

# CIRCUITS 2010

Edition 1

The illustrated guide to the world's  
greatest motor racing circuits

Foreword by  
Andy Priaulx

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# THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TOURISM – motorsport's politically acceptable pot of gold!

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**Increasingly motor sport venues are attracting the attention of the legislators in the form of national and local governments, but not always for the right reasons. As politician's electorates become more sensitive to green issues motor sport has to be seen to be playing its part in addressing climate change and noise pollution amongst other thorny agendas. So how can the politicians be impressed by motor sport and even come to welcome it with open arms?**

Even the pinnacle of motor sport is not immune from difficulty. F1, which in recent years has moved towards successfully attracting backing from governments, is frequently accused of spending its time squandering fossil fuels, although in the terms of overall worldwide consumption it uses a drop in a proverbial ocean. The trouble is that this consumption is not only conspicuous but under both the spotlight and the microscope of a media driven business plan that only survives on the back of global television audiences. Politicians are acutely aware of the sensitivities of the perception of our sport and are almost certainly being lobbied on a daily basis by environmentalists of one sort or another. The motor sport industry finds it difficult to respond.

It is hardly surprising therefore that one of Jean Todt's first tasks as the newly-elected President of the FIA has been to set up a new working group to address such perceptions and to show that our chosen activity can in fact be used to spearhead research into the propulsion of road cars of the future. To be fair his predecessor, Max Mosley, was acutely aware of the need to address the negative perceptions in parliaments and council chambers too.

So, when a government enthusiastically climbs aboard the motor sport

bandwagon and actually invests their taxpayer's (elector's) money where is the politically acceptable pot of gold? From the start of motor sport at the end of the 19th century until the present day the justification is often expressed in tourism terms as part of economic development.

Tourism departments are frequently the acceptable organisations through which the politicians are able to justify motor sport events on their patch. They can not only point to the positive associations that motor sport events create for a town, region or country but also to the tourism football they generate which boosts their economy.

Where positive associations are concerned the French Loire valley town of Le Mans is recognised, for example, as being extremely picturesque in its own right but research shows that the 24 Hours of Le Mans endurance motor race has become better known worldwide than the place itself. Similarly, the United States city of Indianapolis, despite a huge variety of activities, both industrial and sporting, is recognised as being the *Racing Capital of the World* as the home of the Indianapolis 500. Closer to home the Monaco GP is absolutely core to the glamorous image of the Principality of Monte Carlo. Here are three very high profile motor sport events on different continents where those in the Hotel de Ville or City Hall would never countenance distancing themselves from motor sport. So, if you still perceive tourism to be a new partner of motor sport think again as the relationship has actually been in place now for more than a century.

Research studies have revealed the economic effects of individual sports on host regions in terms of income generation and consequent tourism potential. UK Sport has outlined in a variety of reports the importance of sport events in general to the UK, especially as income generators from

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tourism expenditure. These studies have shown clear economic benefits from the attraction of sport events that have tourism potential.

They also make the important point that in most sports, including motor sport, that it is not only the spectators that should be counted as tourists but also the competitors. Where our sport is concerned this means that drivers, support teams, mechanics, marshals and so on are all tourists. So the numbers coming through the turnstiles should not be the only individuals costed in but also those who inhabit the paddock and surround the circuit in marshals posts. In practice too motor sport fits the three major sport tourism models, namely nostalgia sport tourism, active sport tourism and event sport tourism.

It is pertinent to point out that the two longest running motor sport events for cars and bikes in the UK have both specifically used the word “Tourist” in their titles. Both competitions, which are still running in 2010, started in the Isle of Man. The first RAC Tourist Trophy to be held for cars was in 1905 and the even more famous Isle of Man TT (Tourist Trophy) for motorcycles in 1907. Whilst the former Tourist Trophy is now the feature race at the Goodwood Revival race meeting which attracted 116,000 spectators in 2007 considerably boosting the West Sussex economy. The Isle of Man TT is still a major element of the Manx Tourism offer and is today co-ordinated by the Isle of Man’s Department of Tourism and Leisure (DTL).

In recent years the finances required to host a F1 event has increased so much that governments of host countries were willing to pay in order to advertise their nation for prestige and tourism benefits. It has also been found that street-circuits, such as those to be found in Monaco and Singapore, are excellent for tourism purposes because they show the host city and its monuments to the benefit of tourism.

Another example is the Malaysian Government’s support of Singapore, which wanted a F1 race to promote itself both as “Asia’s party town” and as “The Monaco of the East” and to strengthen its overall allure in South

East Asia. The Malaysian Prime Minister emphasised that a Grand Prix was a key tool for enhancing the country’s image and in the promotion of Malaysia as a leading international tourist destination. In Singapore the Tourism Board works closely with the F1 grand prix promoter to help boost the tourism sector with the intention of highlighting the hotel, food & beverage, retail, entertainment and even private wealth management companies that might gain direct benefits from the race.

So what is the outcome of this discussion? In getting to this point we can see that by no means all politicians are antagonistic towards motor sport – some are positively enthusiastic. The management of motor sport circuits should therefore take on board some pointers from the top end of the sport. Everybody attending your venue is a tourist in economic terms. Tourists don’t just get off planes at Heathrow and sit in the stands. Your tourists also drive hundreds of miles to you towing their competition vehicles or dressed in orange they stand out in all weathers waving flags to enable the very racing to take place. These marshals too in many cases travel long distances and stay in camp sites or hotels which are a core element of the tourism that is all around you.

Circuit managers may have to defend their circuit against noise complaints and such like and the local authorities may be solely receiving a totally negative perception of motor sport as a result. Can they be shown what their circuit is worth to the local economy in terms of bednights in hotels, full and part-time jobs and other financial contributions? If not circuit managers need to be looking at economic impact studies as a core element of their business plan and those negativities may be diluted considerably in the minds of politicians. ■

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