

Why John Lloyd's going back to Africa

He's stood on podiums from Rayong, Thailand in the east to Minnesota, America in the west. But John Lloyd always comes back to the continent in the middle.

He always comes back to Africa.

And in September this year, he will be firmly back in Africa. South Africa to be precise; Mpumalanga (next door to the Kruger National Park) to be even more precise.

He's counting the days until Classic Rally South Africa (have this one on us, John: it's 72 before the September 1 start).

The London-based businessman was raised in Kenya and Tanzania. He gets Africa. Loves the place.

And *really* loves the roads.

"I might be biased," he says with a smile, "actually, I know I'm prejudiced, but Africa's definitely the best place in the world to go rallying."

And if anybody knows, it's Lloyd. Finding the World Rally Championship a little too parochial, he broadened his horizons to include the best events in the Far East and North America.

In rallying terms, Lloyd has been and seen it.

But still nothing prepares you for the sight, sound and smell when you're back in Africa again. Tickling the rev limiter in top while eyeing the sun dipping behind the Acacia trees on the horizon reminds you why you come back again and again. That's Africa.

And just as John loves the Safari – as well he might after he finished third on the world's best-known rally in 2004 – he's equally passionate about Classic Rally South Africa.

"Classic Rally South Africa is going to be fantastic," he says. "The roads down there are great and quite different to what we have on the Safari. It's pretty rare for a historic event of this nature to have such smooth roads – but that's another part of the attraction."

Lloyd will be joining 1984 World Rally Champion Stig Blomqvist in the Tuthill Porsche team in September, when the Swede starts the rally as favourite.

"Stig probably is the favourite, which I don't mind... I'm helping out with backing his car," says Lloyd. "But look down the entry list and you'll see at least six drivers who could be on the podium. Already, even at this early stage, the entry list is very high on quality."

Two names in particular caught Lloyd's eye: Geoff Bell and Lee Rose – both in Ford Escorts.

"Geoff and Lee are both close friends of mine," says Lloyd, "and seeing their names on the entry list certainly influenced my decision to get involved. Beyond that, Africa is a very special place and it remains a genuine source of sadness that the World Rally Championship doesn't visit any more. Fortunately, these classic rallies do go to Africa, affording us the chance to drive fantastic cars on some of the best roads on earth."

Lloyd and co-driver Adrian Cavenagh are just one of the British crews making the trip. Historic rally ace Iain Freestone will be running an RS1800 as will Aziz Tejpar – the latter forming part of a four-strong entry from former World Rally Champion Phil Mills' own preparation firm Viking Motorsport.

Classic Rally South Africa facts:

Date: September 1-5

Based: White River, Mpumalanga

Competitive kilometres: 720

Website: classicrallysa.co.za

More details: info@classicrallysa.com

Media enquiries: info@wordspr.co.uk