

*2018 FIA World Rally Championship (WRC)
Round 2: Rally Sweden*

An icy encounter for the MICHELIN X-Ice North 3 tyres in Sweden and Norway

After last month's difficult opener in the French Alps, the FIA World Rally Championship circus moves on from the Rallye Monte-Carlo to another wintry classic, namely Rally Sweden. The weather has been pretty harsh this year in the forests of southern Sweden and Norway and more snow is expected this week to add another coating on top of the region's frozen ground. As in 2017, in addition to the traditional super-special around Karlstad's trotting track, the route will take crews into the deep, dark forests of Sweden's Värmland and Norway's Finnskogen regions. Friday's action will take place on the Norwegian side of the border, although the day will start and finish in Sweden. Saturday's programme features some classic tests near Hagfors, including a number of roads that haven't been visited since 2013. 'Torntorp', which will be run twice, returns to the menu after a three-year absence. Colin's Crest, the event's most famous and most popular viewing spot, will again be part of the entertainment.

The rally's total length is 1,400.79 kilometres which includes 314.25km (17km shorter than last year) divided into 19 special stages. As in 2017, the service park will be based in Torsby, while the event's headquarters will be located in Sunne, 35km to the south.

In contrast to the Rallye Monte-Carlo, where Michelin provided its WRC partners with a choice of four different types of tyre, there will be less head-scratching with regard to tyre selection and strategy in Sweden since only the MICHELIN X-Ice North 3 is authorised. The fact that Rally Sweden takes place exclusively on snow and ice means that it is possible to cover the full spectrum of conditions with this studded 15-inch tyre, the tread of which is narrower than that of Michelin's asphalt and gravel WRC tyres.

"Although there are few differences between the route of last year's Rally Sweden and this week's event, it was important to test on site with our partners," says **Jacques Morelli**, the manager of Michelin's WRC programme. "This is a rally where you're looking to gain not just tenths but hundredths of a second. A poorly set-up differential can lead to premature stud breakage and that obviously affects stage times. As on gravel rallies, start order is very important because of the thick, compact layer produced by recent snow. It has effectively been a harsh winter here so far but everyone is looking forward to a spectacular show in these forests where the performance of the MICHELIN X-Ice North 3 has been acclaimed repeatedly by our partners."



The MICHELIN X-Ice North 3 tyres in brief

The X-Ice North 3 tyres for Rally Sweden are made by Michelin – without studs – in Clermont-Ferrand, France. They are then transported to Växjö, Sweden, where Michelin's long-time partner Däckproffsen drills the tread blocks and glues the steel and tungsten tips in the resulting holes by hand. The 384 steel and tungsten metal tips that equip each MICHELIN X-Ice North 3 tyre measure 20mm in length, 6.5mm of which protrude from the tyre. It takes around 45 minutes to fully stud one tyre. The total allocation for Rally Sweden is 24 tyres for the WRC crews (WRC2 crews: 22), plus an additional four tyres for shakedown.

Michelin has a total staff of 20 for the 2018 Rally Sweden:

- Jacques Morelli (WRC Programme Manager)
- Olivier Vialle (Marketing Director, Michelin Motorsport)
- 2 developers
- 2 coordinators
- 4 team advisers
- 8 fitters
- 2 press officers



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