

CLASSIC DRIVER

Having fun is a serious business at the Le Mans Classic 2016

Lead

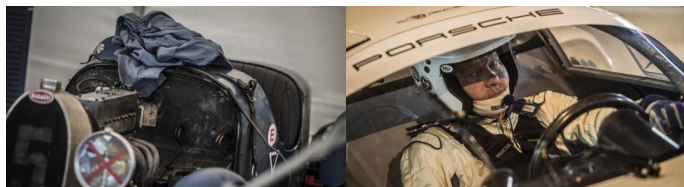
This weekend, 110,000 people are expected to descend on the hallowed Circuit de la Sarthe for the biennial motorsport extravaganza that is the Le Mans Classic. And there are some thrilling new features for 2016 including, for the first time, a race featuring 48 Group C prototypes from the 1980s...

In the heat of the night



After almost two years since [the last event](#), the anticipation and excitement is heightening ahead of this weekend's Le Mans Classic, at which over 700 historic racing cars will compete day and night on the historic Circuit de la Sarthe. At 4pm on Saturday, following the 'Jaguar Trophy' and Group C guest races (the latter of which is sure to become an instant crowd-favourite), 24 hours of solid competition will commence. There are six plateaus (or grids) defined by era, each comprising upwards of 70 cars. Three races are held for each plateau over the course of the 24 hours, giving participants the chance to experience the legendary circuit in a variety of conditions just as their professional forebears did, such as driving into the blinding dawn sunshine or apex hunting in the inky darkness of the night. To give you an idea of the calibre of the entry list, which spans five decades from 1920s and '30 sports cars to late-1970s Group 5 prototypes, there are 11 Ford GT40s, four Porsche 904s and eight pre-War Bentleys.

We can be heroes



It's not just gentleman drivers taking part, either. There are no fewer than ten former Le Mans winners down to drive, including five-times victor Emanuele Pirro, who will pilot a Group 5 Lancia Beta among others, and, much to the delight of the French contingent of spectators, Henri Pescarolo – a man with a staggering 33 Le Mans races to his name. If you can drag yourself away from the action on the track, there's much to keep you entertained. Artcurial will hold its [Le Mans Classic Sale](#) with its typical – and some would say chaotic – French flair, 180 car clubs will display their vehicles, a drive-in movie theatre will be erected near the Dunlop Bridge, and hundreds of shops will offer a beguiling range of automobilia in which to get lost. If it were us, though, we'd head straight to Arnage corner as the sun begins to dip, and enjoy one of the most visceral experiences in motorsport as the braying packs of racing cars thunder through the forest towards you, flames belching from the exhausts and brake discs glowing hot. It really is bucket-list stuff for those with petrol coursing through their veins.

Photos: Rémi Dargégen for Classic Driver © 2016

Gallery

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