



Media information  
04 September 2022

## **BMW Motorrad International GS Trophy 2022 Southeast Europe. Day 1.**

FOTO

### **A warm welcome to Albania for the GS Trophy.**

#### **Recap of Day 1.**

Location: Berat Castle, Albania

Weather: Sun/Cloud, 28°C

Course: 200km: Kavaje to Berat Castle

Terrain types: Tarmac 65km, off-road 135km

Tests: SP1: Welcome Trial, SP2: Holta Enduro Lap

Top three teams male: 1. United Kingdom, 2. Thailand, 3. South Africa

Top three teams female: 1. Germany, 2. South Africa, 3. Mexico

**Berat Castle, Albania.** The 2022 BMW Motorrad International GS Trophy started in spectacular fashion today. The competitors set off from the base camp at Kavaje on the shores of the Adriatic and headed inland, across the coastal plain of the western lowlands, and onto some challenging riding in the mountains before finishing at the stunning UNESCO world heritage site that is Berat Castle.

As usual for the event, the GS Trophy riders were up before dawn, striking camp ahead of a 6:00am breakfast call in preparation for the 7am start. The teams set off in pairs in five-minute intervals, and it wasn't 15 minutes on the trails before they came to their first special test, the 'Welcome Trial' set on a jagged ridge above the coastline. Team Mexico's Michael Littlewood was then the first GS Trophy rider to enter a scored stage and start the competition rolling, and it was evident that the Mexican team was well prepared, combining speed and precision to set a marker for the following 20 teams to beat.

After that, the teams followed a mix of road and trail as they headed east into Albania's interior. And what a ride! The lowlands weren't flat as you might expect, but hilly while the expected flat lands were restricted to the river plains. Here the GS riders marveled at Albania's rural culture. This is agriculture as practiced before mechanization. Small fields given over to corn or fruit crops. The land worked with scythes, picks and shovels while produce is transported by wheelbarrow or cart. Where the land isn't flat, shepherds tended sheep, goats and cows. Horses and donkeys are still common when it



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comes to personal transport. It was easy to assimilate to how 41% of the Albanian population is employed in agriculture. Yet the people are friendly, and this being Sunday, a day of rest, they were ready to wave and cheer the passing GS riders – the children especially so. With every kilometre Albania was surprising and delighting in the landscapes and the community.

Once into the hills the riding became more challenging as the trails scaled and descended the ever-steepening slopes. Rocky, with loose stones, sand and washouts, it called for absolute attention, especially where the trails skirted the cliff edges. One particular hill climb almost brought the GS Trophy to a halt as a combination of steepness, tall rocks steps and loose gravel called for an attack that was equal parts commitment and understanding of good line choice. When that failed it called for teamwork to get the stricken rider to the top.

After this the GS riders came to their second special test, the 'Holta Enduro Lap'. Here the riders, in turn, entered a section of riverbed, all rocks, stones, mud and of course water, where they followed a course that twice crossed the water course and ran into both mud and stone banks. Again, the best riders combined confidence, understanding and attack – but not too much attack as hitting the mud, stones or indeed the rocks themselves with too much aggression typically resulted in a crash.

For the last section of the day, the riders enjoyed a two-hour trail ride over what you may call 'enduro trails' – flowing tracks, that wend their way through valleys and of course up and down hills, but with a certain cadence that makes for an enjoyable, pacey ride. As ever, the riders needed to maintain concentration to the end as washout, gulleys and rock steps were there to trip the unwary.

The finish came at the incredible Berat Castle, a walled hilltop fortress with a history that dates back to both the Roman and Byzantine Empires. The city of Berat that surrounds it is just as spectacular and there's an alpine feeling to the environment given the mountains that tower immediately to the east, not least Mount Tomorr (2416m). In all, the riders had been on the trails for just short of 11 hours. 'A gentle introduction' as the GS Trophy sportive director Chris Zimmerman described it.

And the competition? While so many expect Team South Africa, the defending champions, to dominate, it was Team UK who came out fighting – and how,



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with wins in both special tests to build a strong early lead. Clearly highly motivated and well-trained they've certainly thrown down the gauntlet. In the Female Teams competition Team Germany look equally confident, placing 1-2 in the two tests, while Team South Africa with a 3-1 result are just five points behind, in what looks set to become a close competition.

Tomorrow the GS Trophy heads further east into the Central Mountain Range on a route that is 85% off road – sure to be a severe test of the competitors.

#### Quotes:

**Warren Ventner, Team South Africa:** "It's been brilliant, more than we expected, and it's our type of riding, with hard rock sections and challenges along the trails that have been awesome – a nice little warm up! There was a great hill climb in the middle of the day. When we got there it looked like a war scene, but we helped clean it up then got through ourselves. A great start.

"The country is amazing, around every corner is a new view, stunning landscapes, and little gems of restaurants or hotels in the middle of nowhere – we wonder how they even exist. The farming is, how do we describe it, 'manual' perhaps: men with picks, shovels, wheelbarrows, horse carts. Wives herding cows. We've not seen farming like that, it's a whole different pace of life here. Their culture is very different."

**Valeria Zomazy, Team Female Mexico:** "For me it was very good, I'm very proud of my performance today, I've trained a lot for this and so I did my best in the tests. The landscapes were so beautiful, but it was quite difficult to appreciate it all as the route was so technical and you had to watch all the time the track, it wasn't easy. I was glad the weather was cooler than the last few days. In all, a beautiful experience and to finish here in this historic castle, it's incredible."



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## **BMW Motorrad International GS Trophy 2022 Southeast Europe. Day One overall standings:**

### **Male Teams**

1. United Kingdom 50 points
2. Thailand 33
3. South Africa 26
4. China 2022 21
5. Latin America 20
5. Japan 20
7. USA 19
8. Germany 19
9. France 15
10. Netherlands 13
11. Mexico 12
12. India 10
12. China 2020 10
14. Brazil 6
15. South Korea 4

### **Female Teams:**

1. Germany 45
2. South Africa 40
3. Mexico 35
4. Latin America 26
5. France 22
6. Brazil 21

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The success of the BMW Group has always been based on long-term thinking and responsible action. The company set the course for the future at an early stage and consistently makes sustainability and efficient resource management central to its strategic direction, from the supply chain through production to the end of the use phase of all products.

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