

# Aliyyah Koloc prepares to compete in the mythical Dakar Rally as one of only a handful of women

*Aliyyah Koloc, the 19-year-old will be one of only five women in the highest Dakar car category, the T1+.*

TALLINN, ESTONIA, December 20, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- When the 46th edition of the mythical Dakar Rally starts on January 5, 2024, 590 participants in eight different categories will face 7,891 km in total divided into 12 stages over two weeks through the Saudi Arabian desert. Amongst them will be 39 women, and Buggyra ZM Racing driver Aliyyah Koloc is one of them. In addition, the 19-year-old will be one of only five women in the highest Dakar car category, the T1+.

In January 2023, Aliyyah Koloc wrote history as one of the youngest women ever to participate in the challenging Dakar Rally at just 18 years old. She reached her target to finish the event in 33rd of her category. So why does a young woman want to participate in such a challenging event? "The Dakar is

the toughest rally in the world. I love racing, I love off-road rallying, so it has always been a goal of mine to participate in the Dakar. I achieved that last year when I took part for the first time, in a Can-Am. It was an amazing experience but very difficult. I had to overcome physical and mental challenges, but I made it to the finish," Aliyyah explains.

During Aliyyah's first Dakar in January of this year, she faced her fair share of technical issues.



The days were long and challenging, the nights in the desert cold. A daunting experience for most, let alone for an 18-year-old. "I wasn't really scared," Aliyyah says, "just once when I was going up a tricky mountain, but we managed to get through it. Overall, we did very well, and I gained a lot of experience. This will help me to approach my second Dakar with more confidence even though the car will be more of a challenge to drive than the Can-Am, particularly in the dunes as it is very heavy."

### A few remarkable women of the Dakar

Over the years, many women have participated in the Dakar, though in small numbers compared to their male competitors. It all started with the first edition of the Dakar, in 1979, when seven women participated in the motorbike category.

Even fewer women have participated in the highest category of the Dakar, and Jutta Kleinschmidt certainly is the most successful. The today 61-year-old German won the Dakar in 2001 as the first, and, until today, only woman.

Another big Dakar name is Cristina Gutiérrez. The 32-year-old Spaniard is the first woman to win a Dakar stage since Jutta, which was in 2021 in the lightweight vehicle category.

The most famous woman might have been Princess Caroline of Monaco who, together with her husband, competed in 1985 in the truck category. Unfortunately, she didn't finish the rally as her truck encountered a problem on day 5.

In the bike category, Laia Sanz has the best female track record. The 38-year-old Spaniard was the highest-ranking female biker from 2011 to 2021 and achieved the best-ever result for any biker with a ninth overall in 2015.

In 2021, only three years after women were allowed to drive in Saudi Arabia, two Saudi women, Dania Akeel and Mashael Al-Obaidan, participated for the first time.



And in 2022, the first all-female team started the Dakar in the light vehicle category, Merce Marti and Margot Llobera.

The 2024 edition

This year, Aliyyah Koloc will enter her second edition of the Dakar, and her first time in a T1+ car. "It is an honor to compete with the biggest names in offroad-rallying," she says, thinking of the likes of Nasser Al-Attiyah, Carlos Sainz, or 9-time World Rally Champion Sébastien Loeb. "The T1+ will be a new challenge for me, but I am as prepared as I can be and really look forward to gaining more experience."

And what does she think of being a woman in such a male-dominated environment? "I don't think in terms of women and men, for me we are all competitors and as such I want to get the best result possible. Of course, it is still a male-dominated sport, but motorsport is one of the few categories where men and women can compete all together, so let's just do that, the 19-year-old concludes."

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