

Media Information



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WRC leader Ogier sets early pace on opening day

- **World championship leader in front after two of the Central European Rally's 18 stages**
- **Day two promises a feast of action in Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic**
- **Tickets for all days of the rally are available online at centraleuropeanrally.eu**

Munich. Sébastien Ogier (FRA) and co-driver Vicent Landais (FRA) were the top pair on the opening day of the Central European Rally. Round twelve of the FIA World Rally Championship in Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic saw the championship leaders make the best start in their Toyota GR Yaris Rally1. After two special stages, the French duo arrived at the finish in Passau with a slender 1.6-second lead over fellow Toyota pairing Kalle Rovanperä and Jonne Halttunen from Finland. With just over 25 of the 306 kilometres of special stage behind them, there is still little to choose between the top teams. Hyundai spearheads Adrien Fourmaux and co-driver Alexandre Coria (both FRA) are also within striking distance, just 3.9 seconds behind their compatriots. Friday is the first full day of competition, featuring six stages and just short of 100 kilometres against the clock. The route takes the competitors through all three host nations. Anyone wishing to be there live can still purchase tickets online at any time during the event. The ticket shop and any important information can be found at centraleuropeanrally.eu.

Championship leader Ogier had the honour of starting the race against the clock, as he was first to head onto the flowing opening stage of the Central European Rally. He took advantage of the perfect conditions on the beautifully clean roads and set a time that no other driver was able to match on a route that was becoming increasingly slippery. Only on the second loop of the "Golf und Therme" stage near the spa and golf town of Bad Griesbach was fellow Toyota driver Rovanperä able to hit back, stopping the clock a mere 0.1 seconds faster than the Frenchman: however, that was not sufficient to take the overall lead. As such, it was a satisfied Ogier who arrived in Passau at the end of the day: "I am happy so far – happy with the feel, happy with the car. We are leading, so it must have been a good start. However, as expected, the time differences are very small." Like many of his rivals, the championship leader believes the competition will really get going on Friday: "It will be a lot more difficult, with many more kilometres and some tricky sections to overcome," said Ogier.

Rovanperä: "Tomorrow will be tougher"

Double world champion Kalle Rovanperä must have tweaked some important details on his Yaris while the teams and fans assembled for the lunchtime Regrouping in Bad Griesbach Therme: he struck back with the fastest time on the second loop, which followed the entertaining fan programme in the centre of the spa resort. "It was pretty good," he said, summing up the stage with that typical Finnish composure. "However, that was just the start. We are in a good position and will try to back that up tomorrow. However, the gaps are very small after the short leg, and tomorrow will be tougher."



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Rally action comes thick and fast from Friday!

Thursday's opening act at the Central European Rally offered a taste of things to come, as the teams and drivers really get down to business over the next three days: Friday includes six stages and features routes in three different countries for the first time in the history of the World Rally Championship. First up from 08:30 is the "Granit und Wald" stage near the Lower Bavarian town of Hauzenberg. The rally armada then moves on to the "Böhmerwald" stage in the Austrian region of Mühlviertel (first loop from 09:20). Around midday, attention shifts to the Czech Republic and the two loops of the 23.37-kilometre Col-de-Jan stage, which many drivers have identified as being the most difficult route of the day. One special highlight: Regrouping in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Český Krumlov, where the rally stars will take a break in the picturesque surroundings of the historic town centre, before returning for a second crack at Col-de-Jan. The afternoon then takes the competitors back to Passau via the "Böhmerwald" (from 17:20) and "Granit und Wald" (18:15) special stages. The event programme there starts at 19:00 and features rally cars from the past and present, plenty for fans to do, and live music. Admission to the Dreiländerhalle and Service Park is free. Anyone wanting to check out the action at first hand will find helpful information and links on the official homepage centraleuropeanrally.eu. The full fan programme for the following days of the rally is also listed there.

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