

The Tunnock's guide to... Rally de España

Welcome from Rally de España organisers:

Welcome to the 51st RallyRACC Catalunya-COSTA DAURADA Rally de España 2015.

This edition will, once again, be counting on the support of our invaluable collaborators in the areas of Tarragona, Costa Daurada, Salou, PortAventura, and Catalunya – all of which make it possible for us to enjoy and experience the World Rally Championship in our country.

The excellent facilities of the PortAventura Resort, will be hosting rally headquarters, race control, media centre and the service park. The PortAventura service park is the only service park used during the rally and is located, as usual, just a few metres away from rally headquarters.

We thank the city of Barcelona for welcoming the WRC family. This year we will have the first stage of the rally in Barcelona city again.

The rally philosophy remains the same and starts with shakedown in Salou and a special stage in Barcelona on Thursday, followed by a mixed-surface rally that will start with gravel on Friday and two days of asphalt on Saturday and Sunday. This year we will have 23 special stages in total, 13 of them are different and seven are new.

On Saturday evening, we will again have the chance to enjoy the Salou stage, in front of the sea and on the promenade, where rally cars will run near the beach.

Dates and data:

FIA World Rally Championship round 12/13

WRC – WRC2 – Junior WRC – WRC3 – Drive DMACK Fiesta Trophy

Date: October 22-25, 2015

Based: PortAventura, Salou

Service: PortAventura, Salou

Stages: 23

Competitive distance: 321.25km (199.62 miles)

Liaison distance: 945.58km (587.58 miles)

Total distance: 1276.83km (793.42 miles)

Longest stage: Terra Alta (SS5/9) 35.68km (22.17 miles)

Shorest stage: Salou (SS17) 2.24km (1.39 miles)

Currency: Euro

Time difference: BST+1/GMT+2/UTC+2*

Language: Spanish/Catalan

Spanish population: 46 million

Capital: Madrid

Sunrise: 0815

Sunset: 1900

**Don't forget summer time ends on Saturday night. Clocks go forward by one hour.*

Shakedown:

The shakedown stage is exactly the same test as last year. The 2.97-kilometre (1.84 miles) mixed-surface stage is 3.02km (1.87 miles) away from the service park. P1 and P2 drivers' shakedown runs from 0800-0930, while P3 drivers and DDFT competitors use the stage between 0945-1200.

Itinerary:

Thursday October 22

Start Salou 1300

SS1 Barcelona 3.20km (1.98 miles) 1808

Friday October 23

SS2 Móra d'Ebre – Ascó 1 9.62km (5.97 miles) 1008

SS3 Caseres 1 12.50km (7.76 miles) 1109

SS4 Bot 1 6.50km (4.03 miles) 1136

SS5 Terra Alta 1 35.68km (22.17 miles) 1209

Tyre fitting zone Ascó 1309

SS6 Móra d'Ebre – Ascó 2 9.62km (5.97 miles) 1442

SS7 Caseres 2 12.50km (7.76 miles) 1543

SS8 Bot 2 6.50km (4.03 miles) 1610

SS9 Terra Alta 2 35.68km (22.17 miles) 1643

Service Salou 1833

Saturday October 24

SS10 Porrera 7.43km (4.61 miles) 0915

SS11 La Figuera 1 26.26km (16.31 miles) 0942

SS12 Poboleda 1 10.63km (6.05 miles) 1028

SS13 Capafonts 1 19.80km (12.30 miles) 1123

Service Salou 1218

SS14 La Figuera 2 26.26km (16.31 miles) 1416

SS15 Poboleda 2 10.63km (6.05 miles) 1502

SS16 Capafonts 2 19.80km (12.30 miles) 1557

SS17 Salou 2.24km (1.39 miles) 1715

Service Salou 1735

Sunday October 25

SS18 Els Guiamets 1 6.80km (4.22 miles) 0717

SS19 Pratdip 1 19.30km (11.99 miles) 0750

SS20 Duesaigües 1 12.10km (7.51 miles) 0837

Regroup Móra d'Ebre 0922

SS21 Els Guiamets 2 6.80km (4.22 miles) 1010

SS22 Pratdip 2 19.30km (11.99 miles) 1043

SS23 Duesaigües 2 12.10km (7.51 miles) 1205

Finish Salou 1341

Changes from last year:

Four stages are completely new, while three have been revised. Mora d'Ebre – Ascó (Friday SS2/6) is the only new gravel test. Bot (Friday SS4/8) is last season's Gandesa stage in the opposite direction. Porrera (Saturday SS10) and Guiamets (Sunday SS18/21) are new on asphalt. Poboleda (Saturday SS12/15) is new apart from the first five kilometres (3.10 miles), which was used in the Escaladei test in 2014. The powerstage Duesaigües is the final 12.10 kilometres (7.51 miles) of last year's Riudecanyes stage – but run in the opposite direction. Elsewhere, the first 1.68 kilometres (1.04 miles) of Caseres (Saturday SS3/7) is new, the remainder of the stage is Pesells from 2014. La Figuera (Saturday SS11/14) is the first 26.26 kilometres (16.31 miles) of Escaladei last time out and Pratedip (Saturday SS19/22) includes the first 18 kilometres (11.18 miles) of the 2012 Santa Marina stage before running onto a new road to the finish.

Last year...

Sebastien Ogier turned in a champion's drive to seal his second consecutive World Rally Championship title in Salou 12 months ago. The Frenchman overcame the disadvantage of running first on the road on the opening day's gravel stages to end Friday half a minute up. He wasn't going to be beaten from there and he and the Volkswagen Polo R WRC were peerless and perfect through the weekend. Jari-Matti Latvala was second and, if anything, even quicker on last season's Spanish Saturday and Sunday. The gap was down to 11 seconds by the end, but the charge came too late – a lack of feeling on the loose cost J-ML dearly. Mikko Hirvonen made the podium's bottom step after a drive reminiscent of the Finn's finest hour. Nasser Al-Attiyah won WRC2 from Julien Maurin- with Rob Barrable and Tunnock's very own Stuart Loudon also on the podium in the world championship feeder series. This was the second year in succession Rob and Stuart made the top three in Spain.

Result: 1 Sebastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Volkswagen Polo R WRC) 3h46m44.6s; 2 Jari-Matti Latvala/Miikka Anttila (Volkswagen Polo R WRC) +11.3; 3 Mikko Hirvonen/Jarmo Lehtinen (Ford Fiesta RS WRC) +1m42.2s

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 3 Kris Meeke/Paul Nagle (Citroën DS 3 WRC)
- 7 5 Elfyn Evans/Daniel Barritt (Ford Fiesta RS WRC)
- 8 20 Hayden Paddon/John Kennar (Hyundai i20 WRC)
- 9 6 Ott Tänak/Raigo Molder (Ford Fiesta RS WRC)
- 10 8 Dani Sordo/Marc Martí (Hyundai i20 WRC)

Championship positions...

1 Ogier 238 points; 2 Latvala 160; 3 Mikkelsen 126; 4 Østberg 98; 5 Neuville 86; 6 Meeke 83.

Leading WRC2 runners:

- 31 Yazeed Al Rajhi/Michael Orr (Ford Fiesta RRC)
- 34 Quentin Giordano/Valentin Sarreaud (DS 3 R5)
- 38 Nasser Al-Attiyah/Matthieu Baumel (Škoda Fabia R5)
- 39 Yurii Protasov/Pavlo Cherepin (Ford Fiesta RRC)
- 40 Abdulaziz Al-Kuwari/Marshall Clarke (Ford Fiesta RRC)
- 42 Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (Škoda Fabia R5)
- 43 Jari Ketomaa/Kaj Lindstrom (Ford Fiesta R5)
- 44 Pontus Tidemand/Emil Axelsson (Škoda Fabia R5)
- 45 Jan Kopecky/Pavel Dresler (Škoda Fabia R5)
- 47 Armin Kremer/Pirmin Winklhofer (Škoda Fabia R5)
- 48 Eric Camilli/Benjamin Veillas (Ford Fiesta R5)
- 49 Craig Breen/Scott Martin (Peugeot 208 T16)
- 50 Julien Maurin/Nicolas Klingner (Ford Fiesta R5)

WRC2 positions...

1 Al-Attiyah 97 points; 2 Lappi 88; 3 Protasov 80; 4 Al-Kuwari 72; 5 Ketomaa 67; 6 Tidemand 61

Scoring from 6 of their first 7 registered rallies

Leading Junior WRC runners (all driving DS 3 R3-Max):

- 52 Simone Tempestini/Matteo Chiarcossi
- 53 Ole Christian Veiby/Anders Jaeger
- 55 Mohammed Al Mutawaa/Stephen McAuley
- 58 Terry Folb/Franck Le Floch
- 60 Quentin Gilbert/Renaud Jamoul
- 63 Frederico Della Casa/Domenico Pozzi
- 65 Pierre-Louis Loubet/Vincent Landais

Junior WRC positions...

1 Gilbert 106pts; 2 Veiby 52; 3 Henri Haapamaki 48; 4 Tempestini 47; 5 Jean-Rene Perry 32; 6 Folb 30

Best score on 6 from 7 rallies

Tunnock's key stage:

Capafonts (SS13/16 19.80km – 12.30 miles).

If the weather does turn wet at the weekend, tyre choice will be even more important than ever. If the crews take the soft out of service, will it last until the end of the loop if it warms up or dries out? Capafonts is a completely new stage at the end of the loop – if the boots are well worn on Saturday lunchtime or late afternoon, it's here that we're going to find out.

Weather with you:

There's potential for rain through the recce until the middle of the week. The end of the week is looking clearer with temperatures around 20 degrees, before it turns cloudier and the chance of more rain at the weekend. Rain ahead of the event wouldn't necessarily be a bad thing for first on the road Sebastien Ogier.

The media week:

Tuesday October 20
1400-2000 accreditation open

Wednesday October 21
0800-2000 accreditation open
0800-2000 media centre open
1845 M-Sport Happy Hour (service area)
1930 FIA pre-event press conference (PortAventura media centre)

Thursday October 22
0700-2000 accreditation open
0700-2300 media centre open
0800-1200 shakedown
1300 rally start, Salou
1600 autograph session/promotional activity Barcelona
1808 SS1 starts Barcelona superspecial

Friday October 23
0700-1400 accreditation open
0700-2300 media centre open
1845 (approx) meet the top-three crews (service park)

Saturday October 24
0700-2300 media centre open
1800 (approx) meet the top-three crews (service park)

Sunday October 25
0600-2200 media centre open
1340 podium finish ceremony, Salou
1530 FIA post-event press conference (PortAventura media centre)
1830 provisional final classification published

Tunnock's Restaurant recommendation:

The Guinness Tavern (+34 650 435791), go there for big food and good Guinness. Nobody should go to the Castillo De Javier... it, er, gets very busy. If you should find yourself in there, go for the jamón ibérico. Alright, alright, here's the number: +34 977 352222. Happy now?

Rally de España ... a potted history

Originally based on the Costa Brava and including asphalt and gravel stages around Lloret de Mar, it was no coincidence that Spain's European Rally Championship round was boosted to world status at the height of Carlos Sainz's power. Indeed, the first time the event ran as a WRC round, Sainz was the defending world champion. But there was no dream start for the Spaniard at home – he retired his Toyota Celica GT-Four with an electrical problem at the start of the second day in 1991. Twelve months on and Sainz and his Celica Turbo 4WD were winners after more than six hours of competitive driving.

The Catalan organisers have remained flexible to the whims and wishes of the World Rally Championship, with an itinerary which went all-asphalt before returning for a day on the gravel in recent years. Ten years ago, the Catalunya Rally headed for a new base at the PortAventura theme park in Salou, south of Barcelona, and has remained – and continues to prosper in the hills of Tarragona – ever since.

Recent winners Rally de España:

2005: Sébastien Loeb/Daniel Elena (Citroën Xsara WRC)
2006: Sébastien Loeb/Daniel Elena (Citroën Xsara WRC)
2007: Sébastien Loeb/Daniel Elena (Citroën C4 WRC)
2008: Sébastien Loeb/Daniel Elena (Citroën C4 WRC)
2009: Sébastien Loeb/Daniel Elena (Citroën C4 WRC)
2010: Sébastien Loeb/Daniel Elena (Citroën C4 WRC)
2011: Sébastien Loeb/Daniel Elena (Citroën DS 3 WRC)
2012: Sébastien Loeb/Daniel Elena (Citroën DS 3 WRC)
2013: Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)
2014: Sébastien Ogier/Julien Ingrassia (Volkswagen Polo R WRC)

Most successful driver on Spain's round of the WRC:

Sébastien Loeb (8 wins)

Stuart Loudon says...

"My relationship with this rally didn't get off to the best of starts. I first competed here in 2012 with John MacCrone. I was still in with a shot at winning the WRC Academy co-drivers' title and everything started really well; John and I were leading, when the car swapped ends and dropped us into a field. The Fiesta [R2] was completely undamaged, but the mud was so thick it took us ages to get out. We finished fourth in the end.

"In the last two years, I've finished third in WRC2 with Rob Barrable in a Ford Fiesta R5. Both times, we had a really good event.

"Spain's a bit of an odd one though; it's rare these days that you get two surfaces in one event and the differences go beyond just altering the dampers and ride height on the car.

"Inside the car, asphalt rallying demands a different approach from a co-driver – the notes tend to be called a lot quicker; everything is happening that bit faster and with more corner speed. And, of course, there's nothing like the noise of the clatter of the stones on the bottom of the car you've had for the first day.

"I really enjoy Catalunya. It's a great challenge for the crew and the team to re-prepare the car in the middle of an event. There's always a good atmosphere there – especially with so many British and Irish crews going out to watch, there's also something about the sense of anticipation as Spain's traditionally the last 'away' rally before our own Wales Rally GB.

"I couldn't sign off here without saying something about the Mull Rally earlier this month. As I'm sure some of you will have heard, co-driver Andrew Mort was killed competing on an event that's very close to my heart. My deepest sympathies and condolences go to all of Andrew's family and friends. And my thoughts and all good wishes for a quick and full recovery are with my friend and driver John MacCrone."

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