



WATCHING BRIEF The crowds wait



ON THE EDGE A racer scoots down Aonach Mor with Loch Linnhe behind

Over one weekend, Scotland will play host to 300 of the world's outstanding mountain bikers from some 30 countries.

The star riders will be battling it out for podium places at the notoriously tough Fort William UCI Mountain Bike World Cup 2014.

This exciting and action-packed annual event will also welcome 20,000 spectators, all keen to see the best of the competition.

Our guide reveals 35 facts, figures, top tips and a wealth of advice for World Cup spectators.

What's the cup all about?

1) Fort William is the third round on the prestigious eight-stage 2014 World Cup Downhill and takes place at Nevis Range Mountain, close to the town, on June 7 and 8.

2) The first Downhill World Cup in Fort William took place in 2002.

3) In 2007, Fort William hosted the UCI

Hot spots on the downhill course are the thrilling jumps

Mountain Bike and Trials World Championships, the pinnacle of the mountain biking calendar. **4)** The World Cup includes the gravity disciplines of downhill (DHI) and four-cross (4X), two trials competitions and a youth mini DH series.

5) The public can test their skills on the World Cup courses until September 14, excluding June 2 to 9.

6) The World Cup event features what is claimed to be the world's biggest outdoor screen for catching all the riding action.

It's all downhill from here

7) The star attraction will be the downhill competition. The course plummets 550 metres over 2.8km on the face of Aonach Mor, the ninth highest mountain in the UK. It is described as a "full-on, flat-out, no-compromise charge".

8) The course record is an incredible four minutes 43 seconds.

9) Look out for – and cheer on – Scottish riders Ruaridh Cunningham, Ben Cathro and Greg Williamson.

10) Other star names in the men's



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downhill include the UK's Gee Atherton, Josh Bryceland and Steve Peat, American Aaron Gwin and Samuel Hill, of Australia.

11) Top females are likely to be Gee's sister Rachel Atherton and French riders Manon Carpenter, Myriam Nicole and Emmeline Ragot.

12) Hot spots for spectators on the downhill course are the thrilling jumps, including the Wall, Big Doon, Road Gap and Motorway.

13) For amazing views of Loch Linnhe and downhill riding action, head to the Bog feature, high up the course.

14) The Water Jump took one rider by surprise last year when he fell in. What will happen this year?

15) The Scotland Arc is the gateway to the finish and the place to see some of the biggest and best tail whips.

Cross over to the other side

16) Don't miss the equally exciting 4X Pro Tour Rider eliminator competitions. This event is similar to the ski and snowboard cross, which gained a huge following at the 2014 Winter Olympics.

17) 4X is described as a "head-to-head, gladiatorial-style race". Four riders start together and race down a custom-built course of berms (narrow

ledges), jumps and step-ups and the two fastest riders go through to the next round.

18) Don't miss Saturday 4.45pm for the 4X Pro Tour Rider Intro top four women, top four men competition and 6.30pm for the 4X Pro Tour Finals and awards.

19) The big names in 4X are Britain's Katy Curd, Czech riders Tomas Slavik and Michal Prokop and Celine Gros from France.

Top of the trials

20) Both the British and Scottish trials cup riders will show off their amazing skills in, over and around some of the most ridiculous obstacles.

21) You can catch the trials action on Saturday and Sunday in the World Cup village itself.

Young stars in action

22) The Scottish Power Youth Mini DH series is where the up-and-coming stars of tomorrow will compete.

23) Watch out for local rider Lachlan Blair as he competes for a top position.

What else is there to see and do?

24) Take the six-person Gondola 525m up on to Aonach Mor. Perhaps you'll ride in a cabin with one of the star mountain bikers.

With the world's best mountain bikers and 20,000 spectators due in Fort William next weekend for the latest World Cup stage, here is your ultimate event guide.

