

Fréjus, 7 October 2023

4 to 8 October 2023

2023 ROC D'AZUR

ROC D'AZUR BUILDING UP TO ITS CLIMAX

Key points for today:

- Alexys Brunel and Alana Castrique strongest in the Canyon Gravel Roc
- a Saturday at the Roc: Kid Roc for the children and MTB and e-MTB recreational rides
- Roc Trail: runners tackle four distances in the heart of the Argens plain

Highlights of tomorrow:

- The Roc d'Azur brings the Roc to a close
- Frenchman Hugo Drechou and Lithuanian Kataržina Sosna are marked riders
- Start list includes Romain Bardet, fresh from Il Lombardia, and Juliette Labous, fifth in the last Tour de France Femmes avec Zwift
- Hikes are the major new event for the 2023, guaranteeing a laid-back sporting experience in a landscape straight out of a fairy tale

ALEXYS BRUNEL AND ALANA CASTRIQUE TAKE THE CANYON GRAVEL ROC

Three days shy of his 25th birthday, **Alexys Brunel**, a former pro cyclist turned triathlete this season, aced his gravel grinding debut by winning the [Canyon Gravel Roc](#). He completed the 70 km course in 2h28'07". "For my first gravel grinder, it was a cracking race", he said. "I had a blast. It was awesome. We had a solid start because we had to be in front to be comfortable. I just rode along until the first climb, when I cranked up the pace a bit. By the time I reached the top, I was alone. I was able to ride conservatively and play it safe on the descents to avoid crashing or breaking something. It was an auspicious start for the rest of my gravel grinding career." He beat **Clément Cousin** by eight minutes and the German **Sönke Wegner** by ten. "It was really fun", explained **Cousin**, still racing in U23. "My main target here is the Roc d'Azur on Sunday. I knew the course from last year and I loved it. It's actually the only time of the year I take out my gravel bike." The Belgian pro cyclist **Alana Castrique** (Team Cofidis), who had never entered the Roc before, claimed the women's race in 2 h 58'22", 11 minutes ahead of **Julia Aubry** from Annecy, and **Sophie Almeida**.

RECREATIONAL RIDES, FAMILIES AND CHILDREN TAKE CENTRE STAGE ON SATURDAY

The Roc has a mix of participants who squeeze every last drop of performance out of their bodies and others who stop to take snapshots of their experience. Some even switch from one day to the next. The numerous recreational rides on the programme for Saturday (ranging from 8 km to 48.7 km for the [Shimano Rando Noire Électrique](#) and the [Alltricks.com Rando Noire](#)) provide a wealth of opportunities to make the most of Les Maures Massif.

The [Kid Roc](#) serves up another dose of emotions as children show their taste for sport and, in some cases, showing the talent that will turn them into the stars of tomorrow (many current MTB champions have fond memories of their time in the [Kid Roc](#)). Parents will also put a show with a passion on par with that of their children.

ROC TRAIL ON THE TRAILS OF ROQUEBRUNE-SUR-ARGENS

Over 800 runners set off from Place Perrin, at the foot of Saint Michael's chapel in Roquebrune-sur-Argens, to tackle one of the four [trail runs](#) ranging from 16 to 43 km. They all feasted their eyes on the Argens plain, where the ochre Rocher de Roquebrune juts into the air in stark contrast with the blue skies around it. No wonder the whole field had smiles plastered on their faces at the finish. "Having [trail running](#) on the programme of the Roc is amazing", said **Edgar Dumas**, the winner of the 22 km [Roc Trail](#). "You can spend a few incredible days here. I also entered the [Roc Ruelles](#) Fréjus on Friday evening. A nice little warm-up for today! I love mountain biking, I love running and they both go together really well. The trail running course was wonderful and very technical. Last year I took part in the [Roc Trophy](#) and it's always a pleasure to come back to the Roc, no matter what discipline I'm signing up for."

View the full results [here](#).

ROC D'AZUR: HUGO DRECHOU EAGER TO GET HIS OWN BACK

The Roc d'Azur, held on Sunday, is the grand finale of the five-day Roc. Once again, some of the world's top riders will go head to head in Fréjus. **Hugo Drechou** will be starting with a fire in his belly after his chain snapped a mere 30 metres into the **Ford Roc Marathon** on Friday and knocked him out of contention for that race. Last year's runner-up is eyeing what would be his maiden win in the centrepiece of the **Roc d'Azur**, succeeding **Jordan Sarrou**, who claimed the previous edition and tops the record board of the event with four victories to his name. The German **Andreas Seewald** has also got lofty ambitions following his triumph in the **Ford Roc Marathon**. "I'm in great shape", he bragged. "I just hope I'll recuperate properly after digging deep on Friday." He could become the first German to win the Sunday race since **Moritz Milatz** in 2011. The Colombian **Héctor Leonardo Páez León** (second on Friday), the Estonian **Peeter Pruus**, the Austrian **Daniel Geismayr**, the Italian **Samuele Porro** (third on Friday) and his compatriot **Fabian Rabensteiner** are also expected to be at the business end of the race.

As in previous years, **Romain Bardet** will jump into his car right after finishing Il Lombardia on Saturday, head to Fréjus after nightfall and take the start of the **Roc d'Azur**.

KATARŽINA SOSNA IN THE POLE POSITION

The Lithuanian **Katažina Sosna**, unstoppable in Friday's **Ford Roc Marathon**, which she led from A to Z, is a legitimate candidate to succeed **Pauline Ferrand-Prévot**. For the second-last race of her career (the last will be an Italian race a week from now), the 32-year-old would love to repeat her exploit from 2021, when she pulled off the **Roc Marathon-Roc d'Azur** double. "Going out with a win in what I think is the most beautiful race on Earth would be incredible", she said. **Estelle Morel**, who bounced back from a puncture to take third place in the **Ford Roc Marathon**, and **Margot Moschetti** (winner of the 2014 and 2019 editions) are France's trump cards in this race. **Juliette Labous**, one of the top road cyclists in the world, with successes such as fifth place in the last Tour de France Femmes avec Zwift, will also be there.

HIKES (NEW IN 2023) ON THE SUNDAY PROGRAMME

Ever since it saw the light of day in 1984, the Roc has adapted to the tastes and aspirations of people who love sports in the great outdoors. Following the cross triathlon in 2012, gravel grinding in 2016, e-MTB in 2017 and trail running last year, the addition of **hikes** to the 2023 programme beautifully illustrates this point. Starting from Roquebrune-sur-Argens on Sunday, hikers will also soak up the spirit of the Roc on courses of 5, 8, 13 and 22 km on the Argens plain.

PROGRAMME Highlights of tomorrow

7:45 am: Men's Roc d'Azur Juniors (31.7 km)

8:30 am: Roc d'Azur (54.5 km) (Roc Trophy #5; Multi Roc Challenge #4) — 8 waves every 25 minutes

8 am: Hike (5 km, 8 km, 13 km and 22 km) — start from Roquebrune-sur-Argens

10 am: Kid Roc Roc Draisienne (150 m)

11 am: Kid Roc Five (150 m)

View the full programme [here](#).

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