

Kigali: The 16th edition of the Tour du Rwanda roared to life today, with cycling legend Chris Froome returning for another shot at victory. But Froome won't have it easy, facing a peloton packed with talent, including seven other Tour de France veterans, hungry for glory on Rwandan soil.

This year's race boasts a challenging route incorporating sections of the upcoming World Championship circuits, including the opening team time trial and the final Kigali stage. Riders from across the globe, including strong African contingents from Eritrea and Rwanda, will battle it out on these iconic roads.

While Froome remains the star attraction, the presence of World Tour development squads from Soudal-QuickStep, Groupama-FDJ, UAE Team Emirates, and Lotto-Dstny, alongside ProTeams like TotalEnergies, Israel-Premier Tech, Bingoal WB, and Polti-Kometa, heats up the competition.

Local fans will have their eyes fixed on their local heroes like Eric Muhoza, Samuel Niyonkuru, Eric Manizabayo, and Joseph Hareruya aim to break the Rwandan victory jinx in the prestigious 2.1-ranked race.

They'll have their eyes set on capitalizing on the shorter, faster stages promised by organizers, with the 13km Musanze individual time trial and the legendary Mount Kigali climb presenting significant hurdles.

A total of 195 riders representing 19 teams will embark on this week-long journey, covering 740km across eight stages. The longest stage stretches 163km, while the shortest is the individual time trial.

With the team time trial already underway, the Tour du Rwanda has begun. Will Froome finally conquer the "Land of a Thousand Hills"? Can a local rider make history on home soil? Stay tuned for an exciting week of cycling in Rwanda!

The stages

Stage 1: BK Arena -KCC Roundabout (Team Time Trial: 18km)

Stage 2: Muhanga-Kibeho: 130km

Stage 3: Huye-Rusizi (141km)

Stage 4: Karongi- Rubavu: 92km

Stage 5: Musanze- Kinigi (Individual Time Trial: 13km)

Stage 6: Musanze-Mont Kigali (93km)

Stage 7: Rukomo(Gicumbi)- Kayonza (163km)

Stage 8: Kigali Convention Center (KCC) (90km).