

*2018 FIA World Rally Championship (WRC)
Round 6: Vodafone Rally de Portugal*

The MICHELIN LTX Force H4 and S5 promise to play strategic roles at season's first European gravel round

The Rally de Portugal was a fixture of the inaugural FIA World Rally Championship in 1973 and, after a brief spell off the calendar from 2001 to 2006, it returned to the sport's premier class in 2007 with a new-look event in the country's southern Algarve region. In 2015, the Portuguese classic – which has been voted the world's best rally no fewer than five times – returned to its former base in Porto, in the north.

For the 2018 Rally de Portugal, Michelin's WRC partners will be able to choose between the hard-compound MICHELIN LTX Force H4 and the softer MICHELIN LTX Force S5.

The format of this year's event is very similar to that of last year, with a total distance of 1,583.08 kilometres including 20 special stages and a total competitive distance of 358.19km. Festivities will kick off on Thursday with a start ceremony in front of the castle in Guimarães before serious business kicks off the following morning with the first of the day's two attempts at a loop of three stages close to the Spanish border. The day will then end with two short tests in the streets of Porto, instead of Braga which hosted the spectator stage in 2017.

"The first day's programme features the rally's hardest-wearing stage, namely Ponte de Lima [SS4/7, 27.54km]," observes **Arnaud Rémy**, the manager of Michelin's rallying activities. "It may not be exceptionally long but conditions tend to evolve quickly with each passing car and sharp stones soon become exposed. It also includes a number of asphalt sections which, depending on the temperature, which can climb significantly between the morning and afternoon visits, can also be tough on tyres. It will be important to get tyre calls right for the repeat loop at the midday service break."

The rally could well be settled on Saturday which will be the longest leg of the week, with stages that exceed 30km in length. That said, Amarante – which, at 37.60km, is the longest stage of the event – isn't as hard on tyres as Ponte de Lima because it runs on softer ground. The key factors here promise to be good pace notes and judicious tyre management.

Hostilities will conclude on Sunday morning with a number of short but technical tests, including Fafe which will be contested twice. The characteristics of its celebrated jump – which invariably attracts tens of thousands of spectators – have changed and the landing zone could be trickier than in the past.



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“In 2017, crews chose the soft-compound MICHELIN LTX Force S5 seventy-three percent of the time, as well as for all of the first passes,” reveals **Arnaud Rémy**. “Given that this year’s route is very similar to that of last year, we expect similar proportion this time around. Rally de Portugal is the first European gravel round of the 2018 world championship and, as usual, our technicians will do their utmost to provide the drivers with the best advice possible as we get close to the season’s halfway point.”

Meanwhile, Michelin’s WRC2 runners will be able to choose between the soft-compound MICHELIN Latitude Cross S80 and the hard-compound MICHELIN Latitude Cross H90.

The MICHELIN LTX Force S5 and H4 (WRC crews)

Number of tyres available in Portugal: **690**

Allocation per WRC driver: 24 tyres (plus four for shakedown) from a total allocation of 24 softs and 16 hards.

The MICHELIN LATITUDE Cross H90 and S80 (WRC2 crews)

Number of tyres available in Portugal: **652**

Allocation per WRC2 driver: 22 tyres (plus four for shakedown) from a total allocation of 22 softs and 16 hards.

Michelin staff for the 2018 Rally de Portugal

Michelin’s partners at the 2018 Rally de Portugal will be backed by a total staff of 13:

- **Pascal Couasnon** (Director, Michelin Motorsport)
- **Arnaud Rémy** (Manager, FIA WRC Programme, Michelin Motorsport)
- 4 Team Tyre Advisors
- 2 coordinators
- 4 fitters
- 1 press officer



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