

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Spa Classic 2014: Riding the Ardennes rollercoaster](#)

Lead

Spa-Francorchamps was once the fastest and (with a variation in altitude of 100 metres) one of the most challenging circuits in Europe. Even after the track was tamed, Spa has lost little of its charm, as the Spa Classic weekend demonstrates...



The Spa Classic is a fantastic journey back in time as racers dice with mechanical masterpieces just as they were in period – long before telemetry data outputs or software-adjustable dampers. And what better venue for their struggles than the world-famous circuit that nestles in the foothills of the Ardennes? Famous for the 24 Hours of Spa, the 1,000 Kilometres and, of course, the Belgian F1 Grand Prix. For the fourth time, May 16-18 saw the Belgian Royal Automobile Club and race meeting organiser Patrick Peter hold a magnificent historic event at Spa, over the same weekend as the Mille Miglia.

Elderly cars on the limit



Even if it felt as though visitors numbers could be higher, this did nothing to dampen the good mood. With perfect weather, the racing – especially on Saturday – offered some spectacular moments. In eight different grids, from historic endurance racers through to the always-popular Touring Cars of the 1980s, there were fierce duels. It is always amazing how the pilots take their elderly cars to the limits... and sometimes beyond. It was clear from the first qualifying laps: those who compete at the Spa Classic come here to win.

Heroes of the Ardennes rollercoaster



The highlights of the weekend were the night races. As the dark shadow of night starts to fall, just before the sun sets on the hot asphalt, you hear a rumbling in the distance. Thunder? But then a cone of light cuts through the near-darkness, accompanied by the roar of an eight-cylinder [Ford GT40](#) engine. It is these moments that revive the legend of Spa: it's easy to imagine the years from 1966 to 1979, when endurance racing was dominant. A time when Porsche 910, [Ferrari 512](#), or later, the BMW M1 celebrated grandiose victories. These were the times when drivers such as Jacky Ickx, Henri Pescarolo or Gérard Larrouse were the heroes of the Ardennes Rollercoaster: and that is what the Spa Classic celebrates - in magnificent style.[]

Mittendrinn statt nur dabei



Unlike many historic race events, you feel yourself to be in the middle of the action at the Spa Classic. The paddock is accessible to all, allowing you a glimpse behind the scenes and the chance to experience first hand the tension of the team before the race, as well as the joy after a victory. The 'open gates' policy was a great bonus, too, for the preview of the [Bonhams Spa Classic sale](#). In addition to the [first bespoke Porsche 911 Turbo](#) to leave the halls of [Porsche Exclusive](#), the London auction house also offered a unique [Ferrari 308 GTB Group B by Michelotto](#). The latter changed hands for €609,500. And maybe, just maybe, this white 'Red Devil' will be back at Spa next year - but this time on track.

Photos: [Rémi Dargegen](#) for Classic Driver

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