



# SILK WAY 2017 RALLY 丝绸之路拉力赛



## START CEREMONY - RED SQUARE - MOSCOW. AND THEY'RE OFF!



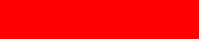
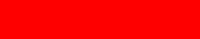
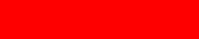
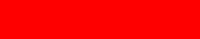
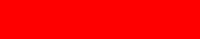
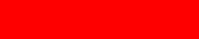
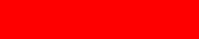
At the end of two days of scrutineering and last minute preparations, the 2017 Silk Way Rally has finally got under way from the Red Square, in the historical heart of the Russian capital, following a colourful start ceremony.

On the banks of the Moskva River, the Red Square once again got dressed up to celebrate the start of the 7th edition of the Silk Way Rally.

Late morning, the leading teams met up at the parc ferme, at the foot of Saint Basil Cathedral, with Alexei Miller, Gazprom CEO, to have a look over their vehicles. The occasion for the boss of the event's main sponsor to reiterate his support for the race. "The Silk Way Rally is one of the most spectacular



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and astonishing sporting events in the world. The scale of the race defies imagination and unites the people of the three friendly countries. Gazprom welcomes rapprochement with China, and we have no doubt that this year the Silk Way Rally will once again be more than a rally, brighter than adventure!"



## Podium

Then, after a flag parade, official speeches and a number of different shows, the moment came for the first car to drive up on the start podium, set up in the square itself.

To the victor the spoils: it was of course the Peugeot DKR 3008 of Frenchmen **Cyril DESPRES** and David Castera, winners of the previous edition, that was first up on the podium, lit up by an explosion of camera flashes from the more than 150 Russian and international media accredited to the event. Commented Despres: "We will of course do everything in our power to defend our Silk Way Rally title and as always our biggest rival will be the desert, a redoubtable opponent. And then there are our team mates, Sebastian Loeb with his nine world rally championships and Stephane Peterhansel with



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his 13 Dakar wins. Fortunately there are no team orders – so may the best man win!” No easy task, according to the Director of Peugeot Sport **Bruno FAMIN**, “For 2017, the Silk Way Rally will certainly be the hardest rally in the world...”

When it came to the turn of the trucks, the Russian public were clearly right behind **Ayrat MARDEEV** and his giant Kamaz, as the factory driver for the Kamaz-Master team set off on another challenge. “I am happy to be racing against our main rivals on the Silk Way Rally, which is going to be both very long and very tough. It is going to be a hard battle, there are no outsiders on the entry list...”



### Proud

And as the ‘monsters of the desert’ and their crews passed over the start podium to a cacophony of klaxons, the organisers, led by their project director Vladimir CHAGIN, were clearly proud to be able to get another adventure underway.



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"I would like to thank all the teams present, as well as our sponsors, without whom it would be impossible to organise the event. This 2017 edition of the Silk Way Rally will be the most demanding so far. We are going to have an extraordinary race..."

Tomorrow (Saturday), the first stage of the rally will take the competitors towards Tcheboksary. On the day's menu: a twisty and fast 61 kilometre special to reach the first bivouac of this 2017 Silk Way Rally.



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