

Project 356 World Rally Tour prepared to cross off its final, arctic challenge

25/10/2021 Renée Brinkerhoff has rallied her Porsche 356 around the world for a good cause, and now she'll drive her re-engineered sports car on skis through the harsh conditions of Antarctica

After nearly two years of delay, Renée Brinkerhoff is preparing for the final stage of her "Project 356 World Rally Tour" with her faithful 1956 Porsche 356 A. The amateur rally driver has already raced the vintage sports car on six continents, on every type of terrain – an extreme endeavor for any individual, let alone a woman in a classic 65-year-old racecar. She will be looking to check off that last land mass by putting the Porsche to the ultimate test, traversing 356 miles in Antarctica.

"While we are extremely proud of completing each endurance rally we've entered, our true mission has been for our racing efforts to become a worldwide visual that supports our vocal pursuit to end child trafficking," said Brinkerhoff. "We've had a goal to break barriers and set new records and we're hopeful our Antarctic expedition will prove just that."

The 356 is already in transit to Chile via ship from its workshop in the United Kingdom, and upon arrival, will be air-shipped to the awaiting extreme conditions at Union Glacier, Antarctica. Brinkerhoff and the Valkyrie Racing team will rendezvous in Chile at the end of November, and if weather cooperates the subzero sprint will begin in Antarctica December 5th and be completed before the end of the year. The long-awaited journey was pushed from late 2020, and the more than 18 months spent planning has also allowed the naturally-aspirated flat six 356 to undergo a complete re-engineering for the treacherous terrain.

"Project 356 World Rally Tour" - 1956 Porsche 356 A

"Success for Renée and her car will come from the thoughtful balance of appropriate technology we've added, and the mass reduction implemented," said Kieron Bradley, Senior Chassis Design Engineer for the project and a practiced extreme explorer in his own right.

Bradley replaced the rear tires of the vehicle with snow tracks, and a pair of skis were attached to the front along with a specialized brace and suspension system. The 356 will use a single arm suspension with coil over shock for stabilization for both the tracks in the rear.

While the addition of skis and tracks increased the overall mass of the 356 -- an issue as lightness is key to driving over the ice rather than sinking in -- the mass per square inch, or foot print, has been reduced to under 4 percent of the standard wheel displacement.

1956 Porsche 356 A x Valkyrie Racing

"The ski we've created must do 40 - 50 percent of the work, by compacting and prepping the snow for the track unit to follow over, with the underside blade guiding the direction – this ensures the tracks will not submarine under the light snow," said Bradley.

An extra wrinkle to Bradley's work was that the skis and tracks must be easily removable to re-fit spiked ice tires with no wheel alignment changes necessary. A pneumatic inflatable jack will be used to make the change.

Joining Brinkerhoff in the 356A during the polar trek will be British explorer Jason de Carteret acting as navigator. De Carteret has led more than 50 expeditions, including those to both the North and South Pole, and together with Bradley has claimed two world records for the fastest overland journey to the South Pole traveling in the Thomson Reuters Polar Vehicle which they designed.

"As often has been the case when taking on a new terrain in my 356, I have had no opportunity to test the car," said Brinkerhoff. "The test will come when we are at Union Glacier and we are very hopeful the new design will prove itself in spades. As I have been told by Jason and Kieron, there is no terrain on earth like Antarctica and therefore no place where a true test can be taken."

“Project 356 World Rally Tour” is both an expedition and a humanitarian effort, and the December 2021 challenge completes the ultimate endeavor by one woman, one car and one global mission to end child trafficking. Through Valkyries Gives, the philanthropic arm of the racing team, Brinkerhoff has raised close to half a million dollars with 100% of the proceeds benefitting victims around the world.

By its conclusion, Brinkerhoff will have driven close to 20,000 miles over all seven continents, and partaken in endurance rallies such as Peking-to-Paris, the East African Safari Classic Rally and La Carrera Panamericana.

Prior to starting her rally career at the age of 57 in 2013, the Coloradoan attended classes at the Porsche Track Experience where she had the Chief Driving Instructor – and America's most decorated endurance racer – Hurley Haywood in the passenger seat. “He kept me out there and kept taking me around the track, and that was such a confidence booster,” remembers Brinkerhoff.

UK-based Tuthill Porsche has held a technical preparation role in nearly all of Brinkerhoff’s endurance rallies, and Valkyrie Racing has also prepared measures of sustainability, such as solar panels on the crevasse bar, to ensure the entire Project 356 World Rally Tour is carbon positive.

Info

More about Valkyrie Racing and Valkyrie Gives.

Valkyrie Racing/Valkyrie Gives has created the ability for a community of supporters worldwide to join them in Antarctica and be part of a "once-in-a-lifetime' experience." Follow Renee and her Porsche 356 as she conquers the final frontier. Donations can be made directly to www.valkyrieracing.com/donate356 .

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