



The Reindeer Race - Utsjoki Porocup - on February 28–March 1, 2026

Utsjoki has made a strong start in organizing reindeer races, as after more than 20 years' break, the races returned to Utsjoki last year. But how does the Reindeer cup work?

This year in Finland, the reindeer racing season consists of the Reindeer cup and its five qualifying races. At the end of the series, the three reindeer and drivers who have collected the most points are awarded. The 24 reindeer with the highest points in the Reindeer cup qualify for the Reindeer Championship race. The Reindeer Championship is traditionally held in Inari at the conclusion of the Reindeer cup.

Every racing reindeer participating in the Reindeer cup must complete qualification trials by finishing a one-kilometer track in under 1 minute and 25 seconds.

The Utsjoki Porocup consists of the general and hot series heats on the first day, and the semi-finals, finals, and junior series on the second day.

General Series

A racing reindeer's journey toward the championship begins in the General Series, which is open to reindeer that have met the qualifying time. From the General Series, a reindeer can advance to the Hot Series by recording a time under 1 minute 19.499 seconds in a Reindeer cup race. In addition, the top three finishers in the General Series A Final at any Reindeer cup event automatically advance to the Hot Series ("heat up"). This means that the top three reindeer in the General Series at the Utsjoki Reindeer cup will compete in the Hot Series at the next Reindeer race event in Salla. Reindeer that meet the Hot Series time limit will also advance.

It can be said that fast and promising racing reindeer can climb from the General Series to the Hot Series within a single Reindeer cup season.

On the first competition day, all General Series reindeer compete in the heats. A total of 36 reindeer advance from the heats. The winner of each heat automatically advances, and the remaining spots are decided based on times.

The semi-finals and finals are held on the second day. There are six semi-final heats with six reindeer each. The winner of each heat advances to the A Final, and the second-place finisher advances to the B Final. All others are eliminated from the finals.

There are two final heats. The A Final determines placements 1–6 in the General Series, and the B Final determines placements 7–12. In Utsjoki, prize money in the General Series finals ranges from €700 to €45 depending on placement.

Follow these new contenders:

Jiella from the Kaldoaivi reindeer herding district, Deetnu from the Paistunturi district, and Huuto from the Ivalo district.

Hot Series

The Hot Series features the very fastest racing reindeer. The structure is the same as in the General Series: 36 reindeer advance from the heats. In the next day's semi-finals, winners of the six-reindeer

heats advance to the A Final,
and third-place finishers to the C Final.

second-place finishers to the B Final,

There are three final heats. The A Final determines placements 1–6, the B Final placements 7–12, and the C Final placements 13–18. In Utsjoki, prize money for the Hot Series finalists ranges from €1,200 to €75 depending on placement.

Follow these stars:

Kultala from Paistunturi reindeer district, last year's Utsjoki winner Kaunispää, Lämppäri from the Ivalo district, and last year's Reindeer Championship winner Nikama.

Junior Series

In the Junior Series, future racing drivers get their chance to compete, usually with reindeer that have been eliminated from the finals. Participants are typically 8–14 years old. The youngest juniors usually begin their racing careers with individual runs, while more experienced juniors compete in paired heats. Young drivers usually move up to adult series at the age of 15.

Did you know?

On the first competition day, each reindeer runs the track once. On the second day, they run once or twice depending on whether they advance to the finals. The top and most sought-after drivers, however, may race around the track up to 20 times in a day with different reindeer.

A racing reindeer's team includes the owner(s) and trainer(s), the racing driver, the ski wax technician, and the supporters — usually the entire reindeer family. Reindeer races are serious but relaxed competitions, and the most enthusiastic team members are visible at the venue from early morning.

The race track and its preparation are the most important elements of the competition. In addition to overall success, safety is crucial, as overly tight turns can pose risks to both reindeer and drivers. Mild weather, rain, and low snow conditions create challenges in track preparation. This year's cold winter has made track building easier.

Welcome to Utsjoki for the Porocup at the turn of February and March 2026!

On Saturday, February 28, the Utsjoki Leisure Centre will host pop-up restaurants and performances by leading Sámi artists Yungmiqu and Intrigue.

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