



## **THE 2024 HERO ABU DHABI HUDAYRIYAT ISLAND: MOUNTAIN BIKING FROM THE DOLOMITES TO THE DESERT**

*The HERO, the toughest mountain bike marathon in the world, rings in the new year by raising the bar – and the temperatures – and pedals off to the Arab Emirates' desert between 9 and 11 February 2024. The first edition of the HERO Abu Dhabi will take place on Hudayriyat Island and represents a milestone, as its inaugural event will include XCO-Cross Country Olympic and XCC-Short Track events which are qualifying races for the 2024 Paris Olympic Games.*

**Hashtag: #heroabudhabihudayriyatiland #abudhabi #hudayriyatiland #hero #heroseries**

*Known as the toughest mountain bike marathon in the world, ever since its first edition in 2010 the HERO Südtirol Dolomites has grown from strength to strength and become one of the most beloved and appreciated races out there. It is much more than a race – it embodies the quintessence of mountain biking, turning the word HERO into a byword for passion, dedication, and breathtaking nature.*

*The race's fame has spread outside the borders of South Tyrol so much so that the Organising Committee has some big news for the new year: get ready to soar from the peaks of the Alps to the balmy, vast, sandy deserts.*



Photocredit HERO Abu Dhabi Hudayriyat / @actionmediaproductionimg

The first ever edition of the **HERO Abu Dhabi Hudayriyat Island** will take place between **9 and 11 February 2024**. A unique location for an event which will go down in history: Abu Dhabi and the Trail X tracks on Hudayriyat Island will turn into a high-octane stage for the Cross Country Olympic and Cross Country Short Track races, just two events in a jam-packed agenda.

Gerhard Vanzi, **CEO of HERO Series**: *"A new HERO race – what an honour to share this piece of news with everyone and to contribute our experience to this event, especially considering how sports and sustainability are ever-growing pillars in this country. We are true believers and are sure that with the support of our main partner, **Modon Properties**, this event will be a runaway success!"*

This is the only UCI mountain bike race in the Middle East – it's hardly surprising then that countless important elite athletes have already shown interest in it. Indeed, the HERO Abu Dhabi Hudayriyat Island also includes XCO Class 1 races which are qualifying events for the 2024 Paris Olympic Games.

**Aref Hamad Al Awani**, Secretary General of the **Abu Dhabi Sports Council**, highlights how important it is for the city to host such a global event, the first of its kind in the region. An event which will debut on Hudayriyat Island, the ideal destination for sports and entertainment. *"Abu Dhabi Sports Council supports the event's organisation in terms of logistics and hospitality. The race will see international elite cyclists competing, and we believe in this race due to the impact it can have on a healthy lifestyle, especially considering the cycling boom we're seeing in Abu Dhabi and across the entire UAE."*

Modon Properties developed the properties on Hudayriyat Island. It created lively communities, high-quality hospitality and living infrastructures fitted with outstanding sport facilities and had a fundamental role to play when positioning Abu Dhabi as a solid sports tourism destination.

The first edition of the HERO Abu Dhabi Hudayriyat Island will run between 9 and 11 February 2024. The weekend will feature two high-level XCO-Cross Country Olympic and XCC-Short Track events. The HERO Abu Dhabi Hudayriyat Island is the only UCI mountain bike race in the Middle East, boasting the participation of the crème de la crème of cyclists from around the world.

### THE STARTING LIST

The starting list features renowned athletes representing 20 countries across 5 continents. Out of the 60 athletes, a good 15 are national champions or even the current Australian and African champion. The race is certain to attract big crowds thanks to the Paris 2024 qualifying XCO Class 1 races.



Peter Sagan - Photocredit Specialized Factory Racing

**Peter Sagan**, three-time Road Cycling champion, will also be among the athletes at the starting line. He's never been shy about declaring his interest in winning an Olympic medal in the discipline which granted him his elite status. His race to the top will start at the HERO Abu Dhabi Hudayriyat Island, by competing in the qualifying Cross Country XCO race.

He says that *"this will be my first year as a professional mountain biker. I'm intrigued to see how things will pan out. I won't predict anything, but I feel optimistic: I'm motivated, I want to have fun and give it*

*my all. It's supposed to be an incredibly technical race, so I'll arrive a few days before the race to train on the tracks."*

Other big names are **Luca Braidot**, the current Italian champion and winner of last year's World bronze, and **Gustav Pedersen**, Danish XCO champion.



Luca Braidot

© Alessio Pederiva - SCRS



Martina Berta

© Grubers - SCRS



Sofie Pedersen

© Ross Bell

Another great line up for the Women category: the reigning Italian XCO champion **Martina Berta**, who already won the World title in 2023. She's joined by **Sofie Pedersen** from Denmark, the current European U23 XCO Champion, and **Ingrid Jacobsen**, seven-time Norwegian XCO Champion.

## AN EXCLUSIVE LOCATION

Hudayriyat Island is Abu Dhabi's main sports and entertainment destination, and the HERO Abu Dhabi Hudayriyat Island will take place in this exclusive location. This island is a marriage of tradition and untouched nature. The island boasts cutting-edge infrastructures such as the Trail X centre, boasting off road tracks and a gamut of services for athletes. The island has promoted sports and sustainability, a commitment which contributed to its recognition as an UCI Bike City. Moreover, it will host the 2028 Road World Championships. All in all, these aspects bolster Abu Dhabi's profile as a top sports hub, with a special focus on cycling, across the entire Arab Peninsula.



*Photocredit HERO Abu Dhabi Hudayriyat / @actionmediaproductionimg*

## THE TRAILS

Hudayriyat Island boasts numerous races and trails for various cycling levels. The XCO circuit is a demanding route and boasts 5.4 km and 70 hm; the XCC Short Tracks was designed for high-speed performance, and covers 1.2 km and 10 hm.

## THE EVENT

The event features a jam-packed programme for professional cyclists, amateurs, and bike enthusiasts who share a common passion for mountain biking, all set against the exclusive backdrop of Hudayriyat Island, competing on the very same race trails as potential future Olympic medallists.

The races will kick off on Friday, 9 February 2024: the first event will be the XCC Short Tacks for élite athletes, followed on Saturday, 10 February by the Amateur Race and KIDS Race, respectively for cycling enthusiasts and younger mountain bikers. The event will finish with the Olympic Cross Country for U23 and élite athletes on Sunday, 11 February.

## SPORTS AND SUSTAINABILITY

What makes the HERO so unique is the fact that the races all take place against the backdrop of stunning natural sceneries. Moreover, the HERO's Organising Committee is committed to protecting the environment, underscored by signing up to the United Nation's 2022 Sports for Climate Action initiative. The HERO Abu Dhabi Hudayriyat Island boosts this commitment to sustainability thanks to the implementation of initiatives which slash CO2 emissions and promote zero net carbon behaviours: the event celebrates sports excellence as well as contributing towards the global fight against climate change.

## Organising Committee

**HERO ABU DHABI Hudayriyat Island**

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