

The Dakar dream continues...

As the countdown continues to the 2009 Dakar Rally, which takes place for the first time in South America, a surprising number of BMW racers from all over the world will be joining Simon Pavey and his G 650 Xchallenge on the start line in Buenos Aires.



Off-Road legend Pierre Karsmakers will also ride a G 650 Xchallenge and is delighted to be among those who will be experiencing the first Dakar on South American soil. The 62-year-old former motocross and supercross champion, and veteran of several Paris-Dakar rallies will be using the same bike that he competed on in this year's Heroes Legend Rallye and can't wait to experience riding on a new continent.

"Although I've competed in many Paris-Dakar rallies, the thought of going to South America to ride is pretty exciting," said the Dutchman. "I've been training hard and riding quite a bit, as well as working out at the gym. In fact, my sports doctor said that I need to put on six kilos, so this gives me an opportunity to enjoy a few drinks and nice food over the Christmas holidays! At my age, I'm not going to be challenging for stage victories, but I do want to get a good result, so I will be finding a good rhythm and riding at my own pace. My main objective is to make it all the way to the finish without picking up any injuries, making sure that I enjoy myself along the way!"

Pierre's G 650 Xchallenge has been carefully prepared by Dutch BMW dealer Bert Duursma, who specialises in converting motorcycles for desert rallies. Bert believes



that the G 650 Xchallenge is a very reliable and strong rally bike – so much so that unlike most competitors, Pierre is doing the 2009 Dakar without relying on any assistance or mechanical support other than what he can provide himself.

“The bike Pierre will use to participate in the Dakar is the same bike he used earlier this year in the Heroes Legend,” said Bert. “Because of this, we actually only had to replace oil and oil filter, chainset, air filter and some other minor things to make the bike ready for the Dakar. These G 650 Xchallenge bikes are unbelievably reliable – this is why Pierre goes to Dakar without any assistance, because he believes the bike won’t let him down, so he needs no help. I hope he will be right!”

An event like the Dakar obviously attracts its fair share of brave characters, and in addition to Pierre Karsmakers and Simon Pavey participating on their G 650 Xchallenge machines, there are several competitors who are putting their faith in rally-prepared versions of the new G 450 X sport enduro.



Frenchman Hugo Payen already has a Dakar finishers medal (from the 2005 rally) and has also competed in many off-road races and competitions such as the Optic 2000 Rallye and various national championship events. Hugo had planned to enter the 2008 Dakar but due to its cancellation because of a potential terrorist threat, he raced a G 650 Xchallenge in the Central Europe Rallye instead.

This year the 37-year-old was determined to contest the South American Dakar on a G 450 X and as part of his preparations for the rally, he has been participating in many local enduro races with the Pays de Loire Motos dealer Enduro Team from the Nantes region. His rally bike has been prepared by Franck Helbert from specialists HFP in Laval and Hugo is delighted with the result.

“I was lucky enough to get my hands on a G 450 X very early,” he said. “The bike wasn’t launched to the public until late in September but I was able to get one in July, which gave me plenty of time to get a feel for it, before sending it to specialists HFP for the rally preparation. While the bike was there, Pays de Loire Moto lent me another series production G 450 X, which I have been using for training. As part of the rally preparation, lots of work has been done on the fork and shocks and it rides really well. It also has a fantastic aluminium fuel tank that holds 17 litres, so in addition to the original eight-litre fuel tank under the seat – and another tank at the back of the bike which holds an additional five litres – I’ve now got a fuel capacity of 30 litres in total. My first impressions of the rally bike are extremely favourable; it looks superb and is a pleasure to ride. I can’t wait for the rally to start!”

Although Hugo Payen thought that he would probably be the only rider to contest the 2009 Dakar on a modified G 450 X, nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, there are three other riders who will be tackling the world’s hardest race on a BMW sport enduro. Andres Memi, the Chief Instructor at the new BMW Enduro Park in Argentina, will take part in the rally with a G 450 X, as will Luis Ferreira and Pedro Bianchi Prata from Portugal. We wish all the BMW riders the very best of luck and will be following their progress in January via the www.dakar.com website.