

CLASSIC DRIVER

Bambi Drives a Porsche Now



Right in the middle of Sweden, next to the famous ski resort of Åre, lies the small village of Kall - which means 'cold' in Swedish. Snow dominates the beautiful landscape and blankets all sounds into a muted silence. Until, that is, the howl from Suzuki's new SX4 WRC rally car cuts through the forest and shatters the quietness into a million pieces. Suzuki is using the Kall Auto Lodge to practice for the upcoming season of the WRC and drivers Toni Gardemeister and Per-Gunnar Andersson pass me less than three yards away, making sure the SX4 stays on the narrow, twisting, ice-covered roads despite speeds of up to 100mph.

Then it's my turn. Kall Auto Lodge has previously only been open to corporate clients such as WRC rally teams and car manufacturers but is now taking private clients, and who wouldn't want to learn how to handle ice-driving in a Porsche Carrera 4S? Or a Carrera 4, Targa 4S or Cayenne S?

The late Colin McRae co-founded Kall Auto Lodge so the place has serious rally history. Everyone from Carlos Sainz to Marcus Grönholm has tested here and the instructors have experience from both the WRC and the Dakar Rally. The facility is state-of-the-art and has recently undergone a complete restructure to become a designer hotel with gourmet cuisine, complete with a spa and professional garage for the most demanding of operations.



Balancing a Porsche in a perfect power-slide on ice may look easy but, rest assured, it's not. During training, the instructors will let you drive the ice courses with safety systems both off and on, the goal being to improve your handling of the car safely with them turned off. When satisfied with your abilities they move on to harder tasks: giant slalom, sliding in a figure of eight and other difficult manoeuvres.



With that much power at your hands (and feet) and such a sensitive throttle, it's not only cornering abilities that are fine-tuned. You learn to hone your right foot as well, as the slightest excess in power makes the tail-end break loose and you'll have a lot of work correcting the fish-tailing with opposite lock. Kall uses specially studded tyres for ice-driving, but these allow for some slip and it takes a while before getting the courage to use the Porsche's 350bhp, flat-six engine to full capacity.

The one convertible that Kall has at its disposal is enormous fun to use under the right weather conditions. Imagine: minus 15 degrees, clear blue skies and the top down on a frozen lake, feeling the cascades of snow churned up by the tyres in slides or under acceleration. It's a sensational experience to be so close to the elements.

Off-road driving is also included, on specially designed courses complete with tricky obstacles and even a see-saw on which to balance the Cayenne. Even in a half-foot of snow the Cayenne never seems to lose control; the grip is massive despite the fat tyres and the sporty appearance. This Chelsea tractor fits right in out here in the wilderness. Here it's more at ease with its identity as a proper sporty terrain vehicle and you'll be amazed at what the Cayenne is capable of when really put to the test. It never once complained, never made any odd sounds trying to whine its way back onto a flat surface again.



Kall Auto Lodge exists primarily for the driving but, in the unlikely event that you get tired of being behind the wheel, there are plenty of other activities to satisfy your every need. How about taking a snowmobile for a trek? Perhaps a dog-sled adventure to a hunting cabin? Or skiing? Remember, the famous ski resort Åre is right around the corner.

After a full day of training your right foot to be as sensitive as an avalanche rescue dog's nose, it's nice to know that the restaurant has prepared an outstanding gourmet meal for you and your co-drivers, with plenty of wine to ensure that boasting about your heroics on the ice doesn't go unnoticed. A certificate of your newly acquired skills is presented and it's time to retire to the sleeping quarters but first, venture outside to look at the astounding Aurora Borealis painting the night sky green. It's actually possible to hear it crack and sparkle, it's that quiet out here.

The following morning and it's time to return to civilisation. But it doesn't matter how good you get, you'll be coming back for more. I promise.

Londino is now arranging advanced courses in ice-driving at Kall for international drivers. Contact Erik Trulsson at et@londino.org. For further details see www.londino.org; www.thecartorialist.com and www.kallautolodge.com.

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