

L'historique

Written by

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The 4L TROPHY™ is already 13 years old!

In the winter of 1996, Jean-Jacques Rey and some Paris-Dakar friends were in Mali to map out some new trails to the Senegalese capital.

As everyone knows, when friends with a common passion get together, they start putting the world to rights and imagining where their passions, in this case for adventure and for Africa, will lead them next.

During a bivouac in the Sahel, over the inevitable evening aperitif around the fire, Jean-Jacques said à propos of nothing: **'I really wish I'd had the opportunity to discover the desert and to experience such an exceptional adventure when I was 20.'** But at the time, none of us could afford a 4WD.

It was more of a dream than something we thought could actually be done. After dinner, the bivouac conversation continued. Some said:

'We could do it with ordinary cars!' And Jean-Jacques cried: 'Yes, why not! We'd need to find an affordable car which would be reliable enough to drive on desert trails.' And that's how the idea was born... Back in France, in his professional capacity as an expert in 4WD and motorbike travel, Jean-Jacques decided to travel to Morocco in a 4L to assess the feasibility of an Adventure Rally in that country.

The route was mapped out and **it worked! The old 4L was up to getting through anything, even the sandpits!** And so the 4L Trophy was born!
Désertours got in touch with students to try and get the message out – easy to say, difficult to do.

At the end of February 1998, 3 candidate teams were ready to go.

Should we go or not ? That was the question. In the end, Jean-Jacques decided that the answer was yes. And so with 4WD assistance, a logistics expert, a mechanic, a doctor and Jean-Jacques himself, off they set.

Staff at Désertours were wondering if the boss might have lost the plot. Today, the results speak for themselves. But it took several years, and the help of students at the ESC Rennes from 2001 onwards, for the adventure to attain its current renown.

For the 4th event in 2001, 50 vehicles took part. By 2005 the number had risen to 460 and by 2008 it had reached its maximum limit of 1,000 vehicles. The 4L TROPHY™ has now truly come of age.

In 2008, there was more media coverage than ever before:

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- Over 1,500 articles in the written press
- 46 TV reports
- Over a hundred mentions on the radio

On top of this, 58 tonnes of school equipment were transported by the 2,000 students participating.

Over the last 12 years, over 15,000 children have been able to attend school thanks to all the materials provided by the students.

From year one, Jean-Jacques stipulated that 50kg of school materials had to be carried by participants, the gifts being weighed before departure. These days, a minimum of two satchels / schoolbags and two sports-bags full of materials are loaded into the 4Ls at departure.

Well done to all those over the last 12 years who have taken part in this great initiative to support the schooling of the disadvantaged children of the desert.

For the 12th event, Jean-Jacques Rey is seeking to introduce new features, both in terms of the route, which may be slightly modified (though the marathon stage will still feature), and in terms of organisation, with the aim in particular of reducing as much as possible the waiting times at the start of stages. 200 organisers in 40 4WDs will be present on the ground, as well as an assistance truck, a utility truck and a helicopter.

Many TV, radio and press journalists will also be invited along to report on the Trophy.

The contribution from partners and sponsors will also be very valuable. As well as helping to attract wide coverage of the event, our partners will help us to keep down the burgeoning organisational costs and enable us to maintain our tariffs at their current level, which are those of 2007. Those who are familiar with the costs of Adventure Rallies in Africa will know that the going market rate in France for such rallies is between 5,000€ and 23,000€ per team; This is obviously way beyond the pocket of students (see the article in Le Figaro, available on the home page). The organisers would like to extend a warm welcome to all the participants in this 12th event, which we will do our very best to make to quite exceptional.

Enjoy your adventure!