

Seven things to whet your appetite for 2022 Dakar Rally in January



Red Bull Off-Road Junior Team and bikers set to star in Saudi Arabia.

With more than 1,000 people lining up to race nearly 7,500km across Saudi Arabian deserts, the 2022 Dakar Rally promises to be another epic rally-raid adventure over the sand dunes with a host of established global stars and talented young racers out to impress.

The field will try their hardest to complete all 13 stages from Jeddah to Ha'il and Riyadh then back again with a slew of fascinating stories set to play out across the respective vehicle categories.

Here are seven things to look out for ahead of the January 1 launch:

1. All change in T1+ class

This year, 4-wheel drive cars are allowed to upgrade to wider tyres, a wider chassis and more suspension travel with 2-wheel drive cars (buggies) retaining the ability to deflate/inflate their tyres from the cockpit to maximise efficiency and fuel consumption. Both of the top teams are racing on new cars – leaving the potential for big shakeups in the leaderboard. Mini has won the last two Dakars, but Toyota's Nasser Al-Attiyah suffered more than 80 punctures in those two races. Could it make the difference and help him claim his fourth Dakar victory?

2. New Audi RS Q e-tron

The not-quite-electric, not-quite-combustion hybrid 671-HP Audi RS Q e-tron is a huge step in the research and development to bringing fully electric cars to the highest level of cross-country rallying with big buzz growing about its performance capability. No matter what happens on the sand, it is sure to electrify Dakar fans worldwide – especially

with two top-class drivers like Stéphane Peterhansel and Carlos Sainz, backed up by multi-class talent Mattias Ekström in his second Dakar.

3. Sanz switches up

One of rally-raid's most charismatic performers will switch up from two wheels to four as Spaniard Laia Sanz looks to finish every stage again like she has done for the last 11 years - an astonishing Dakar record. The 36-year-old might take time to adapt, however her navigation skills and endurance are already up there with the best drivers so watch out.

4. Young talent shines

The Red Bull Off-Road Junior Team has come on leaps and bounds with young duo Seth Quintero and Mitch Guthrie Jr. both excelling over the Dakar dunes. Californian Quintero became the youngest ever Dakar stage winner on the back of his six 2021 stage victories, while Guthrie Jr picked up UTV stage wins in 2020 so watch out for them to excel again. On the bikes, keep an eye out for young American Mason Klein who has proven to be a good navigator and consistently fast finisher as well as his teammate Bradley Cox, whose father is Dakar legend Alfie Cox.

5. Navigation still key

The risks get bigger every year as the talent pool gets deeper with organisers out to contain top speeds by keeping the roadbooks tight and tough, meaning navigation is crucial. With these being delivered digitally, there is no chance to study and prep – it's quick reflex real-time racing.

6. Bike battle open

The last five Dakars have seen five different bike winners with all five back to compete in 2022, alongside exciting new riders like Daniel Sanders so expect a mesmerising back and forth over the arduous route as the likes of 2021 FIM Cross-Country Rallies World Champion Matthias Walkner and Australian two-time victor Toby Price look to grab yet another title win.

7. Magical mystery tour

We know for sure that the race will start on New Year's Day and there will be loads of sand for the huge parade of vehicles to conquer, nevertheless after that remains a mystery for now. It promises to be a fascinating journey into the unknown and, no matter what, it is going to be epic.

Explore more Dakar Rally content [HERE](#).



Seth Quintero perform during testing in Dubai, UAE on November 4th, 2021



Kevin Benavides, Matthias Walkner, Toby Price perform during testing in Dubai, UAE on October 30th, 2021



Sam Sunderland and Daniel Sanders poses for portrait in Dubai, UAE on October 30th, 2021



Carlos Sainz and Lucas Cruz in the Mini Buggy of the X-Raid Mini JCW Team races during the 10th stage of the Dakar 2021 between Neom and Al-Ula, in Saudi Arabia on January 13, 2021.



Red Bull Off-Road Junior Team member Mitch Guthrie Jr. poses for portrait in Dubai, UAE on November 26, 2020

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