

Bajaj Pune Grand Tour 2026: Indian Riders Gear Up for Olympic Pathway Challenge

Pune, 16 January, 2026: With just 72 hours to go to the start of India's inaugural UCI 2.2 Continental Cycling Road Race- Bajaj Pune Grand Tour 2026, the Indian riders are ready to embrace the experience, learnings, and take up the challenge that brings them to the brink of breaking into the international circuit. India's largest contingent of 12 riders will participate, as Pune is ready to host country's first-ever UCI-recognised road race.

Members of the Indian contingent, comprising of two teams of 6 riders each – the Indian National Team and Indian Development Team –spoke openly about their preparation, expectations, and the pride of representing India at Bajaj Pune Grand Tour, during a media interaction held in the city on Thursday. The event was attended by Maninder Pal Singh, Secretary General, Cycling Federation of India (CFI), along with Maxat Ayazabayev, Chief Coach, Indian National Team and Joginder Singh, Coach, Indian National Team. Riders present included Harshveer Singh Sekhon, Vishvajeet Singh, and Surya Thathu from the Indian National Team, and Akshar Tyagi and Manav Sarada from the Indian Development Team.

The five-day race, scheduled from January 19 to 23, 2026, carries added weight for the peloton. For the Indian riders, the opportunity presents for preparation for Olympic goals, as it allows crucial points accumulation for the qualification to the Olympic Games in 2028.

Speaking at the event, **Maninder Pal Singh, Secretary General, Cycling Federation of India**, *"The Bajaj Pune Grand Tour is a defining moment for Indian cycling. Securing a UCI 2.2 multi-stage race was not easy, and it reflects years of consistent work by the Cycling Federation of India to build credibility at the international level. This event opens a direct pathway for our riders toward Olympic qualification and changes how cycling is viewed by governments, sponsors, and stakeholders across the country. Hosting a race of this scale in India gives our athletes the opportunity to compete, learn, and progress without having to leave home."*

Maxat Ayazabayev, Chief Coach, Indian National Team said *"Hosting a race of this level in India is extremely important for our national team. The Pune Grand Tour gives our riders valuable race experience at an international standard on home roads. The routes, organisation, and overall preparation have been impressive, and we are hopeful of delivering strong results."*

Speaking on the magnitude of the event, **Joginder Singh, Coach, Indian National Team** said *"The Bajaj Pune Grand Tour is historic for Indian cycling. It gives our riders a rare chance to compete at home instead of travelling abroad for every major race. Road racing is unpredictable, and strategies evolve before and during and after the race. With a strong mix of young riders and experienced professionals, this UCI 2.2 event can be a real turning point for the growth of professional road cycling in India."*

Harshveer Sekhon added, *"I don't see racing at home as pressure; I see it as motivation. Competing on home roads, in front of our own people, gives me energy. This is my first*

experience of a stage race of this scale in India, and I feel honoured to be part of the Pune Grand Tour. Our preparation has been strong, and we're looking forward to performing well."

Appreciating the opportunity to participate in the Bajaj Pune Grand Tour, **Surya Thathu** said *"This is a huge moment for Indian cycling. Races like the Pune Grand Tour were something we once only watched on television, and to compete in a multi-stage race of this scale in India; especially in my home state of Maharashtra; is incredibly special. Racing in Europe is challenging, from travel and food to registrations. Having everything in India is a big boost. More races like this will give young riders real opportunities, just as regular racing does in countries like Belgium. With strong support from CFI, Bajaj and the Maharashtra Government, we're motivated to deliver strong performances."*

Speaking on the setup in Pune, **Vishwajeet Singh** said *"When we arrived in Pune and inspected the routes, the quality of the roads and overall organisation really stood out. The level of support provided to the teams; vehicles, logistics, and infrastructure - is comparable to what we see in major international tours. Experiencing that in India is special, and it motivates us to give our best."*

Speaking on the teams' preparations, **Manav Sarada** said *"Having both the Indian National Team and the Indian Development Team at this race is a big opportunity for younger riders like us. Training alongside senior riders and competing in a UCI stage race at home will help us improve significantly. We have prepared well and are fully ready for this challenge."*

Akshar Tyagi added *"The training camp with the senior riders helped us correct small but important aspects of our racing. That experience has given us confidence that we can first compete with our seniors and then test ourselves against international riders. The level of support we're receiving here is similar to what we see in major international races, and that belief makes a big difference."*

The Bajaj Pune Grand Tour 2026 will see Indian riders' line up alongside international teams in a demanding multi-stage format, testing endurance, strategy, and teamwork. As the road to Los Angeles begins to take shape, the Pune Grand Tour stands as a rare and meaningful opportunity - one that combines global competition with homegrown pride.

Information About Bajaj Pune Grand Tour 2026

Bajaj Pune Grand Tour 2026 is India's first-ever UCI 2.2 category multi-stage, five-day Continental Cycling Race for Men, marks a watershed moment for the India's presence in the global professional circuit. A gruelling 437-km route passes through the diverse terrains of Deccan Plateau and Sahyadri Ranges, the event has received an unprecedented field of 171 elite riders from 29 teams representing five continents and 35 countries. Organised by Pune District Administration, Government of Maharashtra under the aegis of Cycling Federation of India, the race combines high-performance sporting excellence, celebrating Pune's cultural heritage, historic landmarks and rural tourism through 9 talukas and 150 villages.

World-Class Infrastructure & Global Ambition

Central to the Bajaj Pune Grand Tour's success is a massive infrastructure overhaul, highlighted by the rapid road construction, upgrades with safety protocols in just 75 days.



This project is part of a broader district-wide initiative in upgrading the road infrastructure to meet stringent UCI guidelines, ensuring top-tier safety and ride quality. By delivering this world-class arena, Bajaj Pune Grand Tour not only reclaims Pune's legacy as India's "Cycle Capital" but also establishes a permanent blueprint for sustainable urban-rural development and positions India as a premier destination for international sports tourism and elite competitive cycling.

Race Stages

- 19 Jan 2026: PROLOGUE (7.5 KM) – GOODLUCK CHOWK: Team's pole position
- 20 Jan 2026: STAGE 1: MULSI-MAVAL MILES (87.2 KM, Elevation 828 M): Weaving through Pune's IT hub Hinjewadi, this opening stage combines flat sprints with sharp urban turns, focusing on landmarks and scenery, blending tech with nature.
- 21 Jan 2026: STAGE 2: MARATHA HERITAGE CIRCUIT (105.3 KM, Elevation 1051 M): Cyclists will ascend the challenging ghats, facing steep gradients of the Purandar Fort, Sinhagad and Khadakwasla Lake, making the Day-2 a true test of endurance.
- 22 Jan 2026: STAGE 3: WESTERN GHATS GATEWAY (134 KM, Elevation 1024 M): Stretching across the Deccan plateau from Purandar to Baramati, Day-3 favours speed and tactical prowess, with crosswinds and rolling terrain to keep competitors on edge.
- 23 Jan 2026: STAGE 4: PUNE PRIDE LOOP (95 KM, Elevation 578 M): The final phase winds through the urban sprawls of Pune, passing through modernity and historic relevance like Shaniwar Wada, featuring technical sections and a dramatic finish.

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