

Les Comes, 19th May 2024

2025 DAKAR

THRILLS AND SPILLS IN THE 2025 DAKAR TOUR

Key point :

- The opening leg of the 2025 Dakar Tour rolled into the Les Comes estate, near Barcelona, with a swarm of race vehicles and over 700 guests present.
- The route unveiling cranked up the buzz and adrenaline among the competitors, who praised the work of the organisation and the new items on the menu.
- Training workshops led by seasoned competitors provided valuable insights into the adventure awaiting future participants from 3 to 17 January.
- The Dakar Tour moves on to South Africa next, before hitting Italy, Mexico, Argentina, the Czech Republic and the Netherlands down the line.

A MAJESTIC BACKDROP IN LES COMES

The evening sun was still glowing over the horizon on the jaw-dropping Les Comes estate, tucked away in the hills of Súria, Catalonia, when the starting gun was fired for the 2025 Dakar. It was here, near Barcelona, which became the first Spanish city to host a Dakar stage in 1989, that David Castera declared [entries open](#). After last year's curtain-raiser at the Châteaux de Lastours, the Dakar Tour circus rolled over the Pyrenees for a new launch pad. It was an exciting event for Spain, a hotbed of rally raids that has hosted the Dakar no fewer than thirteen times, most recently in 2007. "I wanted to alternate between France and Spain, two powerhouses of the discipline", explains the director of the Dakar. "We needed a location close to France and the Les Comes estate ticked all the boxes. I was familiar with the site, run by a team that is mad about the Dakar. It has loads of space, a huge bivouac and all the tools to work comfortably in a beautiful environment." The 700-odd guests basked in the amazing landscape as they enjoyed the various activities organised throughout the day.

It was also an opportunity for prep crews and teams to promote and offer their services to competitors who came to test race vehicles and discuss assistance options for the next Dakar.

Rally fans across the planet fixed their eyes on Les Comes for the big unveiling of the 2025 Dakar route.

CHAMPIONS TAKING ROOKIES UNDER THEIR WINGS

Before twisting back the throttle or putting the pedal to the metal in Saudi Arabia, the Dakar newbies first had a date with the classroom for a knowledge-sharing workshop overseen by seasoned competitors who generously shared their experience. The local hero Lucas Cruz (Team Audi Sport), a co-driver to Carlos Sainz and four-time Dakar winner (2010, 2018, 2020 and 2024), took the chalk to put the car rookies in the picture. "These moments are important because many people want to do the Dakar but don't know what to expect", explained the man from Barcelona. "These are difficult things to learn anywhere else but on the track. It's a race where experience counts, so the idea is to pass on what I've learned to first-timers."

The motorbike riders got advice from the Frenchman Benjamin Melot (Team Esprit KTM), with seven participations under his belt, as well as Jordi Viladoms, the runner-up in 2014 and now Sport Manager at KTM. "When you go to the Dakar for the first time, there are a thousand things you don't know. I wish I'd had someone with me to explain a bit more about what to expect in my first Dakar", smiled the Spaniard. "It's a very long and unique race, so any information is good to have. The idea is to talk to them about the philosophy of the event, the things you really need to do. A way to make them understand

what they're getting into!" And a way to prepare them as best as possible to cross the finish line in Shubaytah on 17 January.

TESTS AND EXHIBITIONS ROUND OUT THE PROGRAMME FOR THE WEEKEND

From the Ultimate cars and the motorbikes to the SSVs, Classic vehicles and even the Mission 1000 category, machines across all classes soaked up the Spanish sunshine! The competitors ventured into the valley on a loop stretching for about 5 km (9 km for the Dakar Classic). Some took the chance to start prepping the vehicles they hope will be on the start line in Bisha on 3 January. While waiting for the big day, a virtual taster special fired up on two simulators for the Dakar Desert Rally video game set up in the bivouac, along with an area featuring remote-controlled model vehicles to entertain children and grown-ups alike. A stone's throw away, an exhibition plunged visitors into the history, characters and standout moments of the Dakar. The icing on the cake was the iconic race trophy on display, which was the subject of numerous photos throughout the day. The headline act came at 8 pm, when David Castera came onto the stage to thunderous applause after organising a Dakar trivia quiz for guests...

No more waiting to find out the first details of the 2025 edition (read [here](#)). The Dakar Tour show is on the road. Its next stage will take it to South Africa, where the celebrations will continue on 20 May. The bivouac will then set course for Italy (22 May) before stopping over in Mexico on 30 May, in parallel with the Baja 500. The next day, the Dakar Tour will visit Argentina during the Desafío Ruta 40, the fourth round of the W2RC. Last but not least, the Czech Republic (5 June) and the Netherlands (6 June) will wrap up this seven-stop tour.

COMPETITORS REACT TO THE 2025 DAKAR ROUTE:

Tosha Schareina (rider at Monster Energy Honda — Rally GP): "I'm raring to go! I missed out on the famous 48 h chrono stage last year, so I'm stoked to see it back on the programme. It looks like there will be more sand, and having separate specials from the cars perhaps signals longer stages or tougher navigation. The motocross-style standing start is exciting. I'm all fired up!"

Adrien Van Beveren (rider at Monster Energy Honda — Rally GP): "I like the route description. Having more sand suits me well. The longer 48 h chrono stage will be a tough physical challenge. It's a route that excites me and matches my skill set. We'll need to be well positioned going into the Empty Quarter. It'll be a slog, the tension will ramp up right until the closing days!"

Benjamin Melot (rider at Team Esprit KTM — Rally 2): "This Dakar mixes fresh ideas with a throwback to the old days in the shape of the standing start in the finale! Separating the FIM and FIA routes at times is a good thing, especially for safety reasons. It'll stop the stragglers on two wheels from getting swamped by the cars, which is always stressful. It's a step in the right direction, and you can tell that the route designers listened to the competitors. It's still going to be tough, and Castera has always got an ace or two up his sleeves!"

Guillaume de Mévius (driver at Overdrive Racing — Ultimate): "The organisation has worked hard and listened to the competitors. It's awesome. They've come up with amazing new ideas for the bike riders, as well as the Ultimate, Challenger and SSV competitors. It'll be a beautiful and arduous edition! Having the 48 h chrono stage back on the menu is good news. Finishing in the dunes will be a little extra challenge. The cars will also be up against a real challenge in the five stages where they have to open the road. The organisers wanted to toughen up the rally and that's great —with increasingly powerful machines, we need to find new difficulties. In short, I can't wait!"

Dania Akeel (driver at Taurus Factory Team — Challenger) : "It promises to be spectacular! The way the organisers have structured the challenges is very interesting. We'll have the 48 h chrono stage early on, then the marathon stage before finishing in the dunes. I like the format. The standing start will be impressive and, I think, motivating for drivers. It's exciting because it shakes up the rally. It's incredible how they find new challenges each year, even after decades!"

Gerard Farrés (driver at South Racing Can-Am — SSV): "Discovering the new route and its surprises is always a thrill. Having separate stages for cars and motorbikes is very important: when we start behind the riders, we have their tracks, so drivers rarely get lost. This means that navigation will be the name

of the game. We'll also have the 48 h chrono stage in week one, on different terrain than in 2023. That's good, just like the standing start in the Empty Quarter! All of this will make for a tough Dakar with more navigation required. We'll need to stay on top of the mechanics and manage our pace wisely, knowing when to push or hold back. I'm very pleased and pumped."

Darek Rodewald (co-driver at Team De Rooy — Trucks): "We're told to expect more sand, which is always good for the trucks because we have plenty of power! It'll be an interesting race. The closing stages sound tough, which is great. The Dakar is never easy. It's a marathon where we'll again need to combine speed and caution daily to make it to the finish."

Jean-Michel Paulhe (driver at Team Les Tigres du Désert — Mission 1000): "The organisers have come up with a superb route and some excellent new ideas! The drive to put amateurs back at the heart of things is very welcome. Continuing the sporting and technological challenge that is Mission 1000 is essential for the future. Participating in the inaugural edition in 2024 was a privilege. Now, we must endeavour to push the technological boundaries even further. More and more teams are interested in Dakar Future and, year after year, we'll see fresh proposals emerge."

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