

The Tunnock's guide to... Coates Hire Rally Australia

### **Welcome from Rally Australia organisers:**

Rally Australia showcases one of the most beautiful regions of Australia. Located between the Pacific Ocean and rainforest-clad mountains, the Coffs Coast enjoys a sub-tropical climate all year round; in particular, the spring weather in September will be delightfully warm. Tourism and rural industries, including cattle-raising, wine-making and the iconic banana plantations that cover the local hillsides underpin a vibrant economy.

But for rally people, perhaps the immediate attraction is the sporting challenge of the Rally Australia roads. Competitors widely praised last year's special stages. The 50-kilometre Nambucca stage was hailed as one of the best in the world and I'm pleased to confirm it remains in the 2015 itinerary.

Yet we have listened to feedback in making further improvements. There are three new Friday stages in the Nambucca region that we believe are the most exciting we've offered on the Coffs Coast event – surpassing even the Nambucca stage itself – plus a traditional night stage in the countryside to close Saturday's leg, a first for Rally Australia, and a new stage on Sunday.

The new stages are fast, technical and set in beautiful forest and open country. The itinerary, based around the same Coffs Harbour Service Park, remains one of the most compact and efficient on the WRC calendar.

### **Dates and data:**

FIA World Rally Championship round 10/13

WRC – WRC2

Date: September 10-13, 2015

Based: Coffs Harbour, New South Wales

Service: C-Ex Sports Stadium, Coffs Harbour

Stages: 17

Competitive distance: 311.36km (193.47 miles)

Liaison distance: 712.34km (442.64 miles)

Total distance: 1023.70km (636.12 miles)

Longest stage: Nambucca (SS9/11) 50.80km (31.56 miles)

Shortest stage: Settles Rd (SS15) 6.40km (3.97 miles)

Currency: Australian Dollar

Time difference: BST+9/GMT+10/UTC+10

Language: English

Australian population: 23 million

Capital: Canberra

Sunrise: 0550

Sunset: 1737

### **Shakedown:**

Same as last year, the combination of Hydes Creek Road and Box Trees Road gives a 4.98km (3.09 miles) stage, just south of Coffs Harbour. The stage runs for priority drivers from 0800-1130 on Thursday September 10, with service from the C-Ex Sports Stadium, Coffs Harbour.

### **Itinerary:**

Friday September 11

SS1 Utungun 1 7.88km (4.89 miles) 0818  
SS2 Bakers Creek 1 16.75km (10.40 miles) 0841  
SS3 Northbank 1 8.42km (5.20 miles) 0929  
SS4 Newry Long 1 29.51km (18.33 miles) 1042  
Service Coffs Harbour 1152  
SS5 Utungun 2 7.88km (4.89 miles) 1400  
SS6 Bakers Creek 2 16.75km (10.40 miles) 1423  
SS7 Northbank 2 8.42km (5.20 miles) 1456  
SS8 Newry Long 2 29.51km (18.33 miles) 1609  
Service Coffs Harbour 1719

Saturday September 12

SS9 Nambucca 1 50.80km (31.56 miles) 1018  
SS10 Valla 1 7.94km (4.93 miles) 1208 – *live television*  
Service Coffs Harbour 1328  
SS11 Nambucca 2 50.80km (31.56 miles) 1541  
SS12 Valla 2 7.94km (4.93 miles) 1810  
Service Coffs Harbour 1930

Sunday September 13

SS13 Bucca Long 1 21.95km (13.63 miles) 0758  
SS14 Wedding Bells 1 9.23km (5.73 miles) 0908 – *live television*  
SS15 Settles Rd 6.40km (3.97 miles) 0939  
Service Coffs Harbour 1013  
SS16 Bucca Long 2 21.95km (13.63 miles) 1142  
SS17 Wedding Bells 2 9.23km (5.73 miles) 1308 – *live television*  
Finish Coffs Harbour 1500

### **Changes from last year:**

Only Sunday's Settles stage is completely new – and most of that was used for shakedown and qualifying in 2013. The first 6.49km (4.03 miles) of Newry Long will need to be pacenoted for the first time, while Bucca Long has two new sections in it. The Nambucca test has been extended by 1.88km (1.16 miles), none of which has been driven competitively before.

### **Last year...**

Having come close to landing his first ever drivers' championship in Coffs Harbour the year before, Sébastien Ogier sealed the deal for his second title on this rally 12 months ago. The Frenchman put a tricky mid-season behind him to head up a one-two-three for Volkswagen – a result which almost had team principal Jost Capito in tears. Emotions were running understandably

high: not only had Ogier done the double, but the whole team celebrated back-to-back crowns. Ogier won the event in magnificent style, leading from the front and controlling a small gap to Jari-Matti Latvala throughout. Kris Meeke was the first non-Polo home, the Northern Irishman ruing his decision to cut a corner on the Valla stage. He was hit with a 1m01s penalty, without which he would have remained firmly in a fight with Andreas Mikkelsen for podium's bottom step.

**Result:** 1 Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Volkswagen Polo R WRC) 2h53m18.0s; 2 Jari-Matti Latvala/Miikka Anttila (Volkswagen Polo R WRC) +6.8s; 3 Andreas Mikkelsen/Ola Fløene (Volkswagen Polo R WRC) +1m18.0s

### **Top 10 running order (day one):**

- 1 1 Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)
- 2 2 Jari-Matti Latvala/Miikka Anttila (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)
- 3 9 Andreas Mikkelsen/Ola Fløene (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)
- 4 4 Mads Østberg/Jonas Andersson (Citroën DS 3 WRC)
- 5 7 Thierry Neuville/Nicolas Gilsoul (Hyundai i20 WRC)
- 6 5 Elfyn Evans/Daniel Barritt (Ford Fiesta RS WRC)
- 7 3 Kris Meeke/Paul Nagle (Citroën DS 3 WRC)
- 8 6 Ott Tanak/Raigo Molder (Ford Fiesta RS WRC)
- 9 20 Dani Sordo/Marc Marti (Hyundai i20 WRC)
- 10 8 Hayden Paddon/John Kennar (Hyundai i20 WRC)

Championship positions...

1 Ogier 207 points; 2 Latvala 114; 3 Mikkelsen 98; 4 Østberg 90; 5 Neuville 80; 6 Evans 61.

### **Leading WRC2 runners:**

- 31 Yazeed Al-Rajhi/Michael Orr (Ford Fiesta RRC)
- 38 Yurii Protasov/Pavlo Cherepin (Ford Fiesta RRC)
- 39 Nasser Al-Attiyah/Matthieu Baumel (Ford Fiesta RRC)
- 40 Abdulaziz Al-Kuwari/Marshall Clarke (Ford Fiesta RRC)
- 42 Scott Pedder/Dale Moscatt (Ford Fiesta R5)

Championship positions...

1 Al-Attiyah 72 points; 2 Esapekka Lappi 70; 3 Jari Ketomaa 67; 4 Protasov 62; 5 Pontus Tidemand 61; 6 Al-Kuwari 57

*Scoring from 6 of their first 7 registered rallies*

### **Tunnock's key stage:**

Nambucca 50.80km (31.56 miles)

Saturday September 12, SS9/11 1018/1541

Rally Australia hasn't been the hardest of rallies on the car in the last couple of years, so it's quite possible Sébastien Ogier will still be first on the road through the event's longest test. If he is and it's dry, he's going to have his work cut out to contain the time loss to those running behind him in potentially cleaner road conditions. Saturday is all about long road around Argents Hill, with the short Valla stage (7.94km/4.93 miles) the only other test on day two.

### **Weather with you:**

Potential for some rain showers on the recce, with temperatures around 20 degrees. The rain should clear away once the event starts, with the temperature building to a potential high of around 27 degrees on Sunday.

### **The media week:**

Tuesday September 8

1400-1800 Accreditation open

Wednesday September 9

0800-1800 accreditation open

0800-2000 media centre open

1700-1730 M-Sport meet the team (Horizons Bar, Opal Cove Resort)

Thursday September 10

0800-2000 accreditation open

0800-2000 media centre open

0930-1300 shakedown

1215-1300 Hyundai function (service park)

1330 FIA pre-event press conference

1600 Rally show/ceremonial start Coffs Harbour city centre

Friday September 11

0630-2030 media centre open

1730 (approx) meet the top-three crews

Saturday September 12

0730-2200 media centre open

1930 (approx) meet the top-three crews

Sunday September 13

0630-2200 media centre open

1500 podium finish ceremony

1645 FIA post-event press conference

1900 provisional final classification published

### **Where's the?**

*Accreditation...* Same place as last year: Coffs Harbour Education Campus, Cnr Hogbin and Stadium Drive, Coffs Harbour

*Media centre...* Same place as last year: Coffs Harbour Education Campus, Cnr Hogbin and Stadium Drive, Coffs Harbour

*Media zone...* Same place as last year, just off Stadium Drive at the C-Ex Sports Stadium.

*Press car park...* Same place as last year – take the first right off Stadium Drive after the roundabout outside the media centre.

*Rally HQ...* Opal Cove Resort – don't forget, this is 12km (7.45 miles) north of the service park (past the big banana...)

*Snowballs?* They really are coming in Corsica. Brace yourselves...

## **Tunnock's Restaurant recommendation:**

Latitude 30 ([www.latitude30.com.au](http://www.latitude30.com.au) 02 6651 6888)

## **Rally Australia... a potted history**

Based in Perth from 1989 to 2006, the Western Australian Government-funded Rally Australia was always one of the best-run events on the calendar. The trademark bauxite red gravel roads, however, polarised opinion among the drivers, with the ball-bearing-sized stones offering little grip on high-speed stages lined with some of the biggest eucalyptus trees in the world. Some of the championship's most iconic pictures came from these stages – with the jumps in the Bunnings forest complex always a favourite.

Funding for the event in WA ran out in 2006 and the event disappeared from the WRC for three years before returning for a one-off event in Kingscliff, where the event was marred by environmentalists. After rotating with Rally New Zealand briefly, the current Coffs Harbour-based rally was granted a three-year deal with the world championship promoter from 2013-2015. That agreement has been extended into next year.

The New South Wales stages around Coffs Harbour are radically different to those on the west coast. This week's event will run through forests, open countryside and banana plantations – with cambers not dissimilar to those found across the Tasman Sea in New Zealand.

## **Recent winners Rally Australia:**

2001: Marcus Grönholm/Timo Rautiainen (Peugeot 206 WRC)

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

2003: Petter Solberg/Phil Mills (Subaru Impreza WRC2003)

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

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

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

2009: Mikko Hirvonen/Jarmo Lehtinen (Ford Focus RS WRC 09)

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)

## **Most successful driver on Australia's round of the WRC:**

Juha Kankkunen (4 wins)

Marcus Grönholm (3 wins)

Mikko Hirvonen (3 wins)

## **Stuart Loudon says...**

I've not been fortunate enough to compete in Australia yet, but it's definitely one on the to-do list. Like all rally fans, I remember being transfixed by those pictures of Colin McRae flying through the air in the Bunnings stage in 1997: that Subaru Impreza WRC seemed to be suspended in mid-air, it was amazing.

Obviously, all eyes will be on Sébastien Ogier and Julien Ingrassia this weekend, to see if they can clinch their third successive drivers' and co-

drivers' world championship. Volkswagen's third title looks almost sure, an incredible achievement for a manufacturer still only in its third full season in the sport!

The back end of this week will be a tough one, what with tuning into WRC Live from Thursday night into Friday morning; a day of making the world's best biscuits and then back into the nightshift to see who's doing what down under over the weekend.

**Stuart Loudon** is a semi-professional co-driver who has started 52 rallies, 18 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.

*Pictures courtesy of Red Bull Media House/Volkswagen Motorsport*