



Press release

December 31
2024

AFRICA ECO RACE : THE RACE IS ON WITH A VERY SANDY FIRST STAGE.



The Africa Eco Race 2025 caravan landed in Tangier at dawn on December 31. After a warm welcome from the Tanger Med teams and a hearty traditional Moroccan breakfast, competitors embarked on the first stage toward Tarda. This demanding day covered a 755-kilometer journey, including an initial 47-kilometer special stage. This unique, entirely sandy timed sector followed the coastal dunes along the sea. Despite its short distance, the special proved challenging, with tricky navigation and exceptionally soft sand.

In the motorcycle category, Italian Jacopo Cerutti claimed victory on an Aprilia, ahead of Alessandro Botturi and Pol Tarres, both riding Yamaha. In the four-wheel category, Pierre Lafay took first place in a Can-Am Maverick, followed by Magdalena Zajac in a Toyota Hilux. Vincent Vroninks and his Red-Lined VK56 secured third place. In the truck category, the Dutch team led by Will Van Groningen in an Iveco outraced their compatriots Gerrit Zuurmond's MAN team.

The Africa Eco Race 2025 adventure officially kicked off on Saturday with the departure ceremony in Monaco. Amid the cheers of an enthusiastic crowd, the competitors headed to the port of Marseille, where they boarded La Méridionale's vessel *Girolata*. This two-day, two-night maritime journey to Tangier was a vital part of the race, offering participants time to mentally prepare for the challenges ahead on African terrain.

Onboard, the organizers held strategic briefings to present upcoming stages and reiterate essential safety rules for such a large-scale competition. In a convivial and collaborative atmosphere, drivers, co-drivers, and their teams used this time at sea to rest and build team spirit. This calm before the storm allowed everyone to fine-tune strategies and fully immerse themselves in the spirit of the Africa Eco Race.

The *Girolata* docked in Tangier on the morning of December 31, marking the official start of competitive stages on African soil. Participants now face unique challenges across Morocco, Mauritania, and Senegal's varied and demanding landscapes, culminating in the finish line in Dakar.



This first stage was more than a prologue to determine the starting order for the next day. According to all involved, navigation was subtle on the sandy tracks running along the coast, never leading the competitors onto the beach. The soft sand complicated driving, giving a foretaste of what lies ahead on the journey to Dakar.

In the motorcycle category, Jacopo Cerutti recorded the fastest time at 38'33. He expressed his joy at being back on Moroccan tracks with the Africa Eco Race, saying he had "great fun on this stage without pushing too hard." Yamaha's Alessandro Botturi secured second place with a time of 39'28, while Pol Tarres finished third, 1 minute and 44 seconds behind the leader. Both riders noted the navigation was "not so straightforward" for a short first special, particularly in its final section. Botturi reported feeling "at the top of his game," while Pol Tarres described it as "a dream to race once again on Moroccan tracks with the Africa Eco Race."

Notably, Marco Menichini of the Aprilia team, ranked 12th, suffered an impressive fall just 200 meters from the finish line and injured his cheekbone.



In the car and SSV categories, French duo Pierre Lafay and Gilles de Turkheim won the stage in the SSV Xtrem Race category with a time of 39'53, followed by Polish team Magdalena Zajac and co-driver Blazej Czekan in the T1 category, just 24 seconds behind. Belgian duo Vincent Vroninks and Dave Berghmans secured third place, 1 minute and 10 seconds behind Lafay.

At the finish line of the timed stage, Magdalena Zajac commented, "For a first stage, you usually expect a warm-up, a relatively easy special to get started... this was anything but easy! However, we had a lot of fun on these soft, tricky sand tracks along a deserted, wild coastline. The race is on!"

In the historic category, Eric and Tom Claeys in a Toyota Land Cruiser 73 edged out Kurt Dujardyn and René Declerq in a Bombardier Iltis by just one point, echoing the final standings of the previous edition in Dakar. Behind them, Fabrice and Magali Morin secured third place in a Toyota Land Cruiser, with 129 penalty points separating them from the leaders—a remarkable performance for this team's first regularity rally.



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The entire Africa Eco Race caravan is preparing to celebrate the New Year in the desert at Tarda before tackling the vast southern Moroccan expanses in a 350-kilometer stage tomorrow.



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Contact presse :

Cédric Bret - presse@afcarace.com - (+33) 06 50 70 60 50

About the AFRICA ECO RACE

Created in 2008, the Africa Eco Race is a one-of-a-kind rally raid that follows in the footsteps of legendary African rallies, emphasizing a spirit of adventure and environmental respect. This international rally connects Monaco to Dakar, offering stages through the stunning landscapes of Morocco, Mauritania, and Senegal, culminating on the shores of the iconic Lac Rose.

The Africa Eco Race stands out for its commitment to responsible competition. The event integrates eco-friendly practices to minimize its environmental impact and implements solidarity actions to benefit local communities. It attracts professional and amateur racers from around the world—competing in cars, SSVs, motorcycles, quads, and trucks—who share a passion for pushing their limits, adventure, and environmental preservation.

For more information, visit www.afcarace.com.

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