

4L Trophy 2017: 16–26 February

Humanitarian action – competition – joint endeavour !

4L
TROPHY

Desert Adventure!

ACTION - PARTAGE - SOLIDARITE
1997 **20** ANS 2017
4L TROPHY



16 – 26 February 2017

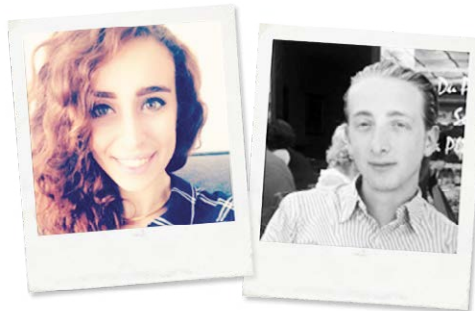
« The desert meerkats »

This year's drivers are 3rd year students at the Skema Business School in Lille.

Biarritz is the starting village for the third year in a row and for this, the 20th edition of the famous 4L Raid, over 1,450 cars are racing, which translates as some 2,900 competitors. The teams get their official race numbers once the final medical, administrative and mechanical checks are complete.

In partnership with the Enfants du Désert foundation and the French Red Cross, the rally promises to be an unforgettable experience: for the 20th anniversary, the students (aged 18-28, from over 15 different countries) will be joined for the very first time by competitors (up to 48 years old) from previous races in order to achieve a greater sense of togetherness and joint endeavour.

TEAM N° 2129
SPONSORED BY ERI



Célia HOUARI Aubin GASNE

Destination: Algeciras

After Biarritz, the students have two days to get to Algeciras in Spain and then cross the Gibraltar Strait by ferry to Morocco. However, the adventure starts well before Biarritz.



● Tuesday 14 February

The car gets its ERI stickers !

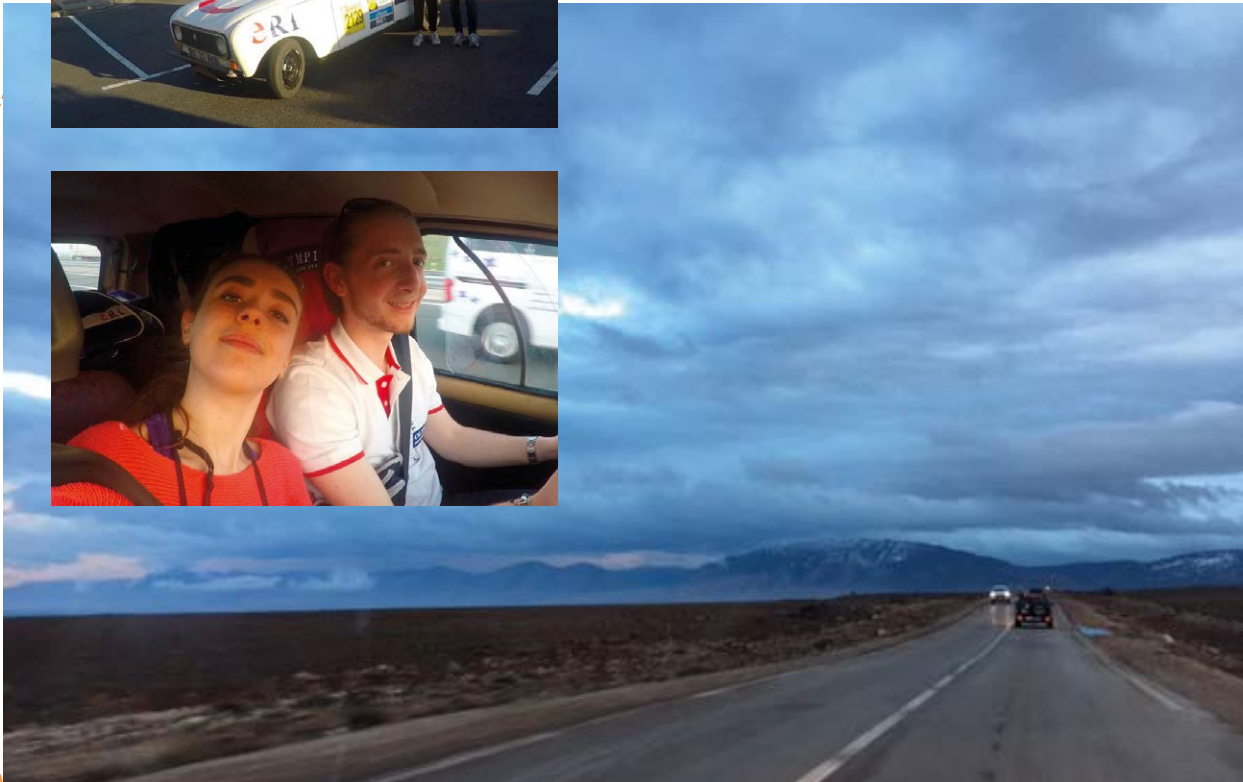
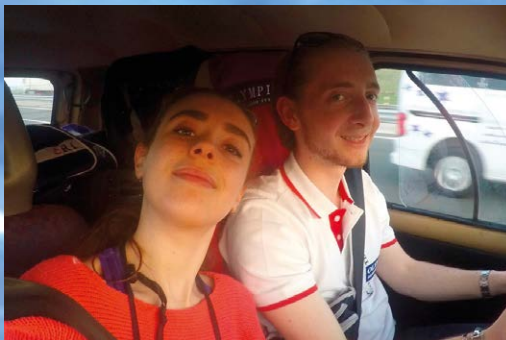
The team arrive from Lille and stop off in Geneva for a quick visit before the big departure.

We load them up with bags, caps and pens to hand over to the Enfants du Désert foundation, which will then distribute them amongst impoverished children along the route.

A photo shoot is held in the car park and there is show of enthusiasm in front of the 4L's ultra-modern dashboard.



Wednesday 15 – Thursday 16 February ●



Arrival in Biarritz

We're really looking forward to arriving in Biarritz. This is where our adventure will start. So, here we are now in Biarritz. The car has taken its MOT, but there's a small problem: we need a garage to urgently fit a reinforcement plate to ensure the 4L will pass all the checks. As a result, we don't get going until 4pm the following day. Most of the cars have left at midday. However, other cars are also experiencing problems, so we're not alone when we finally hit the road. Everything goes smoothly. We see some amazing scenery. We arrive into Salamanca very late in the evening.

Friday 17 February



Departure for Algeciras

This morning when we try to start the car we realise there's a problem with the battery. Panic sets in as we're one of just a handful of 4Ls parked underground. We look for some of the other 4L drivers so that we can connect the jump leads to one of their cars. We finally set off at 10 am. After this morning's incident, everything goes smoothly. It's warm and the driving conditions are good. We meet people at every motorway services. The journey takes about eight hours and because of all the stoppages we get to Algeciras very late. We spend the night at a hotel to recharge our batteries for the rest of the adventure.

Saturday 18 February ●

A day in Algeciras

We spend Saturday in Algeciras, as the ferry doesn't leave until 6 am tomorrow. We pay a quick visit to a garage to sort out the battery, only to find out there's nothing wrong with either that or the alternator. What a relief! It was probably just the damp. We make a few last minute purchases (water and tissues, etc.) and then in the evening try to find a small sea front restaurant. Instead we end up in a gloomy area of Algeciras, do an about-turn and finally end up at Burger King.



Departure for Tangiers

Difficult waking up this morning : we have to set the alarm for 3 am in order to leave Algeciras at 7. The crossing takes 2 hours, but given Tangiers is one hour behind, we arrive at 8 am. We hit the road for Boulajoul. The journey takes 10 hours: there's a problem with the wheel alignment. After only 5 hours into the trip, we're limited to 80 km/h. And it's constantly raining. We arrive in Atlas around 6 pm and a snow blizzard sets in as we start the mountain ascent towards the bivouac at 1,800 metres altitude. Visibility is reduced to two metres and to say the 4L's headlights aren't very effective is an understatement.

The organisers lead us and 40 other 4Ls up to the bivouac in a convoy. We arrive at the bivouac at 8 pm: temperatures are extremely cold, we're very tired and a freezing wind is blowing non-stop. Without doubt one of the worst nights of our lives! We opt to sleep in the car instead of putting up the tent. It's just too cold and then after the snow it rains. We get 6 hours of poor quality sleep. The car is full of mud. It's just horrible.



Dormir dans une 4L 🤔



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● Sunday 19 February

Merzouga

Wake up at 5 am and on the road at 6 for Merzouga. The wheel alignment has not been fixed so we have to drive very carefully for about 6 hours. It's not too bad. Today we make friends with some girls and we stay friends for the rest of the trip. We get to the bivouac at 2 pm and unload the school supplies with the help of the Enfants du Désert foundation. We have a wonderful time playing with the children. It's probably the highlight of the trip. We play football, have a tug-of-war, dance round in circles, make bracelets and draw pictures. A moment of togetherness, high on emotion. The children leave about 6 pm. Time for a quick break: we do some quad biking with the girls. I fall into a hole as I've never done any quad biking. It's hilarious!!! The scenery is amazing. We eat a delicious tajine at the bivouac in the evening and then head to bed. We're worn out from today.



Monday 20 February 



● Tuesday 21 February

Track 1 to Merzouga

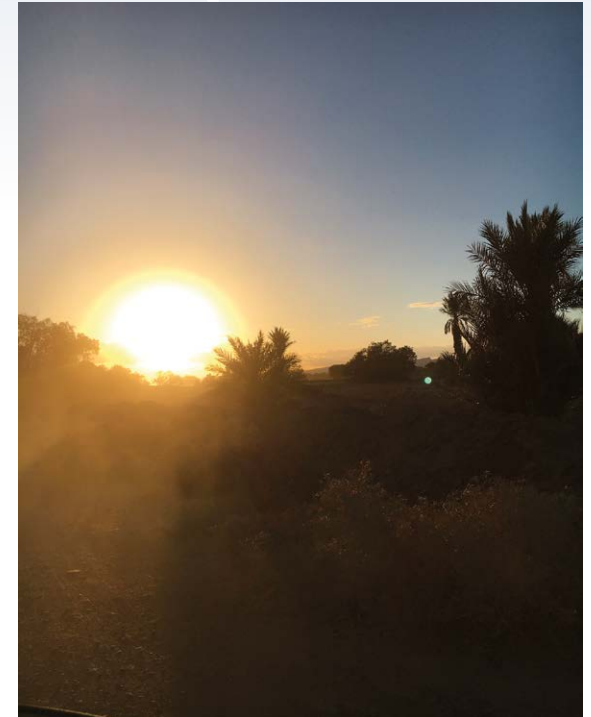
At 11 am we head out to the first desert track. We cross the dunes where a variety of obstacles await: rocks, holes and quicksand. We get stuck once, but no worries as we've already helped plenty of other teams in the same position. You see, the 4L Trophy is also about mutual support and togetherness. We have an aperitif in the dunes with around 15 other teams that we've not yet met. It was really enjoyable spending time with them. The scenery was amazing. Next up is a fancy dress evening. It's really funny to see everyone's costumes. We have a great evening together.



Wednesday 22 February

Track 2 to Merzouga

We set off along the second track at 8 am. Everything is going smoothly until we realise the engine is badly overheating. We stop by the track side, open the bonnet and notice that the fan has come loose and is not working anymore. We make a sign so that one of the other cars will stop to help. 2 4Ls stop and help us to put it back in place. We set off again nice and relaxed and then suddenly we can't change gear properly. We head back to the bivouac and discover that the gearbox mounting is broken. We have to tow the car in the bivouac and take it to the garage for repair. The repairs last 3 hours and are done by one of the competitors, not a mechanic. Another sign of the spirit of solidarity reigning over the event. We have dinner at the bivouac and then get to bed early: marathon leg tomorrow!



Thursday 23 – Friday 24 February

Marathon – Part 1

After repairing one of the headlights, we set off at 11 am for Ouarzazate and what will be roughly a 10-hour journey. We're driving along the track and after about 2 hours, worryingly, there's a really strong smell of petrol in the car. We stop by the track side and notice that some petrol has escaped from the jerrycan. With the jerrycan rubbing against the wall of the boot, the petrol has caught fire. We put some sand down in the boot to soak it up.

We're back on the road until 6:15 pm. We have to stop before nightfall to find somewhere to sleep. This is the only evening when we're left to our own devices. With the other girls, we decide to join up with some of the other teams to bivouac to avoid being small isolated groups in the desert. We spend an enjoyable evening together laughing around a camp fire.



Marathon – Part 2

We're back on the road at 7 am heading to the checkpoint at Ouarzazate, and then on to Marrakech. At midday we stop to eat a delicious tajine in a village we pass through. We cross the dangerous Tichka pass at 2,200 metres altitude on our way to Marrakech. Today has been very testing, what with over 10 hours of driving. We get to Marrakech around 11 pm.



● Saturday 25 – Sunday 26 February



Back to Algeciras

We leave at 10 am and arrive at 9 pm. We have to drive slowly because of the problem with the wheel alignment. It's very difficult to hold the wheel and the car keeps swerving dangerously in the corners. We arrive at Algeciras at 3 am.

Closing evening

We spend the day wandering around Marrakech and in the evening there's a party at "Chez Ali". We have a great time: a real feast of tajine and couscous. We leave not too late as tomorrow we're back on the road to Tangiers.



Monday 27 February

Madrid

We leave around midday and stop along the way to change tyres hoping that will maybe help with the wheel alignment problem. The new tyres do absolutely nothing to improve the car's ability to follow the road. We therefore drive slowly and carefully all the way to Madrid. We stop again at a garage where a mechanic advises us strongly (practically forbids us) against driving the car. With a heavy heart we leave the car with him and make arrangements for repatriation.



The 4L Trophy has been an amazing experience and far exceeded our expectations. The first few days in the desert left us wondering why we had signed up, what with the rain, the snow and questionable hygiene, but after 3 days, we realised that it was all quite an incredible experience and that the lack of comfort really wasn't that important.

We truly gained a lot from the adventure. We met some incredible people, both competitors and locals, saw some amazing places and if we had to do it all again, we wouldn't hesitate!!!

The 2017 adventure is over !

After a free day for sight-seeing in Marrakech, the 4L Trophy drew to a close on Saturday 25 February with the prize-giving ceremony followed by a final, unforgettable party evening for all the teams at "Chez Ali". 3,300 people, including teams, families, friends and sponsors, attended the event.

Our drivers, Célia and Aubin, had a wonderful experience and will forever cherish the memories of the adventure they embarked upon. They travelled 6,000 kilometres from Lille to Biarritz and then from Spain onto Marrakech, along desert tracks in part. Their final race positions were excellent. They really did ERI proud !

843rd Boulajoul to Merzouga leg

255th Erg Chebbi leg

292nd Oued Ziz leg

150th Marathon leg

281st in the final standings

They will never forget the kindness and hospitality of the Moroccans, the breathtaking scenery and the spirit of solidarity.

The Enfants du Désert foundation and the 4L Trophy join forces each year to assist the most isolated Moroccan communities in the desert. Their efforts take them to the most remote areas in the south of the country. The priority is to ensure that all children have access to education.

The 4L Trophy is a challenge for sports enthusiasts, but it is also an opportunity for all the competitors to take part in an ambitious charity project which is unique to the region. By building schools and classrooms, and providing teaching materials and sports equipment for children in need,



the Enfants du Désert foundation, in partnership with some twenty other local associations, aims to ensure that more than 20,000 children each year have access to education.

The teams racing are also asked to bring with them 10kg in non-perishable food goods. This year, the French Red Cross collected over 6 tonnes of donations at the Halle d'Iraty in Biarritz. In 2016, it was these donations which provided 15,300 meals (about 6.9 tonnes of food) for disadvantaged people.

SEE YOU NEXT YEAR FOR THE 4L TROPHY 2018 !