

## ROTORUA'S TURN TO HOST FIRST TARGA RALLY EVENT OF 2017

It's Rotorua's turn to host the first Targa tarmac rally of the year with over 80 entrants descending on the city this weekend for the two-day Targa Rotorua event.

Targa Rotorua 2017 is the first of three multi-day Targa events to be run this year. A new two-day Targa Hawke's Bay is being run in May (over the 20-21 weekend) and the annual multi-day Targa New Zealand is running between October 23 and 29.



Originally held over Queen's Birthday weekend the Rotorua event has traditionally been the second of three Targa events after one or two-day season-opening events in the Franklin district south of Auckland.

Two years ago the event was combined with the Bambina one out of Auckland to make a three-day Targa Northland in May. Last year it reverted to the two-day Rotorua format and the only change from that, this year, says event director Peter Martin of the Ultimate Rally Group, is the date.

"Our competitors consistently tell us they love the roads and the people in the 'Bay, but in May and June the daylight hours limit the amount of stages we can do.

'By bringing the event forward the days are longer and - touch wood - the weather is better."

The change has certainly been welcomed by competitors, with 56 cars entered in the main event and a further 27 signing on for the allied but non-competitive Targa Tour.

As in previous years the event starts and finishes at the Novotel Hotel in Rotorua with seven closed special stages in the Waikato on Saturday and five in and around Rotorua and the greater Bay of Plenty on Sunday. Total closed special stage length is 295 kms, total touring distance in-between 423kms

The best place to see the cars is at the Novotel Hotel on Tutanekai Street on Saturday morning (start time is 8.00am each day) and at parc ferme (where the cars are serviced then parked overnight) on the Village Green on Saturday evening from 5.30pm or back at the Novotel for the ceremonial finish at 3.30pm on Sunday afternoon.

Set to defend his 2016 Targa Rotorua win is Auckland Targa veteran Leigh Hooper and co-driver Michael Goudie in a Subaru WRX Impreza. Last year's win was Hopper's fourth in the Rotorua event, the Orewa man leading home five-time Targa New Zealand event winner Tony Quinn and co-drive Naomi Tillet in circuit-owning entrepreneur Quinn's Nissan GT-R.

This year Quinn and Tillet are back in a new car, a Porsche GT3 RS, a type of car which has already shown impressive form in the hands of Dunedin driver Martin Dippie and his co-driver Jona Grant who last year finished fourth overall and are entered again this weekend in Dippie's similar machine.

The Metalman Classic 2WD class is also popular with entrants and fans alike. This year pairings to look out for include Mark and father Chris Kirk-Burnnand from Wellington in a BMW M3, Bevan Claridge and Campbell Tannock from the Horowhenua in a Holden Commodore V8 and Rex McDonald and Mark Dixon from Auckland in a BMW 325i.

All the way from Japan, meanwhile, is a three-car team made up of students and staff from the University of Tokyo and the Honda Technical Institute Kanto. The group build and run rally cars as part of their course and number amongst their driver line-up legendary Japanese WRC and Dakar Rally veteran Kenjiro Shinozuka.

Local interest will be in the return to Targa competition of Whakatane's Maurice Shapley in a Holden Monaro. Another Whakatane couple, CRC Speedshow organisers Ross and Brenda Prevette, are making their Targa debut in a MINI Cooper S in the Targa Tour.

Targa New Zealand events are organised by the Ultimate Rally Group with the support of sponsors AndrewSimms.co.nz, Chicane Racewear, Ecolight, Global Security, Kids In Cars, Metalman.co.nz, NZ Classic Car magazine, Race Brakes, Racetech, TeamTalk, TrackIt and VTNZ.

For more information go to [www.targa.co.nz](http://www.targa.co.nz).

### CAPTIONS

Winning Targa Rotorua for the fourth time in 2016 was Leigh Hopper and co-driver Michael Goudie (Mitsubishi Evo 3 # 969). Winners first time out, meanwhile, in Global Security 2WD Modern class were Martin Dippie and Jona Grant in Dippie's new Porsche GT3 RS (#640). Popular winners of the Metalman Classic 2WD class were Andy Mygind and Anthony Baker in their Datsun 240Z (#203). Also entered in this year's event is veteran Japanese rally driver Kenjiro Shinozuka in a student built-and-run Honda Civic (#009) from Japan. Photo credit: Fast Company/ ProShotz.

Prepared by FAST COMPANY on behalf of Targa NZ. To find out more about the various Targa events go to the Targa NZ website at [www.targa.co.nz](http://www.targa.co.nz). To talk to Targa Event Director Peter Martin tel 0-9-298 8322 or 0274 525 643. To get in touch with event media man Ross MacKay from Fast Company tel 021 677 919 or e-mail on [ross@fastcompany.co.nz](mailto:ross@fastcompany.co.nz)