

Media Information



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First best times in after glamorous start in Prague

- **Exciting racing after the start in the Czech capital**
- **Czech President Petr Pavel sends the rally cars on their way**
- **Hyundai star Thierry Neuville leads after the opening two stages**

The first full-throttle kilometres of the Central European Rally are in the books! After the first two of the 18 special stages (SS) that make up the newest rally in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC), it is Thierry Neuville (BEL) who has taken an early lead. Heading into the six special stages in the Czech Republic on Friday, the Belgian holds an advantage of 1.2 seconds over his rival in the battle for third place in the championship, Ott Tänak (EST, Ford). Before vying for the first fastest time of the rally weekend on the ultra-compact Super Special Stage at the racecourse in Prague, the 68 teams attended the Ceremonial Start in front of the spectacular backdrop of the Presidential Palace in Prague's legendary Hradčany Square. Czech President Petr Pavel himself sent the teams down the start ramp and into the four days of rallying, during which the title race between Toyota rivals Kalle Rovanperä and Elvyn Evans could be decided with one rally still to come. Anyone wishing to follow the action live on site can still purchase tickets for all the special stages. News and information for visitors and fans watching at home can be found on the official homepage of the event at centraleuropeanrally.eu.

After the spectacular start in Prague, the WRC teams gave fans their first taster of competitive world championship action, before the serious business really gets underway on Friday. The two Super Special Stages in the Czech Republic made up just over eleven of the 312.8 kilometres against the clock. Ott Tänak (Estonia) in a Ford Puma Rally 1 Hybrid set the fastest time on the 2.55-kilometre stage at the Prague racecourse. Later in the evening, Thierry Neuville came out on top in Klatovy. Taking the two stages into account, the Belgian finds himself out in front with a lead of 1.2 seconds after the opening day's action. "It was not the best special stage I've ever driven," said Neuville, who opted at the last minute for a soft compound for the evening stage. "Visibility was not ideal, but we had a clean run." "Challenging" was also how Estonian Ott Tänak described the stage in mixed conditions at the spectator circuit. "There was not a huge amount of water on the route, but enough to prevent you from getting the tyres up to the ideal temperature."

Looking ahead to Friday and a demanding day of rallying

A very demanding schedule awaits the teams on Friday. The six special stages have a total of 122.7 kilometres against the clock – more than any other leg of the rally. The routes are all in the Czech Republic and are regarded as being narrow and slippery. Changeable weather could also make the stages, which are challenging in their own right, real thrillers. As such, the stage is set for an exciting day for the spectators. Anyone wishing to enjoy the rally on site can find information on the routes and spectator areas on the homepage. The free digital magazine is also available here in PDF format, allowing visitors to navigate their way around the rally region. A download link to the free app provided by event partner "TW-Sportsoft", containing lots of information and maps, can also be found here. Those travelling to the rally should also bear in mind the organisers' request to share lifts where



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possible: anyone arriving at the car parks for the Fan Zones with at least four people in their vehicle will be entered into an attractive prize draw, with travel vouchers and valuable non-cash prizes up for grabs every day of the rally. Information is available at centraleuropeanrally.eu/de/ride-sharing.

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