

For the first time ever, local four crews will proudly fly the Rwandan flag at the grueling gravel opener of the FIA World Rally Championship, the Safari Rally Kenya, set to roar into action from 12th to 15th March 2026.

According to the FIA [entry list](#), the Rwanda Rally Team will field four crews, competing not for WRC points, but for African Rally Championship (ARC) glory as well as national and regional honors.

Leading the charge is seasoned campaigner Giancarlo Davite, making a return after a [selective 2024](#) that saw him focus on just two ARC rounds in Burundi and Rwanda. Giancarlo has swapped his Ford Fiesta for a Subaru Impreza WRX STI and will compete in the National Rally (NR4) category.

Local fans are buzzing with anticipation. Giancarlo, alongside experienced pace note reader Sylvia Vindevogel, has had a rollercoaster relationship with the brutal “fesh-fesh” sand of Safari Rally. In 2023, the duo retired at Super Stage 12 and again after SS6 when their Ford was pushed to the absolute breaking point, while mechanical gremlins have plagued their campaigns in 2009, 2012, 2013, 2021, and 2022. Yet the crew, affectionately dubbed the “Omelette driver” team, remains a firm crowd favorite and a symbol of Rwandan grit.

Joining them is rising talent Queen Kalimpinya, with her co-driver Olivier Ngabo, stepping up in the same Subaru Impreza WRX STI. Ngabo explained that the crew is confident despite it being their first time in the Safari Rally, thanks to solid preparation and support from the country, and they aim to make Rwandans proud. They will be part of the regional lineup of KCB Rally Team.

Also making his WRC debut is Jean Claude Gakwaya, navigating a Mitsubishi Lancer alongside longtime co-driver Claude Mugabo. Gakwaya, a seasoned driver on the local scene, has long promised fans he would race abroad—finally, car reliability and sponsorship align for his big break.

Rounding out the quartet are Christian Kanangire and Kevin Shyaka, who will tackle the dusty Naivasha-based gravel stages in a Subaru Impreza WRX STI.

Kanangire noted that both he and Shyaka are ready to push hard, with a car fully capable of taking on the international competition.

The President of the Rwanda Automobile Club (RAC), Christian Gakwaya,

encouraged all crews to deliver strong performances, reminding them that representing Rwanda on this stage is a matter of national pride and a key step in the club's 2025-2029 strategic plans.

Last year, Fernand Rutabingwa competed in a Lancer Evo X in the ARC2 class, further cementing Rwanda's growing footprint in East African motorsport.

Motorsport analysts view Rwanda's bold push into the WRC Safari Rally as a strategic move: a chance to showcase national talent, develop drivers, and build experience on one of the toughest rallies in the world. Carrying the Rwanda Rally Team banner, the crews aim to make a mark on both the African rally scene and the global stage. Experts note, however, that to sustain momentum, RAC will need more domestic rally events and stronger sponsorship backing to fully unlock the country's motorsport potential.

The year's popular Mountain Gorilla Rally is scheduled to take place from July 10-12, 2026. This makes it the third edition of ARC, after the Pearl of African Rally (Uganda)-May 7-10, 2026, before the Round 4: Mkwawa Rally in Tanzania-October 2-4, 2026.

The 2026 Safari Rally It would mark the seventy-fourth running of the Safari Rally, and is due to be the third round of the 2026 World Rally Championship, 2026 WRC2 Championship and 2026 WRC3 Championship. The 2026 event is set to be based in Naivasha in the Nakuru County, and is consisted of twenty special stages, covering a total competitive distance of 350.52 km (217.80 mi).