
A summer drive in the park

This year's Goodwood Festival of Speed is sure to live up to its reputation as one of the greatest celebrations of motorsport, with an event commemorating 130 years of racing

Every British summer, the historic setting of Goodwood House hosts the most extravagant garden party you can imagine. There is champagne, fine-dining hospitality and above all else — racing cars. Whether it's pre-war voitures, classic Le Mans 24 Hours winners or the very-latest Formula 1 machinery, the country drive of this West Sussex estate becomes an

automotive paradise, or in other words, a Festival of Speed.

Goodwood House is the aristocratic home of the 11th Duke of Richmond, located in the South Downs on the outskirts of Chichester. The estate includes a horseracing course, aerodrome and in 1948, Goodwood motor circuit opened. It was closed in the mid-1960s until the present duke — then known as Lord

March — decided to return motor racing to the venue. He founded the Goodwood Revival in 1998, in which participants and spectators are encouraged to attend in period dress.

Five years prior to the re-opening of the circuit, the Goodwood Festival of Speed was created whereby fast — and sometimes exotic — machinery are driven by professional

racers at speed past the house. Spectators get close to the action, standing just the other side of a line of straw bales, and marvel at the noise and power of the cars that roar past.

And there is a competition element. The time to beat up the 1.16-mile hillclimb course is a 39.08s — a record set by former F1 driver Max Chilton in a McMurtry Spéirling. Prior to that, the time of 41.6s was held for some 23 years by Nick Heidfeld in a 1999 McLaren MP4/13. However it was decided some time ago that modern Formula 1 cars should no longer be timed for safety reasons, ►

Below: An Aston Martin One-77 drives up Goodwood Hill. The Hillclimb is the focal point of the festival, pushing the technical skills of competing drivers to the limit





but they still perform high-speed demonstration runs instead.

Each year the Festival of Speed has a theme and this July the organisers will be celebrating 'Horseless to Hybrid — Revolutions in Power' which commemorates 130 years since the world's very first competitive motor race: the 1894 Paris to Rouen horseless carriage contest.

At the other end of the scale the summer gathering will also showcase the very latest EVs and hybrid engine technology in addition to other sustainable or hydrogen-powered vehicles. Last year four-time Formula 1 world champion Sebastian Vettel drove the Nigel Mansell-winning 1992 Williams FW14B and an Ayrton Senna 1993 McLaren MP4/8 on sustainable fuels.

Also being supplemented throughout the 2024 event will be major celebrations for double F1 world champion Niki Lauda, the Shadow F1 team and Joest Racing from the world of endurance and sports car racing. If you want an idea of the scale of the event, last year over 700 cars appeared on the hill and around the site.

Aside from this year's themes, the event has something that caters for all motorsport tastes. Whether that's rallying in the Forest Rally Stage, the FOS Pit

Lane which has the latest Grand Prix cars and Formula 1 drivers visiting to sign autographs. Expect Mercedes star George Russell and McLaren's Lando Norris to make their appearances because each year the Goodwood Festival of Speed takes place on a weekend that doesn't clash with a Formula 1 race. In 2024 it will occur one week after the British Grand Prix.

If you prefer ultra-fast automobiles to racing cars, then the supercar paddock is just for you, featuring the very latest performance-fuelled machines from Mercedes, Ferrari and

Lamborghini, amongst others. Or there is the Cartier Style et Luxe Lawn, the finest concours d'elegance where some of the rarest and most beautiful classic cars are on display. And to top it all, there are air displays, including those of the famous RAF Red Arrows.

"You see more motorsport in four days than you could see if you travelled the whole world with a Grand Prix team and watched all the races. It's more fun, it's faster, it's better," says car enthusiast and radio DJ Chris Evans.

Left: Brabham BT62 Above: McLaren MP4-12C and fancy dress to match the 60s vintage American car Below: Jensen Button at the Festival

For the ultimate celebration of motorsport and car culture, this year's Goodwood Festival of Speed takes place between 11-14 July at Goodwood House. Or if you prefer historic cars competing, the Goodwood Circuit hosts the 81st Members Meeting on 13-14 April and The Goodwood Revival on 6-8 September. goodwood.com ■

