



The Tour de France 2017

ITV will bring viewers extensive live coverage of the 104th Tour de France, which begins on Saturday July 1 in Düsseldorf, Germany.

This year marks the first time ITV4 has shown live daily coverage of every stage from start to finish, with a total of 110 hours of live cycling to be shown during the event, plus 23 hours of highlights.

Presenter Gary Imlach is joined by cycling legend Chris Boardman, commentators Ned Boulting and David Millar and reporter Daniel Friebe for the 21-stage race, which visits Belgium and Luxembourg before heading to all five of France's mountainous regions - the Vosges, the Jura, the Massif Central, the Pyrenees and the Alps - and ending at its traditional home, the Champs-Élysées in Paris, on Sunday July 23.

The coverage is part of ITV's deal to show cycling's showpiece event until 2019, and marks the eighth time the channel has screened live coverage and highlights of the Tour. Alongside terrestrial TV coverage, you can watch the action live on ITV Hub and ITV.com/tourdefrance will feature highlights as well as exclusive features. The @ITVCycling Twitter feed will keep fans up-to-date with the latest clips and news.

This year's Tour covers 3,540 kilometres, with the highest climb up to the 2,645m Col du Galibier in the Alps, before finishing in Paris.

The 2016 winner Chris Froome goes into the event as favourite to win his fourth title, despite a difficult start to the year, while there are question marks over the participation of sprint specialist Mark Cavendish after suffering glandular fever earlier in the year.

INTERVIEWS

CHRIS BOARDMAN

Who do you think will win this year's Tour, why and how?

Chris Froome but with more 'close-call days' than in recent editions. He's had a lower key build up to the event this year, barely racing until the Dauphine, where he performed well but not at his usually high standard.

Quintana, Fuglesang, Dumoulin are amongst those capable of challenging the Brit for overall victory but only Dumoulin and Quintana have shown they can be consistent enough to be called true, Tour contenders.

Sadly, for those wanting to see a ding-dong multi-way fight, after the Giro, those two will only tire as the race winds its way through July. Froome on the other hand, with his steady start, is likely to improve as the race goes on.

What do you think will be the key stage in this year's Tour?

Stage 12, from Pau to the summit finish of Peyragudes. With 6 Climbs and a double-kick finish (so a little descent with 5.5km to go) anyone attacking on the penultimate ascent over the Col de Peyresourde will be hard to pull back, particularly if it's wet. It'll be a tough stage to control.

Chris Froome has had a bumpy lead-up this year's Tour - do you think he can win a fourth title? Where do you think that would place him in the history books?

Yes, he can win (he's the favourite). If he did take his tally to four, he'd still be behind Anquetil, Merckx, Hinault and Indurain in the honours list but it's still a very exclusive club.

How do you think the rest of the British contenders will do this year?

Both the Yates brothers, and Swift have looked great already this year, as have Thomas and Kennaugh (but being in the service of Froome, those two won't get the opportunity to shine at this year's Tour).

The UK now has some serious strength in depth across all types of terrain, so expect to see GB riders contesting daily wins, especially in the medium mountain stages. And if Cummings and Cavendish can come back from early season injury and illness in time, law of averages says stage wins are the very least we can expect.

Is there anything you're particularly looking forward to while following Le Tour this time?

Beer in Dusseldorf!

GARY IMLACH

Who do you think will win this year's Tour, why and how?

I'm really not sure, which I'm taking as a good sign for the race. Cold calculation would say Chris Froome, using the strength of his Sky team to suffocate any possible challengers. But with Froome having a slightly below-par season so far, Richie Porte looking strong, and a route that's been designed to encourage unpredictable racing, that's what I'm hoping we're going to get.

What do you think will be the key stage in this year's Tour?

The key early indicator could well be Stage 5 to La Planche des Belles Filles. That's partly because it's the first summit finish, but also because both previous stages here, in 2012 and 2014, saw the eventual race winner take the yellow jersey for good.

But the hardest and possibly most explosive day will be Stage 9. There are seven super-category climbs in this year's Tour and this stage has three of them. From the top of the last, the Mont du Chat, there's a terrifying descent towards the finish line.

Chris Froome has had a bumpy lead-up to this year's Tour - do you think he can win a fourth title? Where do you think that would place him in the history books?

He's definitely capable of it, even slightly below his best. The pedant's answer as to where it would place him in Tour history is one victory short of membership of the five-time winner's club, which is what he's ultimately aiming for. And of course all Tour history is subject to revision.

How do you think the rest of the British contenders will do this year?

The greatest uncertainty surrounds the condition of Mark Cavendish after his long lay-off recovering from the debilitating effects of Epstein-Barr virus. He's four short of the all-time record for Tour de France stage wins and - at his best - this year's route offers him the chance to equal it.

Is there anything you're particularly looking forward to while following Le Tour this time?

Stage 15 revisits one of my best memories of my early years on the Tour as a reporter: a feature I did on the town of Le Puy en Velay and its spectacular volcanic outcrops. There's a cathedral at the top of one; on

another a giant, hollow iron statue of the Virgin Mary made of melted down cannon from the Crimean War. Pilgrims on their way to Santiago de Compostela stop to climb the spiral staircase inside. I remember feeling vaguely disrespectful as I delivered a piece to camera halfway up, with my head sticking out of a small hinged opening on her hip.

NED BOULTING

Who do you think will win this year's Tour, why and how?

I have a feeling that this will finally be the year for Quintana, who appeared to be riding the Giro as if he was still on an upward trajectory aimed at July. The slightly diminished number of time trial kilometres is very much to his favour.

What do you think will be the key stage in this year's Tour?

My expectation, and my hope, is that it will all come down to stage twenty, the final time trial in Marseille.

Chris Froome has had a bumpy lead-up this year's Tour - do you think he can win a fourth title? Where do you think that would place him in the history books?

History books in cycling are fraught with danger. We will only be able to answer that question in thirty or forty years time. Suffice to say, though, that his name will never be forgotten. His three wins are a stunning achievement. Will he make it four? There's every chance, but if he does, then it will perhaps be his finest.

How do you think the rest of the British contenders will do this year?

I still feel that Simon Yates is a few years away from a win, and I wonder what role Geraint Thomas will be assigned. Realistically, I don't expect either of them to make the podium this time. But I hate predictions, and normally get them wrong.

Is there anything you're particularly looking forward to while following Le Tour this time?

There's always a stage with wind, we just don't know where or when. But wind invariably makes racing exciting and unpredictable.

**TOUR DE FRANCE 2017
LIVE AND HIGHLIGHTS SCHEDULE**

Date	Stage	LIVE PROGRAMME BST	HIGHLIGHTS BST
Saturday 1 July	Stage 1	1400-1800	1900-2000
Sunday 2 July	Stage 2	1100-1645	1900-2000
Monday 3 July	Stage 3	1100-1645	1900-2000
Tuesday 4 July	Stage 4	1100-1630	1900-2000
Wednesday 5 July	Stage 5	1200-1645	1900-2000
Thursday 6 July	Stage 6	1100-1700	1900-2000
Friday 7 July	Stage 7	1100-1700	1900-2000
Saturday 8 July	Stage 8	1100-1630	1900-2000
Sunday 9 July	Stage 9	1030-1630	1900-2000
Monday 10 July	REST DAY		1900-2000
Tuesday 11 July	Stage 10	1200-1700	1900-2000
Wednesday 12 July	Stage 11	1200-1715	1900-2000
Thursday 13 July	Stage 12	0945-1630	1900-2000
Friday 14 July	Stage 13	1330-1700	1900-2000
Saturday 15 July	Stage 14	1200-1700	1900-2000
Sunday 16 July	Stage 15	1200-1730	1900-2000
Monday 17 July	REST DAY		1900-2000
Tuesday 18 July	Stage 16	1230-1645	1900-2000
Wednesday 19 July	Stage 17	1100-1700	1900-2000
Thursday 20 July	Stage 18	1130-1700	1900-2000
Friday 21 July	Stage 19	1100-1700	1900-2000
Saturday 22 July	Stage 20	1230-1700	1900-2000
Sunday 23 July	Stage 21	1530-1900	2100-2200