

The race is on in 2nd Atacama solar challenge

November 15 2012



The driver of the Chilean team Das-Udec competes in the first stage of the Atacama Solar Challenge. Fifteen solar cars from Chile, Argentina, Venezuela and India set off Thursday on the 1,300-kilometer race through the uber-dry Atacama Desert.

Fifteen solar cars from Chile, Argentina, Venezuela and India set off Thursday on a 1,300-kilometer (800-mile) race through the uber-dry Atacama Desert in the second Atacama Solar Challenge.

The start line for the November 15-19 [race](#), first launched last year to encourage the development of low-cost environmentally-friendly

This year's favorite was the entry from the returning champion University of La Serena team, with its newly remodeled Intikallpa, named using the Quechua word for "solar energy."

"This year, we came with better engineering design, which makes the car more competitive," team member Leonardo Saguas told AFP, boasting his car can reach maximum speeds of 120 kilometers per hour.

His team was busily cleaning its car's solar panels, while their main rivals, from the University of Chile worked to protect their car's plates, to keep them cool and maximize performance.

Also participating were racers developed by universities in Argentina, Venezuela and India.



The Chilean team Eolian 3 competes during the first stage of the Atacama Solar Challenge. Fifteen solar cars from Chile, Argentina, Venezuela and India set off Thursday on the 1,300-kilometer race through the uber-dry Atacama Desert.

Most of the solar-powered vehicles consist of a flat rectangular vessel lined with [solar panels](#) to absorb solar energy, which is stored in batteries, and with a cubicle to house the driver.

"On this day, the strategy is not to make a mistake. We have a climb to get to Calama," the end of the first leg, said Saguas, "but on Friday the climb is even harder."

The vehicles will share the road with regular cars, trucks and buses as they speed to the finish line.

Last year's race, held in October 2011, saw 30 teams from seven countries in Latin America participating. The teams traveled on a 1,060-kilometer course during three days of competition.

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