

When the peloton lines up on the streets of Kigali in 2025, the world of cycling will witness a landmark moment. For the first time in its 98-year history, the UCI Road World Championships — one of the sport's crown jewels — will unfold on African soil.

Since 1921, when Copenhagen hosted the inaugural edition, the Championships have rotated through cycling's traditional strongholds in Europe, the Americas, and Asia. From Eddy Merckx in Belgium to Peter Sagan in Slovakia, the rainbow jersey has passed from champion to champion, but never against the backdrop of Africa's rolling hills. That changes with Rwanda's bold step onto the global stage.

The Road World Championships are unlike any other race on the calendar. Stripped of their trade team colours, riders don the jerseys of their nations. Rivals become teammates, and cycling transforms into a contest of countries, not corporations. Imagine Slovenia's Tadej Pogačar and Primož Roglič — bitter rivals throughout the season — suddenly working together for national glory.

Across a week of racing, riders will battle in three disciplines: the road race, the individual time trial (ITT), and the mixed team time trial relay (TTT). With categories spanning elite, under-23, and junior riders, 13 titles will be decided. The stakes are simple but enormous: the winner earns not only a gold medal but the right to wear the fabled rainbow jersey for an entire year.

Nations qualify riders based on their standing in the UCI rankings. Dominant countries such as Belgium, the Netherlands, and Italy can field squads of up to eight riders, while smaller cycling nations may only send one or two. That imbalance creates both drama and opportunity: the underdogs get to measure themselves against the giants, while favourites must manage tactics and teamwork in a race where every move matters.

Rwanda's selection is more than symbolic. Over the past decade, Kigali has emerged as Africa's cycling capital. The Tour du Rwanda, with its punishing climbs and fervent roadside crowds, has become a showcase of the continent's passion for the sport.

Hosting the Road Worlds is a natural next step, signaling that global cycling is ready to embrace Africa not just as a developing frontier, but as a stage worthy of its greatest spectacle.

For Rwanda, the event is also about visibility and legacy. The Championships will bring thousands of visitors, broadcast images of Kigali's iconic hills to millions worldwide, and inspire the next generation of African cyclists.

When the rainbow jersey is awarded in Kigali, it won't just signify another world champion. It will mark the moment cycling broadened its horizons, finally bringing its most prestigious event to a continent long waiting in the wings.

The 2025 Road World Championships will be more than a race. They will be a turning point — for the sport, for Rwanda, and for Africa's place in cycling history.