

Record Number of U.S. Teams to Participate in the Rally Aïcha des Gazelles

Written by Kirsten Kuhn
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Inspirational athlete and pro surfer Bethany Hamilton to compete

February 11, 2013 (Oceanside, CA) Today, Maienga Communications announced five American teams will be taking part in the 2013 Rallye Aïcha des Gazelles, bringing a record

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total number of participants representing the U.S. to date. The well-known international competition, celebrating its 23rd year, will take place in France and Morocco from March 16th – March 31st. The off-road rally raid is unique in format - nine days of off-road driving competition using traditional dead reckoning navigation, outdated maps, no GPS or outside assistance while on course. It is considered one of the toughest all-female sporting events on the planet.

The American presence has grown significantly since 2009 when off-road racer Emily Miller and extreme skiing champion Wendy Fisher competed as the only American team in the nine day off-road rally raid through Morocco. After their initial participation, a dedicated effort began as enthusiasm grew amongst women via U.S. based training, support and increased event awareness.

Included in the line-up this year are returning sister duo Amy Lerner and Tricia Reina. Team Lerner Reina will be competing for the third year in a row after winning the coveted eco-driving Logica challenge as well as finishing in the top ten out of 150 international teams in 2012. Lerner, a former trader from New Jersey and Reina, who heads up her own floral design firm in San Diego, will be shipping their AEV equipped Jeep Rubicon overseas for the second year in a row. Another returning competitor will be Julie Meddows out of Las Vegas, who competed in 2012, joined by a new driver and first time competitor Claire Barone, also based out of Las Vegas. Julie is a social marketing consultant and Claire is an ER nurse for a local hospital. Both will be representing X Elles Racing and shipping their FJ Cruiser used for Meddow's 2012 participation.

Newcomers adding to the list are celebrity surfer Bethany Hamilton and teammate, X-Games gold medalist navigator Chrissie Beavis. Hamilton, who lost her arm nearly ten years ago in a shark attack while surfing off the coast of Hawaii, has exemplified courage and strength, surfing only one month after the incident and later turning pro. Hamilton's autobiography was turned into a major motion picture bearing the same name, "Soul Surfer," in 2011. Beavis, an architect by trade, has top-notch skills in rally racing having co-piloted for drivers such as Rhys Millen and Tanner Foust. She is also a driving instructor, rally racer and her capabilities as a mechanic and ace fabricator have led to appearances in popular TV shows such as "Monster Garage" as well as commentator roles for ESPN.

First-timers Emme Hall and Sabrina Howells are also competing. Hall, a D.C. based costume manager, has made a name for herself in the off-road industry simultaneously holding a career as a costume manager at the famed Ford Theater while Howells has a thriving career as a singer/songwriter as well as actress out of Los Angeles. They will be representing Team Courage Gazelles, a race team dedicated to raising awareness for breast cancer. Another duo

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entering the rally for the first time is Catherine Chiadmi and Patricia Klishevich. Chiadmi is a working mother of three based out of Saint Petersburg, FL who owns a successful restaurant with her husband in Treasure Island, FL. Klishevich is an accomplished pharmacy manager with over 30 years experience from Aston, PA. Being an avid off-road enthusiast, she's shipping over her FJ Cruiser for a competition vehicle. She's also a mother of two grown children and grandmother to one new grandchild.

The event begins on March 16th with a ceremonial start in Paris with teams transferring to southern Morocco for nine days of actual driving competition. The official finishing ceremonies will take place in Essaouira, Morocco on March 30th.

[What is the Rallye Aïcha des Gazelles? Click here to learn more.](#)

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