

Paris, 27 July 2023

FIA-FIM RALLY-RAID WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS VAMOS, VAMOS, ARGENTINA

Key points:

- The W2RC caravan will resume its American expedition in a month. Following the Sonora Rally in Mexico in late April, the fourth round of the championship will take place in Argentina from 26 August to 1 September with the eleventh Desafío Ruta 40 YPF.
- This edition is a first for the W2RC, which has never visited Argentina before, and marks the return of the Desafío Ruta 40 YPF following a hiatus that started in 2018. The competitors will face a gruelling 2,804 km route between La Rioja, Belén (Catamarca) and Salta, split into a prologue and five stages.
- FIA overall leader Nasser Al Attiyah (Toyota Gazoo Racing) is ready to take on the local hero Sebastián Halpern (X-raid Mini JCW). The Argentinian, fourth in the standings, has won the race twice and is lining up as the defending champion.
- Toby Price (Red Bull KTM Factory Racing), perched at the top of the FIM leader board, will have to keep an eye on his teammate Kevin Benavides, currently in fourth place. The Argentinian ace, who defeated the Australian to win his second Dakar last January, also has two victories to his name in this event.

THE ARGENTINIAN REMONTADA

The 2023 W2RC added two new American races to the calendar, slotted between the Dakar and the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge and its traditional season finale in Morocco in October. After the Sonora Rally in Mexico, the Desafío Ruta 40 YPF is now poised to bring Argentina back to the forefront of the international rally raid scene. The country hosted the Dakar ten times in a row from 2009 to 2018, when it awed the world with its sublime landscapes and a tidal wave of enthusiasm swept the nation. The Desafío Ruta 40 also ran for ten editions between 2010 and 2018, including two in 2017 (one in the north and one in the south). After five years on ice, the DR40 —as it is known in the trade— chose 2023 as the right moment to emulate the World Cup-winning national football team and stage its own *remontada*!

Argentina is keen on taking a leaf out of the book of its homegrown talent, which has consistently been at the business end of the sport in recent years. **Sebastián Halpern** is fourth in the car championship, with another albiceleste, the rising star **Juan Cruz Yacopini (Overdrive Racing)**, nipping on his heels. The **Mini JCW** driver, a two-time winner of the DR40 (2016 and 2018), is the current title holder. He has a real shot at joining **Nasser Al Attiyah** and **Yazeed Al Rajhi (Toyota Overdrive)** on the provisional podium. Meanwhile, in the motorbike category, **Kevin Benavides** claimed his second Dakar last January, following his maiden win in 2021. He lies fourth in the championship, hamstrung by a crash shortly before the second round. Also a two-time winner of the race (2016 and 2017), he is the favourite to win on home turf, but few RallyGP riders have improved their performances this year as much as his brother **Luciano (Husqvarna Factory Racing)**. The younger **Benavides** is now second in the championship and certainly has what it takes to add a third Desafío Ruta 40 YPF trophy to the family's silverware.

A DAUNTING CHALLENGE

The Desafío Ruta 40 owes its name to Ruta Nacional 40, which it has traditionally followed. RN40 is the longest and most important road in Argentina, running parallel to the Andes from south to north for over 5,000 kilometres. *Ruta 40* is famous for the mosaic of beautiful reserves, national parks and permanently snow-capped peaks —including the highest in the Americas— that lie along the route. It has set the stage for adventures such as "Che" Guevara's journey of self-discovery. The DR40 will bring all these landscapes to our screens, just like the Dakar once did. The eleventh Desafío Ruta 40 will take place in the northern reaches of the country. Here, the organiser warns that the main challenges will be the varied terrain and the need to change the pace throughout the rally and often within the same stage. Off-track sections, dried-up riverbeds —the famous *ríos*, including the Pie de Medano *río* at an altitude of 2,900 metres—, dunes of all sizes —including the dunes of Fiambalá, which make up 30% of the stage 4 special—, salt flats... Dakar *aficionados* in South America are in for a real treat, not just because the race will revisit some of the venues and bivouacs that went down in the ten-year history of the Dakar on the continent, but also and especially because it is bringing back the atmosphere that fans came to know and love. "You have no idea how many questions about the spectator areas we have received!", confesses the DR40 YPF Communications Department.

La Rioja, Catamarca (where is located Belén) and Salta are three provinces that have hosted the DR40 and the Dakar more than once. Far from resting on the laurels, they are serving up between 10 and 15% of entirely new content. The prologue, held in La Rioja on 27 August, will give fans an idea of the state of play. Stage 1 will take the field to Belén, where the caravan will set up camp in the familiar bivouac of the Dakar and previous editions of the DR40. This picture-postcard village will then host three loop stages. The fifth and final stage will set course for Salta, located almost 500 kilometres from the start city down *Ruta 40*.

David Eli, founder of +Eventos (organiser of the Desafío Ruta 40 YPF):

"We are enjoying the return of the Desafío Ruta 40 YPF with great enthusiasm and excitement, even more so with the arrival of the W2RC for the first time in Argentina. In +Eventos we have a great team with an important know-how when it comes to organising major sports events. La Rioja, Belén (in Catamarca) and Salta are emblematic places in the history of the Desafío Ruta 40 and the Dakar Rally in South America since, as we know, they have outstanding terrains for the rally raid. We are designing a race for the riders to have a good time, but be careful! That doesn't mean it will be an easy race. It will be a great Desafío Ruta 40."

PROGRAMME:

- 12 August: Closing date for FIA entries
- 16 August: Closing date for FIM entries
- 17 August: Publication of the entry list
- 22 August: Opening of the bivouac at the Estadio Superdomo de La Rioja at 8 am
- 25 August: Opening of the press room and distribution of accreditations at the Estadio Superdomo de La Rioja from 9 am
- 26 August:
 - Administrative scrutineering at the Estadio Superdomo de La Rioja from 9 am to 5 pm
 - Technical scrutineering at the Estadio Superdomo de La Rioja from 10 am to 6 pm
 - Press conference at the Estadio Superdomo de La Rioja at 12 pm
- 27 August:
 - Completion of the administrative and technical scrutineering at the Estadio Superdomo de La Rioja from 8:30 to 10 am
 - Publication of the starting order at 11:30 am
 - General briefing at the Estadio Superdomo de La Rioja at 1 pm
 - 9 km prologue at Dique Los Sauces at 3 pm
 - Choice of starting order by the top 10 in the prologue at the Estadio Superdomo de La Rioja at 6:30 pm
 - Ceremonial start at the Estadio Superdomo de La Rioja from 7:30 to 8:30 pm
- 28 August: stage 1 - La Rioja–Belén (road section: 362 km / special: 334 km / total: 696 km)
- 29 August: stage 2 - Belén–Belén (road section: 121 km / special: 339 km / total: 460 km)
- 30 August: stage 3 - Belén–Belén (road section: 196 km / special: 268 km / total: 464 km)
- 31 August: stage 4 - Belén–Belén (road section: 236 km / special: 348 km / total: 584 km)
- 1 September: stage 5 - Belén–Salta (road section: 304 km / special: 257 km / total: 561 km)
 - Finish of the first competitors at 2 pm
 - Finish podium ceremony at the Centro de Convenciones de Salta from 5 to 6 pm

Desafío Ruta 40 official website [here](#)

W2RC official website [here](#)

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