

Green cars ready to race in 2nd Atacama solar challenge

November 7 2012



Vehicles are presented ahead of the Atacama Solar Challenge car race in Santiago. Eighteen solar-powered cars from Chile, Argentina, Venezuela and India will race across 1,300 kilometers of Chile's uber-dry Atacama desert for this year's "Atacama Solar Challenge."

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The November 15-19 race is the latest installment of Latin America's

first big [solar car](#) competition, launched last year to encourage the development of low-cost environmentally-friendly vehicles.

Competing vehicles fall into two categories: cars powered exclusively by the sun's rays, designed by eight-person teams, and hybrid solar- and pedal-powered three-wheelers, mostly designed by university students.

Ten of the 12 cars developed by Chileans were put on display Wednesday in front of the presidential palace in downtown Santiago.

The University of Chile engineering department's offering, called Eolian, can reach speeds of up to 90 kilometers (56 miles) per hour, thanks to the improvements in the efficiency of the [solar cells](#) over earlier models, team member Wladimir Ovalle boasted to AFP.

But the car will have to beat the Intikalpa 2, from last year's winning team, from the University of La Serena. Their car—named using the Quechua word for "[solar energy](#)"—has a top speed of 120 kilometers (75 miles) an hour, according to team member Daniel Garrido.

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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