



# Max Verstappen and Charles Leclerc **quickest** in first two practices

F1 marks return to Malaysia's iconic track with first of three days of top-class racing and entertainment

● **Marco Manson and Juste Mulder go fastest in Formula Trophy Malaysia practices**

● **Axwell set for first of two mega concerts this F1 weekend on Saturday night**

● **Family fun continues with off-track attractions at SIC**

Manama

Max Verstappen and Charles Leclerc marked Formula 1's return to Sepang International Circuit (SIC) today by topping the timesheet in the first two practice sessions of the Formula 1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix in Malaysia 2026.

Verstappen set the fastest lap in the opening hour-long runs for Red Bull Racing. The four-time F1 world champion set a top mark – also the best overall of the day – of 1min 37.520secs to go 0.383s quicker than George Russell of Mercedes. Verstappen's Red Bull teammate Isack Hadjar placed third 0.783s behind.

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc followed in fourth 0.847s behind, while world championship leader Kimi Antonelli in the other Mercedes ranked fifth 1.060s adrift.

Ferrari's Lewis Hamilton was sixth 1.070s back, while rounding out the top 10 were Pierre Gasly (+1.195s) of Alpine, Liam Lawson (+1.586s) and Arvid Lindblad (+1.677s) of Racing Bulls, and Nico Hulkenberg (+1.691s) from Audi.

Completing the classification from 11th to 22nd, respectively, were McLaren's Oscar Piastri and Lando Norris, Audi's Gabriel Bortoleto, Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso, Haas' Esteban Ocon and Oliver Bearman, Williams' Alexander Albon, Aston Martin's Lance Stroll, Alpine's Franco Colapinto, Williams' Carlos



Sainz, and Cadillac's Valtteri Bottas and Sergio Perez.

Leclerc was then the top man in the second session. He had a best lap time of 1:37.528 to beat Hadjar by a mere 0.099s. Norris was third 0.137s behind, Verstappen fourth 0.257s back, and Hamilton fifth 0.305s adrift.

Also in the top 10 were Piastri (+0.371s), Russell (+0.492s), Antonelli (+0.532s), Lawson (+0.968s), and Gasly (+1.060s).

Completing the classification were Lindblad, Bortoleto, Hulkenberg, Ocon, Alonso, Bearman, Sainz, Stroll, Bottas, Albon, Perez, and Colapinto.

F1 returns to the track on Saturday (Editor's note: 3 October) for a third 60-minute practice, which will run from 12.30pm local time/7.30am Bahrain time. Qualifying will then follow at 4pm local time/11am Bahrain time, setting the starting grid for the 56-lap F1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix in Malaysia 2026, which will

be

held on Sunday at 3pm local time/10am Bahrain time.

Fans attending this weekend's events at SIC are advised to plan their trip carefully and arrive as early as possible to avoid peak traffic times. Gates are scheduled to open on Saturday at 9am. Before arriving at the circuit, race-goers are reminded to make sure they have their valid ticket for the event, as well as the correct pre-purchased parking pass to access the SIC vicinity. The parking pass is a must due to the limited parking available at the venue, and all vehicles without passes will not be permitted entry.

Alternatively, ticket and pass holders are encouraged to take the public shuttle services to get to SIC. These are available at Mitsui Outlet Park, KLIA Terminal 2, KLIA Long-Term Car Park, and De-Village @ Enstek. The public shuttles are available from 7am to 12midnight on all three days of F1 weekend.

For those intending to travel by taxi or an e-hailing service, only public and Grab taxis, plus Limousine KLIA premier services, will be permitted entry to the venue and will be required to drop off their passengers only at the designated areas. For those leaving the circuit, taxis will be available from a designated taxi rank.

Also at the grand prix, internal shuttle buses will be operating during opening

hours. They will run every minute within the SIC vicinity.

BIC advises race-goers to check the latest event information before travelling. This will be available on BIC and SIC social media channels.

**Manson, Mulder go fastest in FTM practices**

Marco Manson of Pinnacle Motorsport and Juste Mulder from Evans GP were quickest today in the two practice sessions of Formula Trophy Malaysia (FTM), held as part of the support race programme in the Formula 1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix in Malaysia 2026 at Sepang International Circuit.

Manson topped the timesheet in the opening practice with a fastest lap of 2mins 12.219secs. David Cosma-Cristofor of Evans GP was second-fastest 0.208s behind, while Sicong Chen of Black Blade Racing ranked third 0.537s back.

Mulder was then quickest in the second session. He had a best mark of 2mins 11.678secs. Manson followed 0.105s behind while Inigo Anton of Axle Sports was classified third 0.157s adrift.

FTM returns to action on Saturday with Qualifying at 10.30am local time/5.30am Bahrain time, with the weekend's first of two races to be held at 2.15pm local time/9.15am Bahrain time. Race two is then scheduled for Sunday at 11.45am local time/6.45am Bahrain time.

**Axwell set for first of two mega concerts this weekend on Saturday night**

Grammy-nominated DJ and producer Axwell will be taking to the stage at SIC on Saturday evening for the first of two mega concerts being held as part of Bahrain's F1 weekend.

Axwell's live performance is scheduled for a 7.35pm start local time. Those attending are advised to pick up their concert wristband from one of the collection points to be able to enter the designated concert venue.

Axwell's concert Saturday night will be followed by that of multi-platinum-selling hit-maker Martin Garrix on Sunday to headline the post-race celebrations. It is scheduled for 8.40pm local time.

Tickets for each concert are available exclusively to race-weekend ticket holders and are priced at US\$50 per person for the Axwell concert and US\$100 per person for the

Martin Garrix concert.

A separate ticket is required for each performance and tickets are available at bahraingp.com.

Axwell is the co-founder of both Swedish House Mafia and Axwell Ingrosso. He is a sought-after remixer, delivering popular remixes of 'Burn' by Usher, 'Maybe' by N.E.R.D., 'Angel' by Pharrell, and 'Jump' by Madonna, to name a few. Axwell has claimed a spot on DJ Mag's 'Top 100 DJs' list nine times and won four DJ Awards.

val, and Tomorrowland.

**Entertainment attractions to keep fans busy at SIC off the track**

The off-track entertainment continues on Saturday at the F1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix in Malaysia 2026.

There is something for the whole family at the SIC fanzone and it has all been put together in signature Bahrain style, with shows, activations, and fun performers on all three days.

These include the Bahrain Village, where the Kingdom's rich cultural identity is being showcased, internationally renowned Chinese acrobats, an army of delightful roaming performers, concerts featuring A-list music artists, plus so much more.

The Bahrain Village is a major part of the attractions over the weekend and it has welcomed thousands so far. It offers visitors an immersive experience featuring a programme of traditional experiences, cultural activities, and live handicraft demonstrations.

The Bahrain Village is an opportunity for fans to discover Bahrain's heritage firsthand and gain a deeper appreciation of the traditions that continue to shape the national identity. It also highlights the archipelago's vibrant contemporary charm through the participation of local Bahraini food and beverage brands. Visitors are being treated to authentic Bahraini flavours while discovering the diversity and creativity of the Kingdom's growing culinary scene.



Martin Garrix is one of the youngest and most successful DJs and producers in pop and electronic music, collaborating with some of the biggest names in the industry throughout his career including Dua Lipa, Ed Sheeran, U2, Bebe Rexha, Khalid, Macklemore, Avicii, and Madonna. Aside from F1, Martin Garrix has also performed at some of the world's biggest events and festivals, including the Winter Olympics, Coachella, Lollapalooza, Ultra Music Festi-



Reported by Ashen Tharaka and Anchalo Bensiger from Malaysia