

The Loudon-clear guide to...**Dayinsure Wales Rally GB**

The summer passed without football coming home, but rallying's ready to make that journey. Sort of. Autumn's arrived, there's a chill in the air and half a cloud in the sky – it's time for Dayinsure Wales Rally GB.

You could be forgiven for thinking it's come around quickly, this year's date with Deeside is a fortnight ahead of last season, but it's a full month or six weeks up on the traditional late November week. And that will make a difference. It'll be warmer, drier and crucially... lighter (as in less dark, not less heavy).

One of the enduring challenges of Britain's round of the championship has always been the rain, the mist, the mud and the need to keep a solid set of spotlights clean out front. Not this time.

And there's a significant change in the route with two days in north Wales and one genuinely Super Saturday in the middle. The chance to drive the Dyfi stages *and* Hafren, Myherin and Dyfnant in one day is 100 per cent worth a pre-five alarm call. These are some of the most challenging stages anywhere in world rallying. And the classics only come once a year; get up and get into them.

Dayinsure Wales Rally GB in detail

FIA World Rally Championship round 11/13

WRC – WRC2 – WRC3

Date: Thursday October 4 – Sunday October 7

Based: Deeside

Service: Deeside

Stages: 23

Competitive distance: 318.34km (197.81 miles)

Liaison distance: 1083.01km (672.98 miles)

Total distance: 1401.35km (870.79 miles)

Shortest stage: SS1 Tir Prince 1.70km (0.92 miles)

Longest stage: SS3/8 Brenig 29.13km (18.10 miles)

Currency: British pound

Time difference: BST/UTC+1

Sunrise: 0722

Sunset: 1845

Shakedown:

The 3.37km (2.09 miles) shakedown stage is located in Clocaenog, 44.35km (27.55 miles) from the service park in Deeside. The stage runs from 0800-1330 on Thursday October 4.

Dayinsure Wales Rally GB itinerary

Thursday October 4

SS1 Tir Prince 1.70km (0.92 miles) 1900

Parc ferme Deeside 2006

Friday October 5

SS2 Clocaenog 1 7.67km (4.76 miles) 0757

SS3 Brenig 1 29.13km (18.10 miles) 0833

SS4 Penmachno 1 16.95km (10.53 miles) 0949

SS5 Slate Mountain 1 1.63km (1.05 miles) 1043

SS6 Slate Mountain 2 1.63km (1.05 miles) 1050

Service Deeside 1259

SS7 Clocaenog 2 7.67km (4.76 miles) 1441
SS8 Brenig 2 29.13km (18.10 miles) 1517
SS9 Penmachno 2 16.95km (10.53 miles) 1633
Service Deeside 1854

Saturday October 6

SS10 Myherin 1 20.28km (12.60 miles) 0835
SS11 Sweet Lamb Hafren 1 19.95km (12.39 miles) 0915
SS12 Dyfi 1 19.48km (12.10 miles) 1028
SS13 Gartheiniog 1 11.26km (6.99 miles) 1102
SS14 Dyfnant 8.30km (5.15 miles) 1208
Remote tyre zone Newtown 1317
SS15 Myherin 2 20.28km (12.60 miles) 1450
SS16 Sweet Lamb Hafren 2 19.95km (12.39 miles) 1530
SS17 Dyfi 2 19.48km (12.10 miles) 1643
SS18 Gartheiniog 2 11.26km (6.99 miles) 1718
Service Deeside 1944

Sunday October 7

SS19 Elsi 10.06km (6.25 miles) 0722
SS20 Gwydir 1 (Power Stage) 14.76km (9.13 miles) 0808
SS21 Great Orme Llandudno 1 8.03km (4.98 miles) 0916
SS22 Gwydir 1 (9.13 miles) 14.76km 1035
Regroup Llandudno 1132
SS23 Great Orme Llandudno 2 8.03km (4.98 miles) 1218
Finish Llandudno 1230

Running order:

5 Thierry Neuville/Nicolas Gilsoul (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC)
8 Ott Tänak/Martin Jarveoja (Toyota Yaris WRC)
1 Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Ford Fiesta WRC)
9 Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (Toyota Yaris WRC)
7 Jari-Matti Latvala/Miikka Anttila (Toyota Yaris WRC)
4 Andreas Mikkelsen/Anders Jaeger (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC)
3 Teemu Suninen/Mikko Markkula (Ford Fiesta WRC)
2 Elfyn Evans/Dan Barritt (Ford Fiesta WRC)
6 Hayden Paddon/Sebastian Marshall (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC)
10 Mads Østberg/Torstein Eriksen (Citroën C3 WRC)
11 Craig Breen/Scott Martin (Citroën C3 WRC)

Leading WRC championship positions:

1 Neuville 172pts; 2 Ogier 149; 3 Tänak 136; 4 Lappi 88; 5 Latvala 75; 6 Mikkelsen 75; 7 Dani Sordo 60; 8 Suninen 54; 9 Evans 53; 10 Paddon 49, etc

WRC manufacturer championship positions:

1 Toyota Gazoo Racing 284; 2 Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT 279pts; 3 M-Sport Ford WRT 244; 4 Citroën Total Abu Dhabi WRT 169

Leading WRC2 runners:

31 Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (Škoda Fabia R5)
32 Gus Greensmith/TBC (Ford Fiesta R5)
33 Lukasz Pieniazek/Przemyslaw Mazur (Škoda Fabia R5)
34 Fabio Andolfi/Simone Scattolin (Škoda Fabia R5)

- 35 Ole Christian Veiby/Stig Rune Skjaermoen (Citroën C3 R5)
- 36 Kalle Rovander/Jonne Halttunen (Škoda Fabia R5)
- 37 Jari Pekka Huttunen/Antti Juhani Limaketo (Hyundai i20 R5)
- 38 Pierre-Louis Loubet/ Vincent Landais (Hyundai i20 R5)
- 39 Nil Solans/Marc Marti (Ford Fiesta R5)
- 40 Stéphane Lefebvre/Gabin Moreau (Citroën C3 R5)
- 41 Marco Bulacia Wilkinson/Fabian Cretu (Škoda Fabia R5)
- 42 Simone Tempestini/Itu Sergiu (Citroën C3 R5)
- 43 Eric Camilli/ Benjamin Veillas (Ford Fiesta R5)
- 44 Chris Ingram /Ross Whittock (Škoda Fabia R5)

Leading WRC2 championship positions:

1 Kopecky 125pts; 2 Tidemand 93; 3 Greensmith 55; 4 Pieniazek 48; 5 Andolfi 46; 6 Veiby 45, etc

Leading WRC3 entries:

- 61 Taisko Lario/Tatu Hatamalainen (Peugeot 208 R2)
- 62 Enrico Brazzoli/Luca Beltrame (Peugeot 208 R2)
- 63 Louise Cook/Stefan Davis (Ford Fiesta R2)
- 64 Tom Williams/Phil Hall (Ford Fiesta R2)

Leading WRC3 championship positions:

1 Emil Bergkvist 86pts; 2 Dennis Rådström 80; 3 Jean-Baptiste Franceschi 79pts; 4 Lario 68; 5 Brazzoli 55; 6 Callum Devine 38, etc

Stuart Loudon's key stage: SS3 Brenig 1 29.13km (18.10 miles)

I've gone for the first run of the longest stage on this year's Dayinsure Wales Rally GB, but the afternoon run will be just as tough.

This stage has undergone some fairly major changes since last season. It still starts at the side of the lake, but it's got more surface changes than any other test on the whole route *and* it's got more asphalt than any other stage (apart from the Great Orme Llandudno – which is all Tarmac) with a total of 4.12km (2.56 miles). And that Tarmac's all quick, tricky, lanes-type stuff which is never easy in a hunkered-down asphalt racer... but in a rally car seemingly on stilts, riding high on gravel-spec suspension and with gravel tyres giving far more slip than is necessarily ideal; it's going to be like threading the eye of a needle while riding a bucking bronco.

And the difference when you cross the road into Alwen, which makes up the second half of this stage, will be noticeable. The first half in Brenig isn't as fast and flowing as the roads in mid-Wales, but it's much more so than Alwen, which has plenty of junctions and could feel a bit stop-start by comparison.

Finding a flow and a rhythm through here will be key to a quick time and a good Friday.

Stuart will be watching... #2 Elfyn Evans/Dan Barritt (Ford Fiesta WRC)

Coming back to Deeside for the first time since their big win will fill Elfyn and Dan with confidence this week. There's something special about competing at home – we saw it historically with Colin McRae and Richards Burns, when they dominated Britain's round of the world championship – and we saw it last year with Elfyn. He was superb.

Elfyn and Dan don't know these roads any better than anybody else, but they're comfortable in their surroundings; quite literally, everybody is talking their language and when you're in that kind of zone then everything can become a bit more straightforward.

If you're planning on going anywhere this weekend, get out to Gartheiniog and watch the local hero fly.

Weather with you:

Likely to be a touch cooler than last time out in Turkey. We're looking at temperatures in the mid-teens with rain possible in the recce and then later in the event.

Most successful driver on Dayinsure Wales Rally GB:

Hannu Mikkola, Petter Solberg and Sébastien Ogier (4 wins)

2018 World Rally Championship stats...

Stages planned: 186

Stages run: 186

Longest stage of the season: Vero – Sarrola-Carcopino 55.17km (34.28 miles) Tour de Corse

Shortest stage of the season: Street Stage Leon 1.11km (0.68 miles) Rally Mexico

Longest competitive route of the season: Rallye Monte-Carlo 388.59km (241.46 miles)

Shortest competitive route of the season: Rally Turkey 312.44km (194.15 miles)

WRC fastest times in 2018:

1 Tänak 52; 2 Neuville 34; 3 Ogier 29; 4 Lappi 13; 5 Latvala 12; 6 Sordo/Mikkelsen 9; 8 Kris Meeke 8; 9 Breen 7; 10 Sébastien Loeb 6, etc

WRC stages led in 2018:

1 Tänak 60; 2 Ogier 57; 3 Neuville 35; 4 Mikkelsen 11; 5 Sordo 9; 6 Østberg 4; 7 Meeke/Loeb 3; 9 Paddon/Breen 2.

WRC2 fastest times in 2018:

1 Tidemand 44; 2 Rovannerä 34; 3 Kopecky 32; 4 Veiby 17; 5 Katsuta Takamoto 10; 6 Lefebvre/Kajetan Kajetanowicz 9, etc

WRC2 stages led in 2018:

1 Kopecky 56; 2 Tidemand 42; 3 Rovannerä 27; 4 Takamoto 17; 5 Lefebvre 14; 6 Eric Camilli 8, etc.

WRC3 fastest times in 2018:

1 Franceschi 42; 2 Bergkvist 30; 3 Williams/Lario 24; 5 Torn 23; 6 Rådström 14, etc

WRC3 stages led in 2018:

1 Franceschi 32; 2 Rådström 28; 3 Lario 23; 4 Bergkvist 22; 5 Williams/Torn 21, etc.

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Stuart Loudon is a semi-professional co-driver who has started 103 rallies, 21 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.

Stats courtesy of ewrc-results.com