



THE EPIC ICE-SKATING TOUR

Lizzie Enfield plucks up the courage to cross frozen seas in Sweden

If a trip to the local ice rink doesn't satisfy your inner adventurer, then a four-day skating trek across the frozen waters of Sweden certainly will.

'The question uppermost in my mind when I set off was: Will I fall through the ice into the freezing Baltic sea? "It's not so unusual," our Swedish guide John says, in what I assume is an attempt to reassure me. "But you won't drown. You'll just freeze to death, if you don't get out quickly." Suitably nervous, the group is drilled in what to do if the worst happens. We skate with backpacks containing a full change of clothing – this keeps you afloat in the water and means you won't freeze when you get out. Meanwhile, ice hooks on the bag's front strap can be pulled out and used to cleave the ice. And in a side pocket is a safety line,

which those on solid ground can throw to the person in the water.

'Skating on natural ice is more like cross-country skiing than rink skating, as the technique involves pushing out sideways, propelling yourself further with ice pikes (also used to test the ice thickness).

'Ice conditions change frequently, but because John knows the area so well, he's clued-up on where to take us for the best skating conditions when we leave our hostel each morning. I'm amazed to find we cover vast distances of up to 25km a day on our

tour of the frozen wilderness.

'Before we set off, we're told the Stockholm Skating Club has 250 different words for ice, and once we get going it's easy to see why. The terrain is hugely varied – we skate over newly frozen black

ice, white ice (formed after snow has melted), orange ice (coloured by soil), trumis (ice with air trapped below) and, naturally, some pretty thin ice, too.'

BOOK IT Four-day Ice Skating on Natural Ice tour from £834pp, including meals, equipment and guides; naturetravels.co.uk.

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Explore frozen falls in Sweden

Edited by Alexandra Shakespeare