



## 2018 Tour de Bintan: what to expect?

### For immediate release

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The Tour de Bintan returns to the eponymous Indonesian island for its eighth edition from March 23-25, 2018, and for the second year in a row, Asia's premier amateur stage race will also double as a qualifier for the UCI Gran Fondo World Championships (GFWC).

Just an hour's ferry ride from Singapore and with well-surfaced and mostly quiet roads, beautiful Bintan makes for an ideal setting for a stage race, and it's no wonder roadies flock to the Tour de Bintan every year from all over Asia and beyond.

There are two routes to qualifying for those 2018 world champs in Varese, Italy – the opening 17km Individual Time Trial on the Friday afternoon of the three-day festival of cycling and the epic 144km Gran Fondo Classic mass start road race on the Saturday morning.

Situated in the beautiful and hilly Lombardy region of Italy, one of the centres of Italian cycling culture and home to legions of knowledgeable *tifosi*, Varese is a fitting destination to host the world amateur championships. And it has world champs history, having hosted the 2008 UCI World Road Championships.

To get to Varese, the Tour de Bintan racers need to finish in the top 25 percent in their respective age groups in the ITT and/or Gran Fondo Classic. The age groups in all the Gran Fondo World Series (GFWS) events (the Tour de Bintan is one of 20 qualifiers spread around the world) are categorised in five-year bands, except for the youngest category, which is for 19-34 year olds.

Both the ITT and the Gran Fondo Classic can be entered as stand-alone events, but together with Sunday morning's 111km Gran Fondo Century, they combine to create the full and traditional Tour de Bintan 3-day competitive experience.

For those not enthralled by the art of time trialling, a two-stage competitive package featuring just the Gran Fondo Classic and Gran Fondo Century is offered, but those riders taking up that option will not be eligible for the Tour de Bintan general classification.

Adding extra spice to the battle for general classification honours in 2018 is the introduction of bonus seconds for intermediate sprints; both the Gran Fondo Classic and Gran Fondo Century will have two intermediate sprint primes each.



A big element of the Tour de Bintan has always been the team classification. The contests for best male and female club/team will return again in 2018, but with an adjusted points system. Points are given to every finisher across all the age groups each day, with bonus points awarded on a ranking scale for the first five finishers on each stage. The tweaked system should make for a more dynamic team competition.

Staying on the subject of clubs and teams, for those with at least 15 cyclists registered for the Tour de Bintan, event organisers MetaSport will provide a complimentary club marquee.

The team tents make their first appearance at Friday's ITT, which for the third year starts and finishes at the Plaza Lagoi commercial development at the heart of the Bintan Resorts zone.

The next morning it's the "queen stage", the Gran Fondo Classic. This journey around the northern and eastern parts of Bintan will have its traditional start and finish in front of a big crowd at the small town of Simpang Lagoi. But the 144km round-trip also draws enthusiastic crowds at each of the towns and villages it passes through, including bustling Kijang, one of the bigger cities on the island.

The headquarters of the Tour de Bintan, though, has always been the Nirwana Gardens Resort, and Sunday's Gran Fondo Century will once again start and finish at the lush resort. Following on from the resounding success of last year, the Tour de Bintan post-race celebrations and final prize-giving ceremony will happen beachside at the Nirwana Sea Sports Centre.

After a one-year absence, the official tour dinner also returns to Nirwana Gardens on the Saturday night, where a sumptuous buffet spread will feed the hungry racers.

Nirwana Gardens is of course one of the Tour de Bintan's official hotels, and an early bird rate offering a S\$50 saving a night is currently available.

While the Tour de Bintan is by its nature primarily a competitive affair, the event also opens the smooth roads of beautiful Bintan to those riders who'd like a challenge but away from the hustle and bustle of racing; enter the Gran Fondo Challenge and the Gran Fondo Discovery.

The former takes place on the Saturday morning and at 82km is a modified version of the Gran Fondo Classic, while the Gran Fondo Discovery on the Sunday morning is aimed at newer cyclists and is just 55km in length. These two events can be entered individually or as part of a two-day Non-Competitive Ride Package. MetaSport offers day-trip packages from Singapore for both of these rides.

To register for the Tour de Bintan and for further details on all the information provided above, go to [www.tourdebintan.com](http://www.tourdebintan.com).