



# 2024 ALCAN 5000 RALLY

**36 TEAMS TRAVEL 10 DAYS AND 5,000 MILES TO VIE FOR A 40TH-YEAR RALLY WIN**

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During the Alcan 5000 Rally, no one leaves a fellow rallier stranded. We stopped to check on someone in need. It was our rallymaster, Jerry Hines. He was in good hands already, so we made our way again.

Rally, now celebrating 40 years, combines several things Andy and I love: traveling, vehicles, experiencing new things, meeting and being around like-minded people, and pushing ourselves outside our comfort zone.

**2024 ALCAN 5000 RALLY ROUTE?**

This year's extreme endurance rally started in Kirkland, Washington, and progressed due north through British Columbia. It then covered parts of Alberta and the Northwest Territories to Yellowknife, then switched directions westward to Whitehorse, Yukon Territory. Next, teams headed to Fairbanks, Alaska. It was there where teams had a day off to either relax at Chena Hot Springs or endure an optional jaunt to Coldfoot above the Arctic Circle and back via the Dalton Highway. Being slightly nuts, we opted for the latter.

Once the rally's "day off" ended, teams unexpectedly split into fractured groups. They either braved the conditions and drove down to Valdez, Alaska, via Thompson Pass, which was closed at the time. Ralliers had to catch a critical TSD the next morning and then make their way toward Anchorage for the final time-speed-distance event

**A**s this latest issue of OVR goes to print, my husband Andy and I just got done competing in the 2024 Alcan 5000 Rally in a new INEOS Grenadier Trialmaster 4x4. We took to North American snow- and ice-covered byways to pilot the new SUV over 5,000 miles in just 10 days. We competed in the 40th running of this storied time-speed-distance (TSD) competition that took place February 21 through March 1, 2024.

**HOW DOES THE ALCAN 5000 RALLY RUN?**

This TSD rally is one of the longest-running road rallies in North America. It tosses teams into the elements while they try to achieve perfect times, routes and calculations to hit hundreds of invisible checkpoints perfectly—for 10 grueling days straight. In addition to morning time-speed-distance competitions, we face early-evening TSDs, too. However, they're hundreds of miles away. And then we'd have to find our motel for some shuteye.

The rally has optional "extreme controls" teams must consider completing. These tasks help them get additional awards. Teams battle against Mother Nature, her Arctic elements, and a gauntlet of challenging road conditions, as well as gigantic

wildlife like moose, bison and caribou. Fatigue, lack of sleep, hunger, sickness and other issues can crop up, too.

To some it sounds like a recipe for disaster, but for us and the adventurous sort it's a concoction of brilliance. The Alcan 5000

One of many custom Porsche Cayennes on the 2024 Alcan 5000 Rally, this one belonged to a rookie team.



in Palmer. Or, teams headed straight to Anchorage, the final destination of the 10-day event, and skirted the second-to-last TSD rally in Valdez. It was a complete toss-up.

**WHICH WAY TO WIN?**

As with any adventure-focused excursion, you must be prepared for the unexpected. We set our sights on Valdez and made it to the coastal town after the pass opened. White-out conditions with snow drifts the size of stacked city buses met us as we made our way south. Thick ice greeted us on one side, but as we crested the summit the other side was clearer.

After vying for Valdez, we discovered the last TSD in Palmer, Alaska, was canceled. We made the right choice! We found ourselves leading the 2 SOP Truck and SUV class. We were gunning for gold. Of 36 teams, 17 vehicles were competing in our class. The Valdez TSD would determine the fate of who'd get the 40th-year rally win.

And, after a herky-jerky performance, with a white-out section and slow-moving traffic, Andy and I narrowly held our lead to secure the class win! It was our first major rally victory as a team.



Most competitors must use their jerry cans during the event. We used our canisters three times, with the longest stretch between fuel stops being 304 miles.

Along with our 2024 INEOS Grenadier Trialmaster, we topped the 2 SOP Truck/SUV class and landed in 10th place overall. We led our segment seven of the 10 days and won two stage days (Day 2 and Day 7). We successfully finished all optional extreme control routes, garnering Arctic and Go Farther awards.

**THE INEOS GRENADIER IS GOLD**

"The Grenadier felt solid," Andy said. "The doors closed like bank vaults. There weren't any rattles. The engine had plenty of power and lots of torque. It never left me lacking for power."

Built by burgeoning automaker INEOS Automotive, the 2024 INEOS Grenadier Trialmaster 4x4 was an ideal rally companion. It showcases a body-on-frame ladder chassis, 115-inch wheelbase, and front and



rear recovery points. Also on board was a 2.5:1 Tremec two-speed transfer case and solid axles with 4.10 gearing from Italian manufacturer Carraro. The Grenadier also has a turbocharged BMW B58 3.0-liter inline six-cylinder gasoline engine and 10.4 inches of ground clearance, which came in handy in deep-snow situations.

One of its most overlooked areas of promise is its cargo-carrying opportunities. “The L-track in the rear [cargo area] is brilliant. More companies need to offer that. It’s fantastic for tying down your cargo,” Andy said.

There’s a host of other rated tie-down points, too. It’s just so good for keeping gear tied down and secured. We used D-rings in the rear door jambs to ratchet backpacks down. There were also rated D-rings in the upper parts of the rear cargo area. We didn’t use them, but it had them.

Other than throwing a few error codes when temps reached around 30 degrees below zero that later resolved themselves when it got warmer, we didn’t experience any mechanical failures or catastrophic issues. We just had a few slight curve-balls when learning a new vehicle on the fly—especially from a first-time auto manufacturer in a competition so extreme. The Grenadier had a winning combination: power, capability, good ground clearance

and comfort. It’s a great recipe for over-landing in addition to time-speed-distance rallying.

**OPTIONAL ACCESSORIES & AFTERMARKET PARTS**

We were equipped with aftermarket 265/70 R17 Michelin X-Ice SNOW tires for

Washington residents Shane Bowman and John Williams, with their #17 Jeep Wrangler JL, championed their way to second place in the 2 SOP Truck/SUV class. Not only were they one of our buddy cars, but they’re also good friends of ours.

exceptional winter traction. Armed with Michelin’s EverWinterGrip rubber inclusion technology, we found they had great ice-braking ability and exceptional snow footing, even without studs.

“They far exceeded my expectations,” Andy said. “They were quiet. They were excellent in the snow and ice. They were total champs. They were very responsive and kept us safe and secure.”

We ran factory-optional accessories like a RED winch, rock sliders, rear roof-access ladder, and a Rhino-Rack Pioneer platform rack housing two jerry cans of premium fuel, four Maxtrax recovery boards, and Rhino-Rack folding aerial antenna brackets holding two beefy Rugged Radios antennas. Within minutes we could stow our antennas for transport or secure them upright for use.

Next to tires, carrying quality recovery gear was important. Andy and I brought Factor 55 gear: soft shackles, a kinetic rope and a tow strap. We also had two snatch blocks just in case. We also carried a synthetic winch line extension, heavy-duty gloves and a full-size shovel in case we needed to extract ourselves or someone else. All of this was housed in a Factor 55 bag.

**COMMUNICATION IS CRITICAL**

For communications we used two Rugged





Radios R1 handhelds with XL batteries for longer-use capacity, and we wired them to individual roof-mounted antennas. We chose this portable setup as we have multiple off-roaders at home, so having transportable communications is key versus a hard-mounted dedicated system in each vehicle.

We used three smartphones for technology. One ran the Richta rally app that recorded our scores during TSD competitions. Another managed an overall odometer reading during transit legs plus a separate TSD digital odometer app during TSDs. The third one was used for a backup Richta rally app. It ran the program constantly, helping the officials know where we were by pinging them when we passed through on-course checkpoints during transits and while running during TSDs, too. We also ran a Garmin GPSMAP 66i inReach device for emergency communications and satellite tracking.

Mounting communications and smartphone devices was a challenge. There isn't much

The natural beauty discovered while competing in the Alcan 5000 Rally is magnificent. From jagged peaks and frozen lakes to icy glaciers and slender pine trees, these views will be seared into our memory for years to come.

Our INEOS Grenadier Trialmaster, including factory-optional Rhino-Rack platform rack, LED light bar, rock sliders and rear ladder has an MSRP just shy of \$91,000 (including destination). The jerry cans and mount, Max-trax recovery boards and mount, as well as the Rugged Radios antennas and mounts, are extra.



room on the Grenadier's windscreen or side windows, and we didn't want to utilize that space due to airbag placements. Mounts also have a propensity for falling off of externally placed locations if not properly adhered in this kind of cold. We

tested Gorilla Tough & Clear mounting tape with a few heavy-duty magnetic mounts on the Grenadier's interior ceiling plate where the switches were. After a while the suction cups let loose, but the tape was still secure.



We decided to use the Grenadier's glove-box grab handle for most of our tech. It was warmer here and wasn't near the airbags. Additionally, the center stack cup-holders housed our R1 Rugged Radios. We stashed drinks in the door and water in a CamelBak mounted on Andy's seat.

**PLANNING & EXECUTION**

Rallies of this magnitude take time to plan. Andy and I learn things from fellow competitors every time we compete. We jokingly say the Alcan 5000 Rally is part adventure, part sleep deprivation and hunger. But it's also about preparedness and adaptability.

Andy and I faced Richta rally app problems every day, possibly attributed

to using new phones. Our Grenadier's mileage trip odometer would mysteriously reset itself and we'd lose critical overall odometer readings until we realized it was operator error. Our inverter powering the electronics was lying on top of the infotainment selection button. On pothole-ridden roads, the inverter would bounce atop the button and reset it continually until we caught the problem. (Pushing down meant hitting reset on the odometer reset screen.)

After crossing the Canadian border, the Grenadier kept the speedometer in miles per hour but visually showed speed signs in kilometers per hour. The option to change the vehicle's display units was deleted from a previous software change.

That was quite a challenge when most of the rally takes place in Canada, though the rally is run in mph.

After talking with INEOS corporate, this should be fixed with a future software update. On-the-fly fix: I created a mph-to-km/h cheat sheet so we could reference it at a moment's notice during the competition.

**JUST DO IT**

Put yourself out there. Learn and fail until you start getting it. You never know where life might take you and the things you might see until you push yourself. We're proof of that. Let the outdoors be your TV. Go ahead and challenge yourself. **OVR**

(Top) We were stopped by the pilot car and asked if we could pull off onto the side of the road for this 22-foot semi-truck long-hauler headed up the road. We agreed.

(Far left) There is a lot to keep track of as a navigator. Not only do you have your route book and your navigational supplies, but you have your communication devices, like our Rugged Radios R1 handhelds and smartphones, and a host of other gizmos.

(Far left, middle) For only the second time, I've had my camera internals freeze on me. Both times were shooting ice racing during the Alcan 5000 Rally in -20-degree (or colder) temperatures.