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 airport, the group will be met by the in-country team and National Literacy Trust representative, 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 and a chat about tomorrow's events to complete the evening.

Day 2

- Your day starts with a short (1.5 hr approx.) 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 with a short lunch stop mid-circuit, returning to the lodge by torchlight.

- 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) and dinner.

Day 3

- Today is the 'Big One'. It's time to commence on the Nordic hike where you will set off on a 20km race, starting 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 famous Ice Hotel bar in Jukkasjärvi for some decidedly chilly cocktails in ice-sculpted glasses.
- Finally, back to base camp for a Swedish quiz, tallying scores, prize giving and a celebration dinner.

Day 4

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

“ *I was able to push myself to do something I never thought I would, and was able to raise money for a vitally important charity. If you're at all curious, sign up! It is so worth it.*

”

Practical details

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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.



Fitness

Although the days will be relatively short, the activities you take part in will test you physically - especially the hike.

Therefore, some pre-challenge fitness and endurance training is strongly recommended, such as time spent on the cross trainer and hill walking/running. Please see our mock up training plan on [our website](#) for a rough idea of what to expect.

Instruction

Instruction for all activities will be provided by the local guides in all disciplines.

They are based in the area, so are very knowledgeable about the area and the conditions, so you will be in good hands.

This is a challenging trip with a steep learning curve. However, it's eminently achievable and, with a bit of fitness training and preparation, will provide you with a huge sense of personal achievement, as well as an opportunity to build some lasting friendships.



Dog sleds

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



Food and shelter

You will spend two nights at the wilderness lodge where there is no electricity or running water. You will be sleeping in 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 dormitory accommodation. The food provided will be typical for the region, including moose or reindeer and salmon. Vegetarians and Vegans are easily catered for. If you have specific allergies and you would like to check if these can be accommodated, please email us at fundraise@literacytrust.org.uk.

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 and will be on hand to pick you up if you'd like to stop or take a break at any point during the challenges.

Flexibility and 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.



“ I don't think I could do the experience justice with just a quote! I've sat with friends for about half an hour going through my photos and I'm still not sure I could get across how amazing it was!

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Fundraising



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We ask that every Arctic Challenge participant raises at least £2,200, of which 25% covers the costs of your place on the trip, while the remaining funds go towards funding our work at the National Literacy Trust, changing lives through literacy.

Therefore, it is important to hit your fundraising target and perhaps raise even more.

To ensure our trip costs are covered we require all participants to have raised 80% of their target 12 weeks before the challenge.

To ensure this is achievable, we advise that you follow this fundraising schedule:

- 25% of the target: £550 raised by **24 August 2026**
- 50% of the target: £1,100 raised by **28 September 2026**
- 80% of the target: £1,760 raised by **30 November 2026**
- 100% of the target: £2,200 raised by **14-18 January 2026**



Kit

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What is provided?

- Thick, heavy arctic boots
- Thick winter mittens
- Thick winter hat
- Arctic overalls
- Sleeping bag, pillow

What you will need to bring

Expedition duffel/backpack (rather than a suitcase for all kit)

Sleeping bag liner OR single duvet cover

35-45L backpack (for carrying daily items)

Waterproof walking boots/snow boots

Ski/down jacket

Winter weight or ski trousers

Fleece

Wicking or merino tops to use as base layers (x3 minimum)

Thick and long trek/ski socks (at least 3 pairs)

Gloves (thick and thin)

Woolly hat / beanie	
Balaclava	
Head torch and spare batteries	
Water bottle (FYI a camelback is likely to freeze)	
Thermos	
Ski goggles	
Hand warmers	
Thermals/long johns	
Personal first aid kit (inc. plasters and Compeed for blister treatment)	
Swimsuit / shorts for the sauna	
Day clothing (for travel and in the lodges)	
Trainers/slippers for inside the hut (floors are likely to be wet)	
Snacks (something high energy and bite-sized so it's less likely to freeze)	
Wash kit and towel	
Personal medication	
Portable phone charger	
Lip salve (not water-based - Vaseline recommended)	

Costs breakdown

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What's included in the registration fee and minimum fundraising target

Kiruna airport transfers to and from base camp lodge at Kaupinnen

Accommodation at base camp lodge at Kaupinnen

All meals from dinner on day 1 up to and including breakfast on day 4

All activities during the challenge, guiding, equipment and instructions as per the programme

Equipment provided includes the following: insulated all-in-one sledding overalls, thick winter hats and gloves, sleeping bag, heavy duty cold weather boots

What's not included

Flights to and from Kiruna - all participants will need to organise their own flights. Upon registration we will share all the information needed to book your flights

Insurance - all participants will need to organise their own rescue and repatriation insurance. Similarly, this information will be provided upon registration

Drinks at the Ice Hotel or any alcoholic drinks at the lodges

“ *I pushed myself to my limits, tested my resilience and perseverance, and experienced the most beautiful landscapes and scenery.*

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