

57th Giru di Corsica - Tour de Corse

(November 6-8, 2014)

FIA European Rally Championship

(ERC, round 11)



Tradition and innovation in Corsica for the ERC finale

The Giru di Corsica - Tour de Corse – the 11th and final round of the 2014 FIA European Rally Championship – will take place in Corsica over the weekend of November 6-8. The 57th edition of this historic event will be focused around the south of the island, with a Porto-Vecchio start, the return to the itinerary of some legendary special stages and a ceremonial finish in Ajaccio. A large number of high-profile international and French drivers are expected on the entry list, while the appeal of the second leg will be enhanced by the addition of a national rally organised especially for amateur crews.

The 2014 FIA European Rally Championship (ERC) is speeding towards what looks sure to be a spectacular conclusion at the Giru di Corsica - Tour de Corse, from November 6-8.

At the time of writing – two rounds from the end of the season – the ERC Drivers' and ERC Junior titles as well as the ERC Production Car Cup crown all remain up for grabs.

That means there is a strong likelihood that these battles will be decided on the Mediterranean island which will welcome rallying's European elite for the fourth consecutive year (counting both 'ERC' et 'IRC' events).

Return to an autumn date

Led by its President, Christian Leca, the ASACC Tour de Corse has returned to its roots by returning to an end-of-season date, as was the case for the very earliest Tours de Corse during the 1950s.

"We are delighted to have restored this tradition. As the eagerly-anticipated finale to the FIA ERC, the 2014 Giru di Corsica - Tour de Corse will be a magnificent occasion for everyone – the crews, the teams and the spectators alike," Christian Leca remarks. "The tension remains at fever pitch in a number of the championship's classes, which means we are certain to see the Skoda and Peugeot factory teams in action, in addition to many of the other leading protagonists.

"What's more, the town of Ajaccio has been selected as the venue for the official end-of-season ERC prize-giving. This means we will have the honour of welcoming a prestigious audience – drivers, co-drivers, teams, media, members of national and international federations, our colleagues in charge of organising



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fellow events and the championship promoters will all grace us with their presence on Sunday, November 9 at the Convention Centre.”

In the past, the difficult weather conditions often encountered at high altitude at this time of year (rain, storms, snow) produced memorable events. Moreover, just as it is this year in the ERC, the Giru di Corsica - Tour de Corse has on several occasions served as the season finale to the FIA World Rally Championship.

Indeed, the French showdown habitually took place in the autumn (usually November, but also sometimes October or December) until 1980 prior to changing – barring a few exceptions – to a springtime slot.

Former rally driver Jean-Pierre Nicolas – now ERC Sporting Manager – is perfectly placed to cast his memory back to several of the rally’s classic autumnal editions: “It’s fantastic to see the Tour de Corse return to its rightful date – the beginning of November,” enthuses the winner of the 1973 event in an Alpine-Renault A110. “Unquestionably, it makes for a tougher challenge. The first of the seasonal rain has already been, and the roads are blanketed in dead leaves and crushed chestnuts, which have long been the ingredients behind this rally’s enduring success.”

Start in Porto-Vecchio

Having variously selected Ajaccio, Bastia, Calvi and Corte as the event’s central hub in recent years, organisers have on this occasion chosen Porto-Vecchio as the starting point for the rally for the very first time.

Indeed, following ‘free practice’ and the ‘Qualifying Stage’ (Ceccia-Pasciallelo) a few kilometres to the south of Porto-Vecchio on Thursday, November 6, a start ceremony will take place in front of the town hall at 20.00.

The rally will then officially get underway from Porto-Vecchio Marina at 08.00 the following morning.

A compact itinerary comprising more than 250 kilometres against the clock

Corsica’s third town by population, this port and tourist hot-spot on the island’s south-east coast hosted the start of the opening leg of the Tour de France cycle race in 2013.

Following a switch from two-wheeled to four-wheeled competition, the selection of Porto-Vecchio as the rally base allowed organisers to ‘innovate’ by using for the first time in many years classic stages around Sartène and the Forêt



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d'Ospédale (Palavèse-L'Ospédale, Sorbollano-Pont D'Accoravo, Sartène-Orone). After an overnight halt in Ajaccio, these tests will be followed the next day by a more familiar – but every bit as demanding – loop closer to the capital of Southern Corsica (Acqua Doria-Col de Bellevalle, Bastelica-Tavera, Sarrola-Plage du Liamone).



Thanks to this compact route, more than a third of the overall distance of 733 kilometres will be timed, with 11 special stages (six of them different) totalling 251.50 kilometres: 135.40km over six stages on the Friday (Porto-Vecchio-Ajaccio, November 7), followed by 116.10km during Saturday's five stages (Ajaccio-Ajaccio).



“For drivers from my generation, the ‘new’ stages are not strictly new since we used them regularly up until around 30 years ago,” continues Jean-Pierre Nicolas. “However, the terrain will be completely new for current-day competitors! These stages are entirely in-keeping with the celebrated image of the Tour de Corse. One of the beauties of Corsica is that no matter whereabouts on the island you are – north, south, east or west – the terrain lends itself ideally to rallying.”



A strong field...

A nail-biting conclusion to the title battles in the ERC, ERC Junior and ERC Production Car Cup categories is assured, courtesy of a high-calibre entry list for the 2014 Giru di Corsica - Tour de Corse. Similarly anticipated are two factory Fabia S2000s (drivers TBC) and a brace of 208 T16s run under the Peugeot Rally Academy banner and piloted by Ireland's Craig Breen and Dutchman Kevin Abbring.



Another Peugeot Rally Academy representative, young Frenchman Stéphane Lefebvre (Peugeot 208 R2) could even be set to re-write the history books should he add to his ‘Junior’ World Rally Championship title success secured at Rallye de France-Alsace with the European laurels in the same season – and on home soil to boot!



However, it is clear that his rivals will not make life easy for him in his quest...



Beyond the key European contenders, endurance racing expert and erstwhile French Rally Champion Stéphane Sarrazin is expected to participate in the 2014 edition of the Giru di Corsica - Tour de Corse, as are two former winners of the event and a driver who has triumphed in the Le Mans 24 Hours.



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Another leading light will be three-time British Rally Champion Keith Cronin from Ireland in a Subaru Impreza.

...plus a national rally

To enable island-based amateur competitors and other 'privateer' entrants to experience the challenge and thrill of the iconic Corsican stages and gauge themselves against the finest drivers in the ERC, the Giru di Corsica - Tour de Corse will be accompanied by a national rally – the 'Mare e Machja'.

"We wanted to make a genuine effort for Corsican amateur drivers, whose cars are not homologated to enter a round of the European Rally Championship," explains Christian Leca. "We therefore introduced this event, which will take in the entire second leg of the main rally – the section from Ajaccio to Ajaccio. Crews will benefit from a 370km itinerary, of which 116km will be divided between five timed stages and all for the modest entry fee of only €500..."

What's more, a special trophy will be set aside for amateur Corsican drivers competing in the international rally.

The finish ramp for both the international and national events will be in Place du Diamant in Ajaccio town centre at the end of Saturday afternoon (November 8).

Information

Competitors and spectators can find further information on the ASACC Tour de Corse website (www.asacc.fr) and FIA European Rally Championship website (www.fiaerc.com).

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