

The Loudon-clear guide to... **Rally Poland**

Poland. It's time to get the hammer down.

So far in this extraordinary 2017 World Rally Championship we've seen some of the most technical, tricky, slippery, rough and rocky roads around. But we haven't seen the really quick stuff. Yet. That's what's coming next week.

In fact, for the next two rounds, the World Rally Championship is all about going faster than fast and going ballistic. After Poland comes the season's annual festival of flight in Finland.

I haven't competed in Poland, but I have done Finland and you can rest assured there's nothing quite like taking off in a rally car with the thing bouncing off the rev-limiter in top. It's just fantastic; the speed and exhilaration of this side of the sport are quite intoxicating.

There are fewer jumps in Poland than Finland, but the roads are just as fast in places and the grip tends to be a little bit higher. Unless it rains. And, guess what? It looks like it might rain. We saw the effect a storm had on the final day of last year's event, when the roads cut up a little bit and the surface became treacherous.

Working with the M-Sport World Rally Team, it's going to be fascinating to keep an eye on how and when the weather's going to change – it could be crucial in terms of tyre choice...

Rally in detail

FIA World Rally Championship round 8/13

WRC – WRC2 – WRC3

Date: Thursday June 29 – Sunday July 2

Based: Mikolajki

Service: Mikolajki

Stages: 23

Competitive distance: 326.64km (202.97 miles)

Liaison distance: 1095.99km (681.04 miles)

Total distance: 1422.63km (884.02 miles)

Shortest stage: SS1/SS10/SS19 Super Special Stage Mikolajki Arena 2.50km (1.55 miles)

Longest stage: SS12/16 Pozezdrze 24.28km (15.08 miles)

Currency: Zloty

Time difference: GMT +1

Language: Polish

Poland population: 38.2 million

Capital: Warsaw

Sunrise: 0417

Sunset: 2100

Shakedown:

The 4.90km (3.04 miles) shakedown stage is located at Sady, 3.73km (2.31 miles) from the service park at Mikolajki. The stage runs from 0800-1330 on Thursday June 29.

Rally Poland itinerary

Thursday June 29

Ceremonial Start, Mikolajki Main Square 1600

SS1 Super Special Stage Mikolajki Arena 2.50km (1.55 miles) 1908

Friday June 30

SS2 Chimielewo 1 6.52km (4.05 miles) 0715

SS3 Wieliczki 1 15.96km (9.91 miles) 0900

SS4 Swietajno 1 19.60km (12.17 miles) 0955

SS5 Stare Juchy 1 13.50km (8.38 miles) 1040

Service Mikolajki 1225

SS6 Chimielewo 2 6.52km (4.05 miles) 1345

SS7 Wieliczki 2 15.96km (9.91 miles) 1530

SS8 Swietajno 2 19.60km (12.17 miles) 1625

SS9 Stare Juchy 2 13.50km (8.38 miles) 1710

SS10 Super Special Stage Mikolajki Arena 2.50km (1.55 miles) 1908

Service Mikolajki 1928

Saturday July 1

SS11 Baranowo 1 15.55km (9.66 miles) 0808

SS12 Pozezdrze 1 24.28km (15.08 miles) 0920

SS13 Goldap 1 14.75km (9.16 miles) 1045

SS14 Kruklanki 1 19.58km (12.16 miles) 1135

Service Mikolajki 1257

SS15 Baranowo 2 15.55km (9.66 miles) 1408

SS16 Pozezdrze 2 24.28km (15.08 miles) 1520

SS17 Goldap 2 14.75km (9.16 miles) 1645

SS18 Kruklanki 2 19.58km 12.16 miles 1735

SS19 Super Special Stage Mikolajki Arena 2.50km (1.55 miles) 1930

Service 1950

Sunday July 2

SS20 Orzysz 1 11.15km (6.92 miles) 0810

SS21 Paprotki 1 18.68km (11.60 miles) 0908

SS22 Orzysz 2 11.15km (6.92 miles) 1045

SS23 Paprotki 2 18.68km (11.60 miles) 1218

Finish Podium 1430

2016 Rally Poland result:

WRC: 1 Andreas Mikkelsen/Jæger Anders (Volkswagen Polo R WRC) 2h37m34.4s; 2 Ott Tänak/Raigo Mõlder (Ford Fiesta RS WRC) +26.2s; Hayden Paddon/John Kennard (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC) +28.5s **WRC2:** Teemu Suninen/Mikko Markkula (Škoda Fabia R5) **WRC3:** Simone Tempestini/Giovanni Bernacchini (Citroën DS3 R3T Max)

Top 10 running order:

1 Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Ford Fiesta WRC)
5 Thierry Neuville/Nicolas Gilsoul (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC)
2 Ott Tänak/Martin Jarveoja (Ford Fiesta WRC)
10 Jari-Matti Latvala/Miikka Anttila (Toyota Yaris WRC)
6 Dani Sordo/Marc Marti (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC)
3 Elfyn Evans/Dan Barritt (Ford Fiesta WRC)
8 Craig Breen/Scott Martin (Citroën C3 WRC)
4 Hayden Paddon/Sebastian Marshall (Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC)
11 Juho Hänninen/Kaj Lindström (Toyota Yaris WRC)
12 Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (Toyota Yaris WRC)

Leading WRC championship positions:

1 Ogier 141pts; 2 Neuville 123; 3 Tanak 108; 4 Latvala 107; 5 Sordo 70; 6 Evans 53.

Leading WRC2 runners:

31 Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (Škoda Fabia R5)
32 Benito Guerra/Daniel Cue (Škoda Fabia R5)
33 Simone Tempestini/Giovanni Bernacchini DS3 R5
34 Ole Christian Veiby/Stig Rune Skjaermoen (Škoda Fabia R5)
35 Gus Greensmith/Craig Parry (Ford Fiesta R5)
36 Pedro Heller/Pablo Olmos (Ford Fiesta R5)

Leading WRC2 championship positions:

1 Tidemand 100pts; 2 Teemu Suninen 54; 3 Eric Camilli 52.

Leading WRC3/JWRC runners:

61 Raphaël Astier/Frederic Vauclare (Peugeot 208 R2)
62 Francisco Name/Armando Zapata (DS3 R3T)
63 Jakub Brzezinski/Robert Hundla (DS3 R3T)
71 Nil Solans/Miquel Ibanezsotos (Ford Fiesta R2)
72 Terry Folb/Christopher Guieu (Ford Fiesta R2)
73 Julius Tannert/Jürgen Heigl (Ford Fiesta R2)

Leading WRC3 championship positions:

1 Solans 61; 2 Astier 50pts; 3 Nicolas Ciamin 33.

Junior WRC

1 Solans 62pts; 2 Ciamin 42; 3 Folb 33.

Stuart Loudon's key stage: SS23 Paprotki 2 18.68km (11.60 miles) 1218

This stage was part of the 2009 Rally Poland route when the event came back to the World Rally Championship for the first time in 36 years. More recently, it was run once in 2015 in a shorter form and now it's back for this year. And back as the powerstage. At 18 kilometres it's one of the longer powerstages of the season and the reason for picking Paprotki is simply because it's the last test of what's certain to be a really closely fought WRC round. One of the features of these faster rallies are the small time gaps; without junctions and, tight, technical sections, there are less opportunities for drivers to gamble and go late on the brakes or earlier on the throttle. This stage, I've no doubt, will provide plenty of excitement come Sunday afternoon.

Stuart will be watching... #2 Ott Tänak/Martin Jarveoja (Ford Fiesta WRC)

Couldn't really be anybody else in Poland, could it? Remember the end of the last stage last year? Having led for much of the event, Ott lost out in the rain on the final day. "It's too much..." were his words. He filled up while the rest of the rally world came close to breaking down. For the second year in succession, he'd come so close to breaking his WRC duck. This time around he comes with no duck to break and no monkey on his back after his Rally Italy win last time out. That Sardinian success will have eased the pressure allowing his natural talent and speed to come to the fore. Watch him go.

Weather with you:

Really mixed bag this time, with temperatures potentially ranging from the mid-teens to the high twenties (Celsius) and rain, cloud and sunshine forecast. Basically, a bit of everything.

Recent winners Rally Poland:

2007: Oscar Svedlund/Björn Nilsson (Subaru Impreza STi N12)
2008: Michal Bebenek/Grzegorz Bebenek (Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX)
2009: Mikko Hirvonen/Jarmo Lehtinen (Ford Focus RS WRC 09)
2010: Kajetan Kajetanowicz/ Jaroslaw Baran (Ford Fiesta R5)
2011: Kajetan Kajetanowicz/ Jaroslaw Baran (Ford Fiesta R5)
2012: Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (Škoda Fabia S2000)
2013: Kajetan Kajetanowicz/ Jaroslaw Baran (Ford Fiesta R5)
2014: Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)
2015: Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)
2016: Andreas Mikkelsen/Jæger Anders (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)

Most successful driver on Rally Poland:

Sobieslaw Zasada (4 wins)

2017 World Rally Championship stats...

Stages planned: 121

Stages run: 116

Total competitive distance travelled: 2296.54km (1427.06 miles)

Total distance travelled: 9245.72km (5745.29 miles)

Winners' total competitive time: 21h31m22.9s

Longest stage of the season: El Chocolate 1 54.90km (34.11 miles) Rally Mexico

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

Most WRC fastest times in 2017: 1 Neuville 31; 2 Tänak 15; 3 Ogier 14; 4 Evans 13; 5 Meeke 12; 6 Sordo 9; 7 Latvala/Paddon 8; 9 Lappi 6; 10 Østberg/Hänninen 2; 12 Breen/Lefebvre 1

Most WRC stages led in 2017: 1 Neuville 29; 2 Meeke 25; 3 Evans 16; 4 Ogier/Tänak 13; 6 Paddon 9; 7 Latvala 8; 8 Hänninen 3; 8 Østberg 1

Most WRC2 fastest times in 2017: 1 Tidemand 35; 2 Mikkelsen 29; 3 Jan Kopecky 19; 4 Camilli 9; 4 Suninen 8; 5 Veiby 7; 7 Guerra 4; 8 Gustavo Saba/Bryan Bouffier/Pierre-Louis Loubet/Yohan Rossel 2; 12 Eyvind Brynildsen/Katsuta Takamoto/Lukasz Pieniazek 1

Most WRC2 stages led in 2017: 1 Tidemand 45; 2 Mikkelsen 43; 3 Kopecky 18; 4 Camilli 6; 5 Veiby 3; 6 Rossel 1

Most JWRC fastest times in 2017: 1 Solans 13; 2 Terry Folb/Ciamin 7; 4 Rob Duggan 5; 5 Denis Rådström 2; 6 Sebastian Careaga/Julius Tannert/Dillon Van Way 1

Most JWRC stages led in 2017: 1 Solans 28; 2 Folb 1

Most WRC3 fastest times in 2017: 1 Solans 22; 2 Astier 18; 3 Louise Cook 14; 4 Brzezinski 10; 5 Ciamin 9; 6 Duggan 5; 7 Enrico Brazzoli/Charles Martin/Folb 3; 10 Name/Rådström 2; 12 Luca Panzani/Tannert/Van Way/Careaga 1

Most WRC3 stages led in 2017: 1 Astier 26; 2 Solans 17; 3 Cook 14; 4 Brzezinski 12; 5 Name 7; 6 Folb 1

Most R-GT fastest times in 2017: 1 Romain Dumas 17; Francois Delecour 6; Fabio Andolfi 2

Most R-GT stages led in 2017: 1 Dumas 18; 2 Delecour 4; 3 Andolfi 3

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Stuart Loudon is a semi-professional co-driver who has started 91 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.

Stats courtesy of ewrc-results.com