

## Driving rally cars

Rally cars race on different courses from other motor sports: rather than racing on a specially created circuit, as for example with most Formula 1 races, rallies take place on public roads, from surfaced roads to rough dirt tracks or mountain roads.

The second main difference between rallying and most other forms of motor sport is that instead of competing directly in head-to-head races round circuits, rally cars compete indirectly over timed stages, setting off at regular intervals in an attempt to record the fastest time. Rallies consist of a number of stages and the team with the fastest time at the end of the final stage win.

The final major difference between rally cars and the cars used in most other forms of professional motor sports is that the rally cars in which drivers race are very close in design to production cars that the public drive in everyday life – indeed, rally cars are licensed to drive on normal roads out-of-competition, though of course that is very uncommon. Of course, rally cars are adapted to take account of the conditions under which they have to perform, which can vary from snow and ice to choking heat and sand, but in their basic design and specifications they are not far removed from their street model counterparts.

Rallying has a long and distinguished history, stretching back all the way to the nineteenth century. The first rally to be so called was the Monte Carlo Rally of 1911, and rallying soon took off as a sport. The next few decades saw the great city-to-city races of Europe, such as the Mille Miglia in Italy, involving competitors from Britain, France, Germany and Italy in particular. Longer races included New York to Paris and even, in 1907, Peking to Paris!

After the war, as rally cars became more powerful and reliable, rally races spread around the world, and modern rallies such as the Acropolis Rally and Finland's Rally of the 1000 Lakes were established. Today the annual World Rally Championship takes in 16 races around the globe, from Scandinavia to New Zealand, and drivers from all over the world compete for the title, with the most successful in recent years coming from Finland and France. Rally cars are an important sideline for major manufacturers such as Citroen, Peugeot and Subaru, whose advertising for their latest models often trades heavily on the successes of their rally cars.

## About the Author

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