

Sea Camp, December 31<sup>th</sup> 2022

## 2023 W2RC: OFF WE GO

### Key points:

- A presentation of the 2023 calendar was held at the Sea Camp, which is hosting the start of the Dakar, to mark the launch of the second season of the FIA and FIM World Rally-Raid Championships.
- After the Dakar is done and dusted on 15 January, the 83 vehicles on the start list of this season-long adventure (28 motorbikes, 4 quads, 19 T1s, 14 T3s, 14 T4s and 4 trucks) will clash again in the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge in February, the Sonora Rally in April, the Desafío Ruta 40 in Argentina in late August and the finale in the Rallye du Maroc in October (see calendar below). It will be a ten-month melodrama with 59 days of racing (prologues included).
- The format developed for 2023, with two new events in the Americas and a variety of terrains, has convinced new champions such as Guerlain Chicherit and the three Audi drivers —Stéphane Peterhansel, Carlos Sainz and Mattias Ekström— to take the plunge.

**Orlando Terranova, fourth in the 2022 Dakar and in the W2RC season classification**, will be competing on home turf in the Desafío Ruta 40, a race he has won four times (2013, 2015, 2017 and 2018):

"I'm stoked that the W2RC is coming to Argentina. I expect us to revisit Fiambalá, which the drivers explored in the Dakar, but the weather will be cooler in late August. We will also see the Argentinian fans turn out in force for the specials again. The tracks are narrower than in the other events that make up the series, with more vegetation than elsewhere. This will give the leg a different flavour compared to the Dakar, the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge or Morocco. It will be one of the big additions to the calendar, although for me, the biggest one will be Mexico, with landscapes that almost no-one has ventured into before."

**Skyler Howes, the winner of the last Rallye du Maroc**, will be returning to productive hunting grounds in the Sonora Rally, which he claimed in 2018 and 2022 (second from 2019 through 2021).

"The Sonora Rally is one of my favourite rallies. I've been coming here for five years. It's really exciting to see it join the W2RC calendar. It'll bring an extra challenge. What I like best about this race is its varied terrain, which takes us to the coast, among cactuses, down riverbeds and on some of the tallest dunes in North America. The other great thing about it is the atmosphere in the bivouac, where the entire rally community comes together for barbecues! For Americans like me, it's kind of our local race because it's really close to the southern United States and we all got started here, so there's a special place for it in my heart. Now we'll get to share this with the rest of the caravan."

**The 2022 W2RC runner-up, Sébastien Loeb**, spent the whole season locked in a vicious duel with Nasser Al Attiyah:

"I think launching this championship was a really good idea because rally raids are an amazing sport. We have some wonderful rallies ahead of us, and the star-studded field means you really have to be worthy of the world champion title to win it."

**Guerlain Chicherit**, the 2009 FIA Cross Country Rally World Cup champion, is eager to repeat the exploit:

"My goal is obviously to become world champion again with my new team and new car. The Dakar awards a lot of points and there are more specials, which means more points up for grabs every day, so my campaign starts here. Our victory in Morocco showed we're on the right track, but we need to keep our feet on the ground because we have to do well throughout the season and we're up against some seriously talented drivers! Beating Nasser, Loeb or Stéphane for the world championship would be incredible. It's up to us to do our best. The calendar is exceptional. We're going to South America, to Mexico, where no-one has gone before and where the specials should be similar to the bajás I know, which motivates me even more. Argentina comes up later. We won't be able to be there for logistical reasons, but it's no big deal, I'll just go on a road trip there with my wife and children."

**Stéphane Peterhansel**, the undisputed hegemon of the sport with 14 Dakar victories (8 in the car category), only managed to win the Cross Country Rally World Cup once, in 2019. He was delighted to discover the 2023 W2RC:

"The launch of the championship last year was already a positive development, and now it'll be adding races unlike what we are used to with its foray into Sonora in Mexico and the return to Argentina for those of us who competed in the Dakar there. Carlos, Mattias and I signed up for the championship. I think we'll see where we go from the end of the Dakar and what options are best for us. I'd like to do it."

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