

World solar car race begins in Australia

October 25 2009



A driver for team 'Sattem' gives a thumbs-up from the cockpit of a solar powered car at the start of the World Solar Challenge in Darwin, on October 25. Thirty-two solar powered cars from 17 participating countries will race over 3,000 km across the Australian outback to Adelaide.

A 3,000-kilometre (1,860-mile) solar car race across Australia's desert heartland began in the northern city of Darwin Sunday, organisers said.

The cars left Darwin in hot and humid weather at about 8:30 am (2300 GMT Saturday) on the journey that is expected to end mid-week in the South Australian city of Adelaide.

"We had 32 vehicles start this morning," Mike Drewer, a spokesman for the World Solar Challenge, told AFP, adding that weather conditions were good for solar cars.

"The first away was Aurora 101 from [Australia](#), having set the fastest

speed time trial (of 91.83 kilometres per hour) yesterday."

It was followed by the Dutch car Nuna5, which posted a time of 85.49 kilometres per hour.

The Nuna team has won the last four solar challenge races in 2007, 2005, 2003 and 2001 but had to rebuild its new car before the start of this race after a testing accident in Darwin.

The third car to start was Germany's HS Bochum BoCruiser, which trialled at 82.52 kilometres per hour.

The solar cars race for nine hours each day, stopping at a certain cut-off time each night and camping by the side of the road, wherever they are at that moment.

"We would expect the fastest vehicles are capable of doing, depending on weather conditions, about 800 kilometres per day," Drewer said. "The fastest ones could be approaching Adelaide by Wednesday night, Thursday."

Event director Chris Selwood said picking a winner would be difficult.

"We won't really see the technology and ingenuity until the cars are scrutineered in Darwin and a lot of things can happen on the journey south," Selwood said ahead of the race.

The race is being run in tandem with the Eco Challenge, which involves production and prototype eco-friendly vehicles that are, or soon will be, available to the public.

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Citation: World solar car race begins in Australia (2009, October 25) retrieved 20 March 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-10-world-solar-car-australia.html>

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