

Paris, 12 March 2024

2024 BP Ultimate Rally-Raid Portugal FIA-FIM WORLD RALLY-RAID CHAMPIONSHIPS READY FOR A HISTORIC FIRST IN PORTUGAL

Key points:

- D-20 until the third of the five rounds that make up the 2024 season. The inaugural edition of the BP Ultimate Rally-Raid Portugal will take place from 2 to 7 April, a month to the day after the dust settled on the second round in Abu Dhabi.
- After scorching the sands in the two rounds held in the Middle East, the championship is jumping continents from Asia to Europe before moving on to South America in June and Africa in October.
- Portugal is rolling out the red carpet for the W2RC for the first time. The Automóvel Club de Portugal (ACP), the organiser and mastermind behind the rally, brings a pedigree of high-level FIA and FIM motor sports experience to the table, such as the Portuguese round of the WRC, the Baja Portalegre 500 and the 24H TT.
- Based in Grândola, Setúbal District, 60 kilometres from Lisbon, the clover-shaped route will explore the Alentejo and Ribatejo areas, with a foray into the Spanish autonomous community of Extremadura.
- Five stages spanning a total of 1,758 km, with 1,008 km of specials, await the competitors in a race that represents a new paradigm on more than one count.

PORTUGAL AND RALLY RAIDS GO A LONG WAY BACK

Portugal's love affair with cross-country motor sports is one of the most storied in Europe. 2024 will see the 57th Rally de Portugal, the fifth round of the FIA WRC; the 38th Baja Portalegre 500, a leg of the FIA and FIM World Bajas Caps; and the 26th 24H TT Portugal. The Automóvel Club de Portugal is now at the helm of these three international cross-country events. The BP Ultimate Rally-Raid Portugal builds upon a well-established pedigree.

Portugal is no newcomer to the rally-raid scene. Lisbon has hosted the start of the Dakar on three occasions (2006 through 2008). Sixteen years later, a reunion is on the horizon.

The nation has also been a breeding ground for rally-raid titans. **Carlos Sousa** finished just outside the podium of the Dakar car race in 2003. **João Ferreira**, the Can-Am Factory driver gunning for the world championship in the SSV class, ranks among his heirs. Lusitanian motorbike riders, including several who are still active, have been more prolific in etching their names into rally-raid lore. **Hélder Rodrigues**, who has finished on the podium of the Dakar twice, became the first Portuguese world champion in 2011. The late **Paulo Gonçalves** secured the world championship in 2013 and went on to finish the 2015 Dakar in second place. His brother-in-law, **Joaquim Rodrigues**, has been carrying the torch at Hero MotoSports since 2016. **Ruben Faria** will be spearheading the Monster Energy Honda squad. The HRC manager snagged the runner-up's spot in the 2013 Dakar. Six years later, he joined the management of the reds, the maker that won the two previous manufacturers' world championships.

BREAKING NEW GROUND ON THREE FRONTS

Following in the wake of Saudi Arabia, the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, Morocco, Spain, Mexico and Argentina, Portugal will become the seventh nation to welcome the W2RC since its inception in 2022. Europe already played host to a W2RC round during its maiden season, with the action unfolding in Andalusia. The caravan is back following a one-year hiatus. Portugal steps up as the marquee stop this time around, a novel entry in the competition's journey.

Based in Grândola, the bivouac will pitch its tents a 75-minute drive southeast of the capital. The Setúbal area, nestled in the heart of Portugal, offers easy access for competitors and fans alike. The traditional prologue will be held on the doorstep of the bivouac. In a unique twist specific to this round, the test run, which will help to decide the starting order for stage 1, will take place in the morning. Come the afternoon, the riders and drivers will blast into stage 1, split into two segments. The field will take a break 97% into the stage to Santiago do

Cacém. As the sun wanes, a 3-kilometre final sprint with crowds lining the tracks will be broadcast for the first time on Sport TV, the broadcaster of the premier sports events held in Portugal. All in all, the prologue, the selection of the starting order for stage 1, and stage 1 itself will take place on the same day.

Adding to the unique flair of the BP Ultimate Rally-Raid Portugal, stage 4 will be held entirely in Spain. Badajoz, in the autonomous community of Extremadura, will set the backdrop for this special. Skeleton service crews will head there to prepare the finish of stage 3 before returning to Grândola the next day. It will be the first cross-border round of the W2RC since its launch.

Carlos Barbosa, President of the Automóvel Club de Portugal (organiser):

"It's a difficult race to organise, there are more than 1,700 kilometers of route, through the Portuguese Alentejo and Ribatejo and the Spanish Extremadura, with everything that entails, but with the experience and quality of our team we've managed to do it. I think the ACP is going to put on a great race and prove once again that we are excellent organisers. It's going to be a very crowded race, with great drivers and, above all, very interesting, because the route is completely different from what they've done so far."

David Castera, Motor Sports Director at ASO (promotor):

"We are thrilled that the FIA and FIM world championship is making a stop in Europe and to have Portugal play host. It has been a pioneer in the creation of cross-country events, as well as a hotbed of bajas for several decades. Its national know-how will shine a light on the great rally raid champions in Europe, a continent that has traditionally produced many racers and fans. Some are about to discover or rediscover this sport just a few hours from home. Others will face a litmus test with a view to upping the ante and joining the W2RC caravan in future rounds. It will be a salutary stop on the road."

PROGRAM

- **18 March:** closing date for entries
- **25 March:** publication of the entry list
- **30–31 March:** opening of the bivouac
- **1 April:** administrative scrutineering and technical pre-scrutineering
- **2 April:**
 - administrative scrutineering and technical pre-scrutineering
 - general and stage 1 briefing
 - press conference
 - ceremonial start
- **3 April:**
 - prologue in Grândola (5 km)
 - selection of the starting positions
 - stage 1 part 1 (SS: 100km)
 - stage 1 part 2 (SS: 3 km)
- **4 April:** stage 2 (SS: 220 km)
- **5 April:** stage 3 (SS: 282 km)
- **6 April:** stage 4 (SS: 270km)
- **7 April:**
 - stage 5 (SS: 133 km)
 - final press conference
 - prize ceremony

Portugal: UTC+00:00

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Photos for an editorial use only

Official W2RC website [here](#)
Official BP Ultimate Rally-Raid Portugal website [here](#)

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