

The Loudon-clear guide to... **Kennards Hire Rally Australia**

Hard as it is to believe, this week's Rally Australia will be the final outing for the Volkswagen Motorsport team. Incredible.

Instead of dwelling on a decision which took the World Rally Championship by surprise soon after last month's Wales Rally GB, let's focus on what lies in store this week: the potential for a fabulous and hugely successful swansong for the sport's all-conquering team from Hannover.

Running first on what are set to be some of the hottest and loosest gravel roads of the season, Sébastien Ogier will face one of the toughest tasks of his entire career to end his time with Volkswagen with victory. But, if anybody knows how to find fortune in the face of adversity, it's the four-time champion.

Otherwise, it's going to be down to Jari-Matti Latvala and Andreas Mikkelsen – both of whom are in more favourable positions on the road – and the latter will need an outstanding performance if he's going to wrest second place back from Hyundai's Thierry Neuville.

It's almost impossible to call a winner this week and with the sun shining on some of the most entertaining stages of the season, we're set for an absolute thriller down under. And let's not forget, while the drivers', co-drivers' and manufacturers' titles are decided, WRC2 is still up for grabs. Third place will be enough for Škoda driver Esapekka Lappi to break his fellow Finn Teemu Suninen's heart and take the title.

Rally Australia is, of course, back as the calendar's final round – returning to that position for the first time since 2005 – and represents the end of the road for not only the Polo R WRC, but the current generation of World Rally Cars.

Sad as we might be to say goodbye to Volkswagen and the current cars, let's not forget what lies in wait in 2017!

The rally ahead...

FIA World Rally Championship round 13/13

WRC – WRC2 – WRC3

Date: Thursday November 17 – Sunday November 20

Based: Coffs Harbour

Service: Coffs Harbour

Stages: 23

Competitive distance: 312.98km (194.48 miles)

Liaison distance: 727.53km (452.08 miles)

Total distance: 1040.51km (646.57 miles)

Longest stage: SS12/15 Nambucca 50.80km (31.56 miles)

Shortest stage: SS10/11/17/18 Destination NSW SSS - IV 1.27km (0.74 miles)

Currency: Australian Dollar
Time difference: GMT + 11
Language: English
Australia population: 24.2m
Capital: Canberra
Sunrise: 0542
Sunset: 1923

Shakedown:

The 5.02km (3.11 miles) shakedown stage is located at Boyds Deviation, 28.09km (17.45 miles) from the service park. The stage runs from 0800-1330.

Kennards Hire Rally Australia Itinerary

Thursday November 17

Shakedown stage, 5.02 km (3.11 miles)

Friday November 18

SS1 Utungun 1 7.88km (4.89 miles) 0756

SS2 Bakers Creek 1 16.75km (10.40 miles) 0812

SS3 Northbank 1 8.42km (5.23 miles) 0840

Remote Refuel at Macksville

SS4 Newry16 1 25.30km (15.72 miles) 0948

SS5 Raceway SSS 1 1.37km (0.85 miles) 1041

Service, Coffs Harbour 1119

SS6 Utungun 2 7.88km (4.89 miles) 1310

SS7 Bakers Creek 2 16.75km (10.40 miles) 1326

SS8 Northbank 2 8.42km (5.23 miles) 1354

Remote Refuel at Macksville

SS9 Newry16 2 25.30km (15.72 miles) 1502

SS10 Destination NSW SSS – 1 1.27km (0.74 miles) 1700

SS11 Destination NSW SSS – 2 1.27km (0.74 miles) 1708

Service, Coffs Harbour 1728

Saturday November 19

SS12 Nambucca 1 50.80km (31.56 miles) 0828

Remote Refuel Bowraville

SS13 Valla16 1 14.84km (9.22 miles) 0937

SS14 Raceway SSS 2 1.37km (0.85 miles) 1035

Service, Coffs Harbour 1113

SS15 Nambucca 2 50.80km (31.56 miles) 1316

Remote Refuel Bowraville

SS16 Valla16 2 14.84km (9.22 miles) 1425

SS17 Destination NSW SSS – 3 1.27km (0.74 miles) 1648

SS18 Destination NSW SSS – IV 1.27km (0.74 miles) 1656

Service, Coffs Harbour 1716

Sunday November 20

SS19 Settles Reverse 1 6.20km (3.85 miles) 0743
SS20 Bucca16 31.90km (19.82 miles) 0806
SS21 Wedding Bells16 1 10.41km (6.46 miles) 1215
Service, Coffs Harbour 1033
SS22 Settles Reverse 2 6.20km (3.85 miles) 1215
SS23 Wedding Bells16 2 10.41km (6.46 miles) 1308
Finish Coffs Harbour 1358

Last year

Sébastien Ogier, Julien Ingrassia and Volkswagen celebrated a third successive world title in style on this event last season. The number one Polo R WRC was always going to struggle opening the road on day one, but once the masterful Ogier had somebody sweeping something resembling a line on Saturday, he began a fightback which rushed him to the top of the leaderboard following the final day two test. Kris Meeke and co-driver Paul Nagle remained the only men capable of getting among the Volkswagens and led for much of the event's first half – before slipping to third behind Ogier and Jari-Matti Latvala/Miikka Anttila at the finish.

Result: 1 Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Volkswagen Polo R WRC) 2h59m16.4s; 2 Jari-Matti Latvala/Miikka Anttila (Volkswagen Polo R WRC) +12.3s; 3 Kris Meeke/Paul Nagle (DS 3 WRC) +32.6s.

Top 10 running order

- 1 Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)
- 2 Thierry Neuville/Nicolas Gilsoul (Hyundai i20 WRC)
- 3 Andreas Mikkelsen/Anders Jaeger (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)
- 4 Hayden Paddon/John Kennard (Hyundai i20 WRC)
- 5 Dani Sordo/Marc Marti (Hyundai i20 WRC)
- 6 Jari-Matti Latvala/Miikka Anttila (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)
- 7 Mads Østberg/Ola Fløene (Ford Fiesta RS WRC)
- 8 Ott Tänak/Raigo Mõlder (Ford Fiesta RS WRC)
- 9 Eric Camilli/Benjamin Veillas (Ford Fiesta RS WRC)
- 10 Lorenzo Bertelli/Simone Scattolin (Ford Fiesta RS WRC)

Leading WRC2 runners:

- 31 Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (Škoda Fabia R5)
- 33 Hubert Ptaszek/Maciek Szczepaniak (Peugeot 208 T16)
- 34 Jourdan Serderidis/Frederic Miclotte (DS 3 R5)
- 35 Khalid Al-Suwaidi/Marshall Clarke (Škoda Fabia R5)
- 42 Nicolas Fuchs/Fernando Mussano (Škoda Fabia R5)

Leading WRC3 runner:

- 62 Michel Fabre/Maxime Vilmot (Citröen DS3 R3T)

Stuart Loudon's key stage: Nambucca 50.80km (31.56 miles)

This monster runs twice, so take your pick, either of them are likely to be key. In terms of tyre wear, the second time through – starting at 1316 – will be done in the heat of the day.

Stuart will be watching... the Polos. All of them.

These are the cars which have ruled our world for the last four years and this is the final chance to watch in wonder at what Hannover has produced. Enjoy it.

Weather with you:

Rain earlier in the week will clear to bright sunshine as the week progresses. There's the odd chance of some cloud around, but temperatures will still range from the low to high 20s. In case you're wondering, that's a wee bit warmer than Uddingston.

The media week:

Wednesday November 16

0800-1800 accreditation open (media centre, Coffs Harbour)

0800-2000 media centre open (media centre, Coffs Harbour)

Thursday November 17

0800-2000 accreditation open (media centre, Coffs Harbour)

0800-2000 media centre open (media centre, Coffs Harbour)

1200 meet the top three crews from shakedown (service park, Coffs Harbour)

1330 FIA pre-event press conference (media centre, Coffs Harbour)

1600 Rally Show, Coffs Harbour city centre

Friday November 18

0700-2200 media centre open (media centre, Coffs Harbour)

1930 (approx) meet the top three crews (service park, Coffs Harbour)

Saturday November 19

0700-2200 media centre open (media centre, Coffs Harbour)

1930 (approx) meet the top three crews (service park, Coffs Harbour)

Sunday November 20

0600-finish media centre open (media centre, Coffs Harbour)

1500 podium finish (Coffs Harbour)

1615 FIA post-event press conference (media centre, Coffs Harbour)

Stuart's restaurant recommendation:

Urban Espresso Lounge (+64 0266511989) urbanesspressolounge.com.au

We thought we'd give you a breakfast option given that jetlag is likely to be a feature of the week!

Recent winners:

2002: Marcus Grönholm/Timo Rautiainen (Peugeot 206 WRC)

2003: Petter Solberg/Phil Mills (Subaru Impreza WRC)

2004: Sébastien Loeb/Daniel Elena (Citröen Xsara WRC)

2005: François Duval/Sven Smeets (Citröen Xsara WRC)

2006: Mikko Hirvonen/Jarmo Lehtinen (Ford Focus RS WRC 06)

2009: Mikko Hirvonen/Jarmo Lehtinen (Ford Focus RS WRC)
2011: Mikko Hirvonen/Jarmo Lehtinen (Ford Fiesta RS WRC)
2013: Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)
2014: Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)
2015: Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)

Most successful driver on Kennards Hire Rally Australia:

Juha Kankkunen (4 wins)

World Rally Championship stat centre:

Rounds run: 12

Rallye Monte-Carlo (January 21-24), winners: Ogier/ Ingrassia; Rally Sweden (February 4-7), winners: Ogier/Ingrassia; Rally Mexico (March 3-6), winners: Latvala/Anttila; Rally Argentina (April 21-24), winners: Meeke/Nagle; Rally of Portugal (May 19-22), winners: Paddon/Kennard; Rally Italy (June 9-12), winners: Neuville/Gilsoul; Rally Poland (June 30-July 03), Andreas Mikkelsen/Anders Jaeger; Rally Finland (July 28-31), winners: Meeke/Nagle; ADAC Rallye Deutschland (August 18-21), winners: Ogier/ Ingrassia; Tour de Corse (September 29-October 2), winners: Ogier/Ingrassia; Rally RACC Catalunya-Costa Daurada (October 13-16), winners: Ogier/Ingrassia; Dayinsure Wales Rally GB (October 27-30), winners: Ogier/Ingrassia.

Stages completed: 218

Cancelled stages: 10

Accumulated winning time: 40h21m54.9s

Accumulated competitive distance: 4,047.58km (2,515.16 miles)

Accumulated liaison distance: 11,514.27km (7,154.96 miles)

Accumulated total distance: 15,925.85km (9,896.32 miles)

Longest stage of the season so far: Guanajuato (Rally Mexico) 80.00km (49.71 miles)

Shortest stage of the season so far: Street Stage Guanajuato (Rally Mexico) 1.09km (0.67 miles)

Most WRC fastest stage times in 2016

- 1 Ogier 64
- 2 Latvala 37
- 3 Tänak 30

Most WRC stages led in 2016

- 1 Ogier 91
- 2 Meeke 45
- 3 Latvala 31

Most WRC2 fastest stage times in 2016

- 1 Lappi 41
 - 2 Teemu Suninen 38
 - 3 Pontus Tidemand 33
- =Elfyn Evans 33

Most WRC2 stages led in 2016

- 1 Lappi 64
- 2 Suninen 42
- 3 Evans 38

Most WRC3 fastest stage times in 2016

- 1 Michel Fabre 51
- 2 Fabio Andolfi 39
- = Simone Tempestini 39
- 3 Ole Christian Veiby 27

Most WRC3 stages led in 2016

- 1 Fabre 59
- 2 Tempestini 40
- 3 Veiby 39

Eight drivers have led WRC rounds; fourteen have led WRC2, and eleven have led WRC3 rounds.

WRC standings

- 1 Ogier 247pts
- 2 Neuville 143pts
- 3 Mikkelsen 129pts

WRC2 standings

- 1 Evans 120pts
- = Suninen 120pts
- 2 Lappi 107pts
- 3 Kopecky 92pts

WRC3 standings

- 1 Tempestini 123pts
- 2 Fabre 101pts
- 3 Andolfi 91pts

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Stuart Loudon is a semi-professional co-driver who has started 88 rallies, 19 of which are rounds of the World Rally Championship and one of which was with an Ashes-winning English cricketer. He makes biscuits in the family

business when he's not working towards his dream of becoming a factory co-driver in the WRC.

Stuart Loudon and Words PR work their socks off to make sure every last dot and detail of the document is 100 per cent accurate – but we can't be responsible for any changes to the itinerary or stage distances.