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Motoring freedoms celebrated on 2026 RM Sotheby's London to Brighton Veteran Car Run

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Biggest and



best entry in recent years as more than 400 pioneering cars line-up for the world's longest-running motoring celebration

We are told...

The magical RM Sotheby's London to Brighton Veteran Car Run returns on Sunday 1 November with more than 400 pioneering Pre-1905 cars expected to take part in one of the world's most evocative celebrations of motoring history – honouring two major milestones in the story of the motor car.

This year marks 140 years since Karl Benz introduced his revolutionary Patent-Motorwagen, widely regarded as the world's first production car, while it is also 130 years since the landmark Emancipation Run of 1896 – the event that celebrated the liberation of the horseless carriage and effectively heralded the birth of motoring in Britain.

The arrival of Benz's pioneering three-wheeled Patent-Motorwagen in 1886 marked the beginning of a revolution that would transform personal mobility and ultimately change the world. Ten years later, Britain's own motoring revolution reached a defining moment with the passing of the Locomotives on Highways Act 1896.

The legislation raised the legal speed limit for light locomotives from 4 mph to 14 mph and, crucially, abolished the requirement for a person carrying a red flag to walk ahead of every motor vehicle. The new-found freedom was celebrated on 14 November 1896 when 33 intrepid early motorists drove from London to Brighton in what became known as the Emancipation Run.

It is that pioneering journey which the annual London to Brighton Veteran Car Run has commemorated since 1927, making it not only one of the world's most famous historic motoring events but also the longest-running motoring event of its kind.

Now, 130 years after those first motorists were officially liberated from the restrictions of the old legislation, the tradition continues with hundreds of veteran cars once again taking



to the historic road from London to Brighton. Indeed, this year's impressive gathering is the biggest and best in recent years with a number of highly significant entrants.

Moreover, the international appeal of the legendary event is underlined by the fact that more than 100 of this year's entries have travelled from overseas, with participants coming from across Europe as well as the USA, Hong Kong and Australia to take part in this unique celebration of motoring history.

"Few events can claim such a direct connection with the birth of motoring itself as the RM Sotheby's London to Brighton Veteran Car Run," said Duncan Wiltshire, Chairman of the Royal Automobile Club. "The 1896 Emancipation Run was a defining moment in Britain's motoring history, marking the freedom to travel by motor car and opening the road to the extraordinary development of the motor industry that followed.

"It is therefore particularly appropriate that, 130 years on, we are celebrating that landmark occasion with such a magnificent field of veteran cars. The scale of this year's entry is hugely encouraging, as is the enthusiasm of the many younger drivers and participants who are becoming increasingly involved. They are ensuring that this remarkable piece of motoring history is not simply preserved, but continues to be enjoyed and brought to life for future generations."

This year more than 400 Pre-1905 Victorian and Edwardian vehicles dating back to the dawn of motoring will gather before sunrise in Hyde Park. Following the traditional ceremonial tearing up of the red flag, the field will set off at 6.53 am as the sun rises, beginning the historic 60-mile journey to the Sussex coast.

The evocative line-up of two-, three- and four-wheelers will head south through Wellington Arch, powered by steam and electric as well as petrol. **Reflecting the continuing evolution of motoring, an increasing number of veterans are also running on the latest sustainable fuels, courtesy of event partner SUSTAIN.**

Around 100 different makes will be represented. Some - including Cadillac, Chevrolet, Ford,



Renault and Peugeot – remain familiar names to motorists today, while many others have long since disappeared from Britain's roads. Mors, De Dion Bouton, Brush, Covert, Flint, Humber, Knox and Gladiator are just some of the fascinating marques represented.

Among the notable entrants this year are the world's oldest surviving Rolls-Royce, Rover and Vauxhall models, together with Mercedes-Benz's oldest roadworthy commercial vehicle.

The landmark 1904 Rolls-Royce has recently undergone a meticulous restoration and will make its first appearance on the Run for many decades after taking class honours at the prestigious Pebble Beach Concours. The 1904 Rover is entered by the British Motor Museum, while the venerable Vauxhall is another highly significant forebear of today's well-known brand.

The oldest cars lining up in Hyde Park – and consequently among the first to leave – will be a pair of plucky Peugeots dating back to 1895 and an even earlier Benz Velo from 1894.

Adding further colour to the period spectacle, veteran cycles and motorcycles are also invited to join the celebrations, including several eye-catching penny-farthings. These two-wheeled pioneers are flagged away first, just before dawn.

Following the historic route

Hyde Park has been the traditional starting point since 1936. From there the veterans head down Constitution Hill, passing Buckingham Palace and continuing along The Mall before making their way beneath Admiralty Arch and into Trafalgar Square.

They then turn right into Whitehall, passing the Cenotaph before heading towards Westminster, where the significance of this year's anniversary is particularly evident.

The cars pass Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament – just yards from where, 130 years ago, the legislation that transformed the prospects for motoring in Britain was passed.



The entire field crosses Westminster Bridge before the route splits into two. Half the cars follow the traditional A23 route via Kennington, Brixton and Streatham, while the remainder travel along Albert Embankment before crossing Clapham Common and continuing through Tooting and Mitcham.

The routes merge once again on the A236 north of Croydon, with the field reunited as it heads south through Surrey and towards Crawley for the official halfway break at The Hawth Theatre. A new, more easterly, route from Horley past Gatwick Airport is being trialled this year to improve the participant experience.

Although there is no public access to the CARS-supported Pit Stop at The Hawth, spectators will have ample opportunity to get close to the remarkable veteran machinery all along the route, particularly in popular viewing locations including Three Bridges, Staplefield and Cuckfield.

Once refreshed at The Hawth Theatre crews and cars then tackle the scenic – if challenging – South Downs before descending towards the finish on Brighton’s famous Madeira Drive.

The first vehicles are expected to arrive shortly after 10 am, where finishers will receive a well-earned hot toddy courtesy of The Macallan. To qualify for a coveted finishers’ medal, crews must complete the journey and reach the seafront before the 4.30pm dusk curfew.

Royal Automobile Club’s London Motor Week

The RM Sotheby’s London to Brighton Veteran Car Run brings the curtain down on the Royal Automobile Club’s busy London Motor Week – a week-long celebration of motoring featuring anniversary dinners, awards presentations and the Art of Motoring Exhibition, Europe’s leading curated art exhibition, hosted at the Iconic Images Gallery in Waterloo Place, Westminster, from 28 to 31 October.

Now in its third year, the free-to-attend St James’s Motoring Spectacle is also one of London Motor Week’s major highlights. Taking place on Pall Mall on the eve of the Run, with the



famous thoroughfare closed to through traffic, the Spectacle celebrates motoring past, present and future and features the St James's Concours for veteran cars.

RM Sotheby's London auction, also taking place on Saturday 31 October, is another cornerstone of London Motor Week and has become a major fixture on the UK collector-car calendar. Returning to the exquisite setting of The Peninsula London, the sale is one of the country's leading automotive auctions, renowned for its atmosphere, quality and exceptional consignments.

Suggested viewing points:

Time	Location
6.45am	Ceremonial tearing of red flag - Hyde Park, London
6.53am	Start - Hyde Park, London
7.00-8.45am	Constitution Hill, London
7.00-8.45am	The Mall, London
7.10-9.00am	Whitehall, London
7.10-9.00am	Westminster Bridge, London
7.10-9.00am	Lambeth Palace, London
7.20-9.20am	Clapham Common, London
7.25-9.50am	Mitcham, London
7.35-11.05am	Coulsdon High Street, London



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7.40-11.05am	Merstham, Surrey
7.55-11.35am	Redhill, Surrey
8.10am-2.00pm	Three Bridges and Crawley, West Sussex
8.25am-2.10pm	Handcross High Street, West Sussex
8.30am-2.25pm	Staplefield, West Sussex
8.50am-2.35pm	Cuckfield High Street, West Sussex
10.00am-4.30pm	Brighton, West Sussex

For more details of the RM Sotheby's London to Brighton Veteran Car Run, visit www.veterancarrun.com.