

51 THINGS YOU MUST DO IN 2019

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We map your motoring year

COMING THIS YEAR

# NEW DEFENDERS

**MEET THE FAMILY** The full line-up of Land Rover's reborn 4x4

AUTOCAR  
IMAGE



The big,  
rugged 4x4



The soft-top  
explorer



The small,  
stylish one



# EVERY NEW JLR CAR FOR 2019

New Jag XE, XF **New Evoque** New Disco Sport **542bhp F-Pace SVR**

ROAD TEST



Alfa's Ferrari-powered SUV

USED GUIDE



Amazing RS Clio: now only £2k

OFFICIAL PICS



All-new Merc CLA revealed





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## "THE NEW LAND ROVER DEFENDER'S DESIGN WILL MAKE BREXIT DEBATES SEEM MILD"

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Three-wheel drive is  
sufficient with the  
appropriate vehicle





# THE LAND TOUR

You've read about the UK's best roads, but what about when the asphalt runs out?  
Richard Webber takes us on the ultimate Land Rover off-road adventure

PHOTOGRAPHY LUC LACEY



“  
We crest a summit on a bend and I  
become suspended by my seatbelt  
”



**W**e've guided you towards Britain's best driving roads, but the hard stuff need not be your limit for a truly satisfying motoring year. Off road is where the real challenge lies and with a range of vehicles that crave the most rutted tracks and the steepest inclines, Land Rover Experience (LRE) centres offer the most accessible way to get down and dirty. We visited six LREs in the UK to find out how.

## LRE Scotland

### DISCOVERY SPORT TD4 180 HSE AUTO

Our adventure begins in the lush, wooded Perthshire hills just outside Dunkeld. The sky is a brilliant blue and instructor Will Cox has a spotless white Discovery Sport ready for us to sully.

Before starting, it's worth mentioning what hardware the Discovery Sport doesn't have. Like its Evoque cousin, there's no low range and it only comes on coils, limiting ride height to 211mm. (Air-sprung Range Rovers clear 295mm.) And our TD4 180 doesn't get the GKN-sourced Active Driveline that not only defaults to front drive when conditions allow but also features a traction-hunting, torque-vectoring rear e-differential.

However, it does have Land Rover's proprietary Terrain Response (TR) system to modulate steering, throttle, gearbox, brakes and the electronic centre coupling. Its grass/gravel/snow mode best negotiates the centre's 280 acres of woodland, with its steep, tight trails, although sand and mud-rut programmes feature, too.

Hill Descent Control (HDC) does its thing, policing individual discs to edge us down a gravelly slope with feet off the pedals, but new to me is the optional All Terrain Progress Control – a sort of off-road cruise control. I set a maximum speed using the wheel-mounted buttons. Then the Discovery Sport clambors on through the shadowy dells, feeling out the loose, root-strapped ground with each wheel like fingertips on braille. It's quite

brilliant and lets me focus on steering, which requires much closer attention off road than on.

There's also a technical assault course but we're here for the wilderness, so sample the centre's 150 miles of rutted upland tracks. The Discovery Sport delivers ample traction, with barely a hiccuping wheel and we're rewarded with beautiful vistas towards Pitlochry and the Cairngorms, watched over by a circling golden eagle.

## LRE Yorkshire

### RANGE ROVER EVOQUE TD4 180 SE TECH AUTO

Instructor Adam Wilcox shows us LRE Yorkshire, where gravelly tracks and a range of obstacles are

cleverly landscaped into rolling, sheep-munched hillsides high on the 3000-acre Broughton Hall Estate near Skipton.

Today's Evoque has very similar off-roading kit to yesterday's Discovery Sport and a near-identical approach angle, but it actually boasts the better breakover and departure angles by virtue of its shorter wheelbase and rear overhang. Still, its ride height again means certain obstacles, such as the rock crawl, are off the menu unless we're to spend an age tiptoeing through them in fear of re-profiling the underside.

There's loads we can do, though. Creeping down a hill, rollers on the driver's side simulate ice and the HDC modulates braking just enough



Light floods into the glass-roofed Evoque at LRE Yorkshire

## WHERE WE WENT

Our 500-mile mixed route largely followed a north-south axis down Great Britain, starting in Perthshire and then tackling the longest leg to Skipton via a scenic diversion through the Moffat Hills. We then followed a languid S-shape, skirting the Mersey and going back inland to orbit Birmingham before heading southwest to finish in the Malverns.





to keep those wheels turning, ready for when grip resumes. Then we crest a summit on a right-angled bend, and although the absence of air springs means the rear nearside wheel is more than a foot off the ground – and I become suspended by my seatbelt – those that remain earthbound are easily capable of guiding the car through and down with rock-solid stability.

We then try two optional tech toys that help remove the guesswork from off-roading. First, surround-view cameras let us keep close tabs on the front wheels as we negotiate a tight, winding log road. Then a pair of sensors give an audio-visual guide to water depth as we slosh through the centre's extensive wading troughs, where the voguish Evoque actually matches the old Defender's 500mm wading limit.

## LRE Liverpool

### DISCOVERY TD6 HSE AUTO

Wedged between the Halewood plant that churns out Discovery Sports and Evoques and a busy dual carriageway, LRE Liverpool's man-made terrain park covers barely five acres but squeezes in a wealth of obstacles.

For Land Rover's full suite of off-road hardware, a Discovery is the cheapest solution. Today's diesel V6 brings a low-range ratio (2.93:1, selectable up to 37mph) and air suspension, plus the optional GKN rear e-diff that's available in all four larger models. Like the central transfer case, it uses a multi-plate wet clutch to redistribute torque in an instant.

Low range also adds a throttle-progressive, differential-locking rock-crawl mode to TR and off-road infographics are more embellished than in the smaller cars to show the locking status of both active differentials, suspension articulation, wheel slip and steering angle, keeping you fully informed at a glance. We also have optional TR2, which adds a self-governing automatic traction programme.

With instructor Mal Dutton guiding, we engage low range and the ride height automatically rises 75mm to 283mm, allowing the Discovery to meld its way across the offset mounds of the 'elephant's footprints' where the smaller cars would cock wheels. Then we round 'the cone', with its 35deg



Evoque shares its 500mm wading limit with old Defender



LRE Yorkshire is set in a 3000-acre estate near Skipton

## EXPERIENCE THE WORLD

There are 29 Land Rover Experience centres in total, covering four continents.

We visited six of the nine UK locations, bypassing the East of England centre at Rockingham Castle, the West Country location in East Devon and the London facility by Luton Hoo Hotel. Paid experiences range from one hour to a full day, but Land Rover customers get a complimentary half-day when buying a new car.

There are nine more across mainland Europe, from a Catalan farm to a snowy lakeside forest in Finland and the Black Sea coast near Istanbul. Further worldwide locations are Russia, China, Canada, the US, the Middle East and South Africa.

side slope, the car clinging on gamely despite its lofty, near 2.5-tonne stature.

The steepest section is the 45deg 'ski slope', where low range means low speed but high revs as we mainline the car's reserves to haul itself up, the optional surround-view cameras lending a view forward when the windscreen reveals only sky.

There's also a gravel-strewn, rocky incline that better represents natural topography. That the Discovery grapples up is impressive enough, but were it not bone dry for our visit, this would be a rushing waterfall that even Evoques must conquer.

Don't let Halewood's diminutiveness put you off: Dutton says it's easy to fill a three-hour session here, and I can see why.

## LRE Cheshire

### RANGE ROVER VELAR D300 R-DYNAMIC HSE AUTO

This place wins the dramatic arrival award. We enter gothic revival Peckforton Castle through a grand archway to find the fleet of white Land Rovers lined up inside. From here, instructor Alex Brown guides us onto the centre's 1000 acres of off-road terrain in a Velar.

Although its platform owes more to Jaguar, the Velar features plenty of Land Rover toys, including Gradient Release Control (for smoother hill starts), torque-moderating Low Traction Launch, HDC and TR, but no low range. The V6 diesel comes with air springs, to which our car adds £2190 of wilderness-friendly options: ATPC, TR2, surround-view, wade sensing and rear e-diff.

The site features both wooded and open trails through the Peckforton Hills, from whose sandstone the castle was built. We rise through the trees to trace a dramatic cliff-top on 200-year-old tracks, mud-ruts mode raising the suspension and lending us the revs needed to mount each rock, furrow and root.

We divert into a flooded quarry that calls for HDC, wading and side-sloping together. Those who consider the Velar more SUV than 4x4 might double-take at its progress: through the water, which looks (but doesn't smell) like chocolate Yazoo, it's steady and assured, with just an →



## ATPC

Like Hill Descent Control, All Terrain Progress Control works in both forward and reverse. It can be set between 1mph and 19mph.



LRE Liverpool packs in a lot of obstacles within just five acres





Velar's clever tech shows its true worth at LRE Cheshire



LRE Eastnor is pretty and, even in an RRS, pretty challenging



← extra pump of throttle required here and there, empowering the electronics to drag us through the sodden, silty base.

Then the Velar squeezes through a Victorian cart cutting, trudging through deep, squelchy, clagging mud. Despite wearing showroom-spec tyres (as all LRE vehicles do), it's undeterred. We finish in Peckforton's terrain park, which rests within a large, lush quarry, reclaimed by nature but for myriad obstacles built into the landscape. It's how Halewood might look 100 years post-apocalypse. Even on air springs, ride height rules out a handful of features – but the rest is meat and drink. Given the Velar's considerable on-road repertoire, that compromise seems more than reasonable.

## LRE Solihull RANGE ROVER SDV8 VOGUE SE AUTO

Jaguar Land Rover's sprawling Solihull plant is where the Land Rover story began: the first production vehicles were built here 70 years ago. Today, it's where the four larger models are made, and we're going to give the flagship Range Rover a wilderness workout at the site's own experience centre. Our 4.4-litre SDV8 Vogue SE has been optioned with surround-view and wade sensing, thereby matching the Discovery from Halewood in its comprehensive off-road specification.

Instructor Phil Sutton introduces the facility's three sections, which boast 14 miles of tracks. The Adventure Zone is a compact, neatly landscaped assault course, while the Land Track incorporates trails and obstacles set into a hill built from soil excavated during factory expansion. Both are suitably challenging, but it's the Jungle Zone that makes this place extra special. Land Rover's own Garden of Eden, it's where those very first cars were developed, and new models still are.

Accessed directly off the plant's busy perimeter road, the Jungle Track teleports you to another world within 10m. Although now hemmed in by the factory, housing and playing fields, it feels like a bona fide canopied rainforest. It's so unbelievably verdant that high-vis-wearing photographer Luc Lacey becomes entirely camouflaged somewhere among the leaves. Natural springs mean we're gouging muddy tracks as we go, but the Range Rover moves capably up, down and across the slippery terrain.

Like the Discovery, Range Rovers can wade up to an astonishing 900mm, meaning almost half the car can be safely submerged. We enter one of the site's clear, wide and gently flowing watercourses,



Velar is strong here, especially given its fine road manners

drowning the front camera. Without momentum, a Defender would leak like a sieve here, but we can stop and sit in our ventilated leather chairs, water slapping the doors while birds swoop through shafts of sunlight that pepper the surface. Such is the brilliant, bizarre world of LRE Solihull.

## LRE Eastnor RANGE ROVER SPORT SDV6 HSE

Our final stop is Herefordshire, where LRE Eastnor shares Eastnor Castle's 5200 acres with Land Rover engineers, who have been testing here since 1961.

Instructor Howard White shows us the manicured hilltop terrain park and then we head for the wilds. The Range Rover Sport SDV6 HSE comes with air springs and TR, but ours also boasts the On/Off-road pack, adding the likes of low range, TR2, ATPC and rear e-diff.

The Sport's more athletic stance means its off-road vitals can't quite match its big brother's, but we safely negotiate Frog Alley's spring-fed quagmires and the wading pools of Watercourse Road with just a little added care and attention.

White has been quietly assessing my abilities



Range Rover can wade 900mm so this at Solihull is a paddle





“  
Do we want to try  
the ascent in reverse?  
I laugh. He's not joking  
”

and decides that I'm up to descending Castle View Hill, a loose, loamy, 29deg track about 100m long – and barely the width of a Range Rover Sport. He says it's unnavigable in the wet, and even in the dry, you'd become a toboggan without HDC. A scrambling Lacey confirms it's treacherous on foot, too.

In low range with HDC set to a crawl, the ground disappears as we crest the summit. I need only steer, but the sound of manically pumping brake lines and graunching tyres is unsettling. The car is working really hard right now. We edge down slowly, but safely, upshifting to second to ease engine braking towards the end.

On the radio, Lacey requests we go again, so I ask White if the car can manage the ascent. “Yep,” he says. “Want to try it in reverse?” I laugh, but he's not joking. I'd sooner reverse a bendy bus into a phone box. But the daunting challenge is set.

I line up and eyeball the rear camera. (The door mirrors reveal only ferns.) A stiff dose of throttle and we're off. The steering needs frequent, gentle adjustments, while my right foot stays bullish. We get halfway up, then the power unexpectedly sinks and we're back on the brakes, hanging in our seatbelts. I'm about to concede defeat, but the Sport revives with a fresh helping of diesel and we shoot on up and over the summit. It's an extremely impressive finish.

Our tour shows that off-roading has transformed in the past 70 years, traditional notions such as ‘giving it welly’ rendered redundant as advanced electronics lend control, time, safety and – dare I say – comfort to modern mud-plugging. It has also been democratised: novices can safely tackle challenging terrain, while old hands learn how best to harness the latest technology.

As for the Land Rover Experience centres, we have barely scratched the surface of those we visited and any single one of them could have filled these pages on its own. And the price of these experiences? From £99 for two people, that's pretty democratic, too. **A**

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Many LRE obstacles are colloquially named after instructors, recalling infamous incidents past, but we struggled to glean the grisly details.

Rounding ‘Tony's Corner’ at Halewood, Mal Dutton says: “I don't know the true story behind it, but there is obviously a story somewhere.” I ask if he's being diplomatic. “I am,” he says, nodding. Phil Sutton lets slip how ‘Gregory's Hill’ at Solihull got its name, but we're sworn to secrecy.

Howard White tells me Eastnor is home to ‘Paulo's Panic’ and ‘Alf's Hole’, but won't elaborate. Before tackling our treacherous backwards ascent, I suggest that ‘Howard's Hill’ has a nice ring. “Not today,” he says, deadpan.

