

Peru moving to protect fossils from car race

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An official inspects motorcycles during the technical and administrative checks of the 2013 edition of the Dakar Rally in Lima, Peru, Thursday, Jan. 3, 2013. The race of over 400 vehicles including cars, bikes, trucks and quads begins on Jan. 5 in Lima, and finishes in Santiago, Chile on Jan. 20. (AP Photo/Victor R. Caivano)

(AP)—Peru's government is taking steps to protect one of the world's largest fossil deposits from being damaged by this year's Dakar Rally, the Culture Ministry said Thursday.

It's the second year that the long-distance race involving hundreds of cars and motorbikes has included Peru. The race begins Saturday and will cross into Chile and Argentina before ending Jan. 20.

The Culture Ministry said it is erecting signs at all access points to the Ocucaje desert to help prevent damage to existing fossils.

Klaus Honninger, director of the private Meyer-Honninger Paleontological Museum in Peru, called the race an "enormous danger" for the Ocucaje [fossil](#) zone in the Ica region, which is home to fossils of [whales](#), dolphins, penguins and other animals.

Honninger said spectators at last year's rally dumped tons of trash in the desert and some people reportedly used whale fossil [vertebrae](#) as benches. Some autos crushed fossils in their path.

Dakar Rally director Etienne Lavigne said Thursday that organizers are taking all measures possible to prevent any kind of damage to fossils or the environment in general. He said organizers would be making inspections every day on every leg of the race.

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