



The five competitive groups in the Dakar are the motorcycles, quads, the cars class (which ranges from buggies to small SUVs), UTVs, and the trucks class. Many vehicle manufacturers use the rally's harsh environment as both a testing ground and an opportunity to show off their vehicles' durability even though most vehicles are heavily modified from their production specification or purpose-built.

**Table of Contents: Vehicles**

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| Motorbikes | |
| See the source image  Figure 1 RTR 450 rally bike | In this premier category, riders also convey the image of the lonely biker at sunset, looking for a way in the middle of an ocean of dunes.  Although the vast majority of the bikers are amateurs, the selection process is very strict. In order to participate in the Dakar, candidates must have already completed a leg of the FIM Cross-Country World Cup or a "Dakar Series" race.  There are several groups, the best known of which are the "Elite" bikers. Equipped with distinctive yellow number plates, these riders have all finished in the top 10 of the general classification or won at least one special (not including the prologue) in a previous edition.  All motorbikes in the Dakar have their engine capacity limited to 450 cc. |

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| Quads | |
| See the source image  Figure 2 OUTLAW® 70 EFI | Their maximum engine capacity is 750 cc for two-wheel drive machines and 900 cc for four-wheel drives. |

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| Cars | |
| See the source image  Figure 3 Citroën Rallye Raid | T1:  The most common type (among professionals and amateurs) is a prototype that meets Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) technical and safety standards. The base of the vehicle is a tubular chassis on which mechanical and safety components are mounted.  The bodywork, often made from fibreglass or carbon, usually emulates the profile of a production vehicle, but these vehicles are entirely designed and developed for competition. They are not found in dealerships!  T1s are two- or four-wheel drive machines equipped with petrol or diesel-powered engines. They are the fastest and, often, the most impressive cars in the field.  The best known:  - Nasser Al-Attiyah's TOYOTA Hilux  - Stéphane Peterhansel's JCW BUGGY  - Nani Roma's HUNTER Prodrive  T2:  Their race number is on a white background. These are production off-road vehicles that have been modified for competition. The concept is relatively simple. Based on a production 4×4 vehicle purchased from a dealership, modifications are made, following a highly regulated and primarily safety-oriented preparation: roll cage, bucket seats, fuel tanks…  OPEN:  The OPEN class comprises several subcategories. It includes vehicles meeting technical standards different from those of the FIA, such as the American SCORE rules for electric vehicles and alternative-powered vehicles. |
| Trucks | |
| See the source image  Figure 4 Mammoet Sport | **T5.1:**  These are production-based trucks that meet FIA regulations. They have become quite rare because they are not very suitable for crossing dunes, for example.  **T5.2:**  The most common. These are prototype trucks, following regulations written by ASO, the organiser of the Dakar. However, the cabin and certain components must be production-based. Contrary to the T1 cars, it is therefore possible to recognise the brand of the truck at first glance. Lightweight, powerful and imposing, their "cargo hold" is in fact almost completely empty. For safety reasons, their top speed is capped at 140 km/h.  **The best known:**  IVECO  Team De Rooy  KAMAZ  Team Mammoet  RENAULT  Team Mammoet |

# 2023 Route Map



**Dakar 2023 | Prologue | SEA CAMP > SEA CAMP**

**December 31st 2022 - 15:31 [GMT + 3]**

**FOCUS**

Seaside sprints have become a regular fixture in the Dakar of the 21st century since the first ones were held in Castellón, Spain, in 2001 and in France in 2004. The following year, the clock started ticking on the beach of Castelldefels, near Barcelona, and in 2013 the race started on Agua Dulce beach in Lima. This time round, the 45th edition got under way on the Red Sea coast near Yanbu, which hosted a 13 km prologue on a winding sandy track packed for the occasion. As a former enduro rider and a former track racer, respectively, Toby Price and Mattias Ekström had good reason to salivate at the course, which started and ended at the entrance to the Sea Camp.

**OUTLINE**

No-one expected a ten-minute effort representing about 0.3% of the special mileage from here to Dammam to provide a clear snapshot of the state of play, but it did buoy the morale of those who put their speed and skills to good effect. Toby Price, for example, bounced back after two painful exits from rallies, one due to a car fire in the Baja 1000 and another due to a crash in the Rallye du Maroc. The Australian, who was not tipped as KTM's safest bet, scored his sixteenth Dakar stage win by a single second over his compatriot Daniel Sanders, while Botswana's Ross Branch took the bottom step of the podium behind the two men from Oz. Joaquim Rodrigues (sixth) and Sebastian Bühler (eighth) also placed high and proved that Hero is a force to be reckoned with. In the car category, Mattias Ekström, the top-ranked Audi driver last January (ninth), returned to action with a bang. The Swede, who counted beating Sébastien Loeb in the Race of Champions a few years ago among the highlights of his career, pulled it off again, starting his third Dakar with a victory by one second over last year's runner-up. Stéphane Peterhansel (+ 11″) remains within striking distance in third place, just ahead of Nasser Al Attiyah (+ 12″) and Guerlain Chicherit (+ 13″). In the T3 race, the Red Bull secured the win in the prologue as Cristina Gutiérrez put two seconds into Seth Quintero, with their former teammate Guillaume de Mevius in third place at 4″. W2RC Rokas Baciuška picked up where he left in the T4 category, following up his triumph in the final stage of the 2022 Dakar —which catapulted him to the podium— with victory in today's opener.

**PERFORMANCE OF THE DAY**

The performances of the Audis and their drivers on the short circuit of the prologue dispelled any lingering doubts on their potential. Combined with its four successes from last January, the German maker has secured as many as a third of the specials at stake since it took up the challenge of the Dakar. Mattias Ekström grabbed the win in front of the Sea Camp, but his colleagues Stéphane Peterhansel (third) and Carlos Sainz (sixth) also contributed to a collective recital by the RS Q e-tron E2s.

**A CRUSHING BLOW**

Someone must have put a jinx on Nacho Cornejo. The Chilean received a devastating blow in 2021, when he crashed out of the lead with two days to go. Today, the man on an HRC got his seventh Dakar off to an inauspicious start with a crash on the first turn of the prologue. No broken bones, no serious injuries, but the time loss will leave him as salty as the breeze on the shores of the Red Sea. He finished 79th on the day and his actual deficit of 1′15″ to Toby Price was turned into a difference of 6′15″ by the coefficient of 5 applied to the prologue to dissuade competitors from sandbagging. Nacho, the second-last ranked biker in the Rally GP category, ahead of the equally unfortunate Balooshi (97th overall), is likely to start in second place tomorrow. Entrants in the Rally GP category will open the first stage in reverse order of their times today. To make matters worse, the new rules entitle the top 10 riders in the prologue to pick their starting positions from among the 28 available slots in the Rally GP category. The fastest bikers in the prologue are likely to cluster at the back of the field to benefit from the tracks left by the early starters.