**DEFENDERS EXPLORE AND DEFINE DAKAR RALLY ROUTE**

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**Gaydon, UK – 18 December 2025:** As the official car partner to the Dakar Rally, British adventure brand Defender supports the world’s toughest off-road race in more ways than one. A fleet of six highly-specialised Defenders will be supplied to the event organisers for route reconnaissance over the course of the four-year partnership, and the first two have already been put to work finalising the route for the 2026 Dakar Rally.

The unique challenge of the Dakar Rally, which welcomes hundreds of competitors each year, comes from the demanding routes set out by the officials covering several thousand kilometres over a period of 10-15 days. Winding its way through the remote Saudi Arabian desert, Dakar officials demand capability and durability from recce vehicles in order to be able to prove and validate every kilometre of competitive stage before the route can be finalised.

The Defender recce vehicles are derived from P300-powered 110 models, with rally modifications to ensure they are ideally equipped to take on the weeks of route-planning in the desert by officials who will spend hours behind the wheel, traversing dirt tracks, loose sand, dunes and rocky tracks.

Safety is paramount of course, so each Defender recce car is equipped with a full roll-cage and configured to carry just three occupants to maximise stowage space for equipment. Those three seats are equipped with four-buckle harnesses. The P300 four-cylinder engine is standard, bar a rally-spec cooling pack kit and a high-level air intake with cyclonic intake pre-filter for optimised air cleaning.  
  
All-terrain tyres on 18-inch wheels, rally-specification dampers, reinforced underbody protection and elevated recovery points are among the additional modifications. To maximise stowage a 132kg-capacity roof-rack complements the additional space freed up by the three-seat configuration. Tools, spares and an emergency recovery kit including sand ladders are all present of course, as is an auxiliary fuel tank to support an additional range of up to 700km.

Given the long recce routes will mean many nights spent camping in the desert, a fridge, additional lighting and a 40-litre water tank for showering complete the extensive equipment list.

Once the route is set (the details of which are only revealed to competitors as each day’s stage begins) the recce cars will also be used on the Dakar Rally itself to ‘open’ each stage.

In addition to supporting the reconnaissance work with the supply of the recce cars, Defender’s Official Car partnership with Dakar Rally also includes the supply of a fleet of Defenders to support the event to enable transport of rally officials and VIP media for the duration of the competition. The partnership began at the 2025 Dakar Rally and is set to continue until at least 2028.

**ENDS**

**Notes to Editors**

**About Defender**

Defender embraces the impossible. Each member of the Defender family is purposefully designed, highly desirable and seriously durable. A modern-day hero that respects the past but at the same time anticipates the future.

Available in 90, 110 and 130 body styles, with up to eight seats, each has a charisma of its own.

As part of our vision of modern luxury by design, Defender 110 is available as an electric hybrid.

Defender Hard Top means business, with 90 and 110 body styles for professional capability.

The tough luxury Defender OCTA is the master of extreme performance – taking performance and capability to another level on and off-road.

A beacon of liberty that can trace its roots back to the first Land Rover in 1948, Defender is a brand that supports humanitarian and conservation work with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Tusk Trust.

The Defender brand is underpinned by Land Rover – a mark of trust built on more than 75 years of expertise in technology and world-leading off-road capability.

Defender is designed and engineered in the UK and sold in 121 countries. It belongs to the JLR house of brands alongside Range Rover, Discovery and Jaguar.

**About Defender Rally**

Defender embraces the impossible, and Defender Rally embodies this to the extreme, demonstrating the ultimate capability, reliability and endurance in the most challenging of environments.

In 2025, Defender became the official car partner of the Dakar Rally, the partnership set to continue in 2026, 2027 and 2028. From 2026, Defender will also compete in the FIA World Rally-Raid Championship (W2RC), entering the ‘Stock’ category – this being the first of a three-year programme.

Defender’s capability is designed to take on the most challenging of conditions, with Dakar Rally being the ultimate test. The competition car retains the same tough, purpose-engineered D7x body architecture as the Defender, based on a lightweight aluminium monocoque construction to create a stiff body structure, in addition to featuring the 4.4-litre twin turbo V8 engine from Defender OCTA to provide exceptional driveability.

While Defender will not compete in Dakar until 2026, it played a key role at the 2025 rally as the event’s official vehicle partner. A fleet of 20 Defenders supported the event, which began in Bisha, Saudi Arabia, and ended in Shubaytah, transporting race officials and VIP media. A further six highly specialised Defender recce vehicles will be used by Dakar Rally organisers to plan the routes for the 2026, 2027 and 2028 events.

**About BILSTEIN**

For more than 70 years, we have been working with leading vehicle manufacturers to develop shock absorbers for the perfect driving experience. Innovative, exclusive, trusted and precisely tailored to the individual performance characteristics of each vehicle model. Each BILSTEIN product is engineered for original equipment and the aftermarket, ensuring maximum performance and durability. Our close cooperation with premium manufacturers and global network makes BILSTEIN a leading technology partner.

**Important notice**  
JLR is constantly seeking ways to improve the specification, design and production of its vehicles, parts and accessories and alterations take place continually. Whilst every effort is made to produce up-to-date literature, this document should not be regarded as an infallible guide to current specifications or availability, nor does it constitute an offer for the sale of any particular vehicle, part or accessory. All figures are manufacturer’s estimates.

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