



Tadej Pogacar On The Brink Of History: Tour de France 2026 Champion Heads To Paris For Record-Equalling Fifth Crown

Description

Barring a catastrophic collapse over the final 89 kilometres of the 2026 Tour de France, **Tadej Pogacar** is on the brink of cycling immortality. The Slovenian superstar enters today's Stage 21 from Thoiry to Paris with a lead of **6 minutes and 26 seconds** over **Remco Evenepoel** – a margin that makes his fifth Tour de France title a near-certainty, and would see him join the most exclusive club in professional sport.

A fifth yellow jersey would place Pogacar alongside **Jacques Anquetil**, **Eddy Merckx**, **Bernard Hinault**, and **Miguel Indurain** – the only men to have won the Tour five or more times. He does so at just 27 years of age, with years of racing still ahead of him.

A Dominant Campaign From Stage One

Pogacar's 2026 Tour has been a masterclass in controlled aggression. He took his first stage win on **Stage 3**, pulled on the yellow jersey and never relinquished it. By Stage 19, he had added victories on Stages **6, 10, 14**, and **19** – five stage wins in three weeks, each a display of attacking instinct and physical superiority over his rivals.



UAE Team Emirates head into the 2026 Tour de France with Tadej Poga ar as the defending champion.    UAE Team Emirates

The defining moment of this edition came on **Stage 19** at **Alpe d  Huez**. Poga ar faced a three-minute deficit to the breakaway as the peloton reached the foot of cycling  s most mythical climb. He attacked from the group of favourites with 12 kilometres still to go, hunted down rider after rider, and crossed the line alone in a **record-breaking time of 35 minutes and 26 seconds**    the fastest ascent in the history of the sport. It was a performance that will be told and retold for generations.

  It is very cool to win up here, and it was a crazy atmosphere the whole climb. It was thanks to all the team that I could pull it off in the end. I was riding for the teammates today.   Tadej Poga ar, post-Stage 19

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Tadej Pogacar receives the Yellow Jersey on the stage 19 podium at Alpe d'Huez. © UAE Team Emirates

Evenepoel's Valiant Challenge

Remco Evenepoel has been the closest challenger throughout, winning Stages 15 and 16 including a brilliant individual time trial where the Belgian showed why he remains the world's finest against the clock. His final deficit of more than six minutes is a fair reflection of the contest: Pogacar operated on a different plane whenever the road went uphill.

Completing the provisional podium in third is **Isaac del Toro**, Poga’s 21-year-old Mexican teammate. Del Toro’s composure and climbing ability across three weeks have been one of the Tour’s great revelations. He also secures the **White Jersey** as the best young rider – a remarkable achievement at his first Grand Tour.

Stage 21: The Champs-Élysées Finale

Today’s Stage 21 runs **89 kilometres** from **Thoiry** into the heart of Paris, finishing on the iconic **Champs-Élysées** after multiple laps of the city circuit. The route includes the cobbled ascent of the **Côte de la Butte Montmartre**, which promises to animate the finale even as the overall classification has long been decided.

By tradition, the Yellow Jersey is not contested on the final stage, and with Poga’s dominant margin, there is no suspense there. Attention turns instead to the sprint finish, where **Mathieu van der Poel** – world champion and a rider who has pointed at Paris all race – will contest stage honours with **Tim Merlier**, who claimed three stage victories across these three weeks, and the other fastest finishers in the peloton.

What A Fifth Title Means

The scale of Poga’s achievement is difficult to overstate. He has now won the Tour in 2020, 2021, 2024, 2025, and – barring any incident on the road to Paris – 2026, losing only to **Jonas Vingegaard** in two hard-fought editions in between. He has also won the Giro d’Italia and stands as the most decorated Grand Tour rider of his generation by a considerable distance.

For the sport of cycling, his era has been an extraordinary gift: explosive racing, attacking instincts, and a champion who seems to relish the combat as much as the victory. As the peloton rolls towards Paris this evening, France’s capital city will be celebrating not just a champion, but the defining figure of a golden era in professional cycling. [Liverpool’s New Era: Andoni Iraola Begins Pre-Season Revolution As Reds Eye Top-Four Return](#) | [Tour de France 2026 Stage 20: Pogacar Chases a Sixth Win on Alpe d’Huez in Today’s Queen Stage](#)

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Author
jadeyeo