

2018 FIA World Rally Championship (WRC)
Round 3: Rally Guanajuato México

Gravel action for the MICHELIN LTX Force H4 and S5

After the icy asphalt of the Rallye Monte-Carlo and Rally Sweden's wintry lanes, the first gravel round of the 2018 FIA World Rally Championship takes teams to Leon – 400 kilometres northwest of Mexico City – for Rally Mexico on March 8-11.

The trip to Mexico marks the first anniversary of the maiden appearance of the MICHELIN LTX Force S5 which went on to enjoy success on the 2017 WRC's subsequent dirt fixtures. On all the events where it was used, the new soft-compound gravel tyre won over the French firm's partners thanks to its combination of versatility and high performance.

Also available in Mexico will be the hard-compound MICHELIN LTX Force H4. Indeed, depending on the weather and ground conditions, tyre strategy could well prove decisive in North America where teams will need to make the most competitive choice possible between the soft and hard versions of the LTX Force for the morning and afternoon visits to the event's demanding stages.

The total distance of the 2018 Rally Mexico is 1,055.88km divided into 22 special stages totalling 344.49km. Unlike last year, when action kicked off in the centre of Mexico City, this year's competitive programme will begin in the streets of Guanajuato which is much closer to Leon. This mining town, which sits on a labyrinth of galleries cut through the UNESCO world heritage-listed city's bedrock, is a major tourist attraction and has always attracted huge crowds when the colourful start ceremony has been held there. Thursday evening's super-special itself takes cars through the underlying maze of tunnels before competitors head for the surrounding mountains over the next three days.

"Rally Mexico is unique," says **Jacques Morelli**, the manager of Michelin's FIA WRC programme. "The average altitude visited by the stages is around 2,200 metres, and some parts of the route climb to more than 2,600 metres. As a result, the engines lose about 20 percent of their power, which equates to a shortfall of approximately 70 or 80 horsepower. This clearly means the stages are less punishing for our tyres and there is a high chance that our partners will opt for the soft-compound MICHELIN LTX Force S5 for the morning's loops, despite the fact that the ground offers less traction on the first passes. Compared with 2017, there are few changes to the route, but the second runs are likely to be harder on tyres, while the stages towards the end of the weekend tend to feature a big proportion of asphalt which is harder-wearing on gravel tyres, even though the tests are shorter. Even so, we feel confident ahead of the start since our engineers dialled just this sort of challenge into the LTX Force's specification at the design stage."

Rally Mexico will see the comeback of nine-time world rally champions Sébastien Loeb and Daniel Elena in a Citroën C3 WRC, the car which came first in Leon last year in the hands of Kris Meeke and Paul Nagle.



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Given the high quality of the 2018 field and the eagerly-awaited appearance of the Franco-Monegasque pair, who won Rally Mexico six times in a row, this year's Rally Guanajuato Mexico promises to deliver some superb entertainment, with all the WRC runners and several WRC2 competitors competing on Michelin rubber to contribute further to the show.

The MICHELIN LTX Force S5 and H4 (WRC crews)

Number of tyres available in Mexico: 500

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 Mexico: 400

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

Michelin staff for the 2018 Rally Mexico

Michelin's partners at the 2018 Rally Mexico will be backed by a total staff of 14:

- **Pascal Couasnon** (Director, Michelin Motorsport)
- **Jacques Morelli** (Manager, FIA WRC Programme, Michelin Motorsport)
- 2 coordinators
- 4 team advisors
- 5 fitters
- 1 press officer

