

CLASSIC DRIVER

The Pebble Beach Tour d'Elegance is a technicolour parade of dreams

Lead

As the annual Pebble Beach Tour d'Elegance departed yesterday morning at seven o'clock sharp, the typical Monterey mist was nowhere to be seen, allowing spectators who woke up early enough to secure a spot on the Pacific coast an unobstructed view of who's in the running at Sunday's main event...

Never before have so many people taken part in the traditional Pebble Beach Tour d'Elegance, which is staged for the multi-million-dollar classics poised to line the fairways of Pebble Beach in Sunday's prestigious beauty pageant.



In addition to seeing so many priceless motor cars stretching their legs on California's breathtaking roads, the 70-mile tour – which traces sections of the legendary 17-Mile Drive en route to Carmel-by-the-Sea, via Big Sur and Highway Number 1 – is the first chance for entrants to eye up their concours competition.

And the owners are actually encouraged to take part. Should two cars be tied on points on come Sunday, the esteemed jury will typically give the nod to the car that took part in the tour. And rightfully so – nobody loves a trailer queen.



There's nothing quite like the grand departure from Portola Road. Organised chaos would be a good way to describe it. Right up until the very last moment, the cars taking part are swamped with people like the grid before a Formula 1 race.

As a result, you only get fleeting glimpses of the automotive treasures patiently waiting to leave. Oh look, there are the shapely hips of the Shah of Iran's old Lamborghini Miura. Or the impossibly long bonnet of the Zagato-bodied 16-cylinder Maserati Tipo V4, the world's fastest pre-War road car. Or the proud horseshoe-shaped grilles of not one but three genuine Bugatti Type 59s.



When the grid girls stroll through the pack holding up signs reading ‘start your engines’, the warm California air erupts in a cacophonous explosion of noise and smell. It’s one of the classic car calendar’s greatest spectacles, and that’s before the tour has even started. It’s a sensory overload.

While the route does not change, this impossibly beautiful stretch of Pacific coast simply never gets boring. Between the idyllic coves, Moon-like rock faces and enchanting pine and cypress forests, it really is the finest stage for a moving motor show like no other.



So, what do we make of the class of 2019? In addition to the usual categories, special classes in this year’s edition include ‘Bugatti Grand Prix & Touring’, ‘Zagato Centennial’ and ‘Historic Hot Rod Cover Cars’. Owing purely to their volume, the unique Lamborghini Miura SVR and spaceship-like ex-Maranello Concessionaires Ferrari 412P instantly commanded our attention (and we’re sure we weren’t the only ones).

The 1950s and 1960s were perhaps best represented by the gorgeous silver Ferrari 250 GT ‘Tour de France’ and Aston Martin DB4GT Zagato, respectively. The Maserati 200Si entered by Classic Driver dealer [Girardo & Co.](#) looked to be in rude health, as did the Porsche 356 Carrera GTL Abarth, which was making its debut following a tragic fire that forced its restoration.



Perhaps inevitably in this, Bentley’s centenary year, there was also a spectacularly generous and truly exquisite selection of the illustrious British marque’s cars, from Works Birkin Blowers (including the legendary ‘Old Number 2’) to opulent R-Type Continentals. Classic Driver dealers [Fiskens](#) and [Tom Hartley Jnr](#) bolstered the 60-strong (yes, 60!) pack with a pair of beautiful 4½ Litres.



Looking forward to Sunday's Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, we wonder whether the judges will show their usual reverence for the pre-War contingent or can one of the superb post-War classics break tradition and claim the revered 'Best of Show' gong. That said, wouldn't it be great to see a Bentley take the top prize on its 100th birthday? Whatever the outcome on the 'fairway to heaven', rest assured you'll be able to read about it here on Classic Driver on Monday.

Photos: Rémi Dargegen for Classic Driver © 2019

Gallery

