

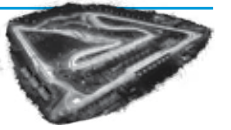
The winning formula



● This year's Formula One (F1) Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix weekend will run for four days for the first time



● The 2018 Bahrain Grand Prix saw a crowd of 33,000 on race day alone



● Aside from Formula 1, equally thrilling will be the action from the FIA Formula 2 Championship

● Porsche GT3 Cup Challenge Middle East is the biggest and most popular one-make motor racing championship in the entire region



TDT | Manama

With the Formula one spectacle revving hard around the corner, the time has come around for Bahrain to unleash its sparkle to the global audience like a pearl for which it is always known for.

The archipelago in the Arabian Gulf, whose culture dates back 5000 years to the ancient Dilmun era, this time is offering more excitement than ever for F1 with its economy now on an upward trajectory guided by the Royal vision.

The local economy has shrugged off its weaknesses, caused by the prolonged period of lower prices, to reach a refreshing growth, helped by a slew of measures rolled out to boost revenues and balance books.

Investments in the fintech sector; a major oil and gas find and the development of Bahrain as a hub for foreign companies are helping the Kingdom to move its feet firmly into the future.

Bahrain's inclusion in JPMorgan's emerging market indexes

and a rise in the price of Bahrain's 2028 dollar bonds stands as a testament to the country's emergence.

According to Bahrain's ministry of finance and national economy, the Kingdom's fiscal programme is on track to deliver a balanced budget by 2022.

"This is a comprehensive and credible plan which, through a combination of spending reductions and revenue measures, is already delivering significant progress," the ministry said.

Amid recovering oil, 5 per cent value-added tax (VAT), subsidy cuts, voluntary retirement plan, the Kingdom continues to attract business to the region with Amazon Web Services (AWS) being the latest entrant. Amazon, the world's biggest cloud computing provider, is opening a regional data centre in Bahrain later this year.

As Zubin Chagpar, the head of the public sector for Amazon Web Services in the Middle East puts it, Bahrain is looking forward to leverage technology to redefine economy.

Add to this a burgeoning art and food scene, a growing reputation as a financial technology hub and the annual Formula 1 Grand Prix spectacle.

999th Formula 1 Race

So when it happens in Bahrain, the 999th Formula 1 Race weekend will be the sixth race taking place under BIC's state-of-the-art floodlights as a night race in the heart of the Arabian desert.

The 57-lap Bahrain Grand Prix also marks the second round of the 2019 FIA Formula 1 World Championship, which had its opening round in Australia with Mercedes claiming a fine one-two triumph led by Finn superstar Valtteri Bottas.

In 2007 the circuit became the first Grand Prix circuit to be awarded the distinguished FIA Institute Centre of Excellence award, given for excellent safety, race marshal, and medical facilities, and for the high standards of technology required to maintain these.

Formula 2

Aside from Formula 1, equally thrilling will be the action from the FIA Formula 2 Championship season-opener and the Porsche GT3 Cup Challenge Middle East championship finale.

Formula 2 is widely accepted to be the chief feeder series to Formula 1, with many of its graduates moving on to the top

flight after honing their skills at this level. Formula 2 will be staging the opening round of its 2019 season in Bahrain with 20 cars representing 10 teams on the grid.

Engines provide over 612bhp, plus ground effects and proper slick tyres make Formula 2 cars powerful and tricky to handle.

Among the more prominent drivers competing this year is Mick Schumacher, who is the son of seven-time Formula 1 World champion Michael Schumacher. He will be taking to the tarmac with Italian outfit Prema Racing, alongside Indonesian teammate Sean Galeal.

GT3 challenge

The Porsche GT3 Cup Challenge Middle East is the biggest and most popular one-make motor racing championship in the entire region.

It has been the number one choice of the Arab world's most promising circuit racing drivers to broaden their racing experience in a professionally run series. Drivers race in identical Porsche GT3 Cup Car 911s, supplied by the founders from Lechner Racing.

Clear rules ensure an equal footing – single-seated, near-standard race vehicles of

the same make adhering to strict safety guidelines. At the Bahrain Grand Prix, the Porsche GT3 Cup is holding the sixth and final meeting of its 2018/2019 campaign.

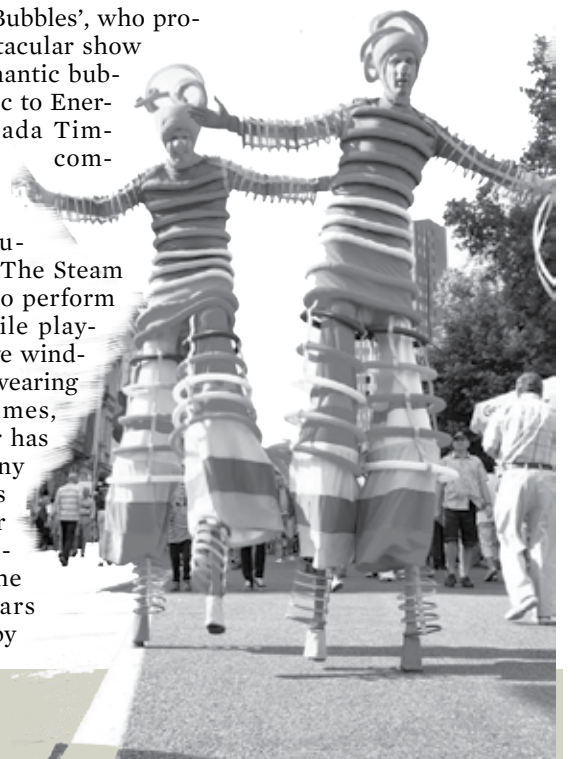
Something for everyone

But as they say, there is something for everyone at the Bahrain International Circuit's (BIC) Formula 1 Village vending area when the Grand Prix spectacle takes place March 28 to 31 in Sakhir.

From 'Dr Bubbles', who provides a spectacular show with his romantic bubble and music to Energetic 'Batucada Timba', which composed of young and talented musicians and 'The Steam Dancers' who perform on stilts while playing with large wind-sleeves and wearing funky costumes, BIC this year has lined up many special acts suitable for family audience as in the previous years highlighted by

the back-to-back live performances of Martin Garrix on the Friday of the event and Kygo on Saturday.

Ferris Wheel, a Star Flyer and a Venetian Carousel, an interactive F1 Fanzone, The Mummy's Tomb, carnival games and roaming performers, dancers, magicians... the list goes on and on at the four-day extravaganza.



Don't miss these when in Bahrain

Bahrain National Museum



Asprawling complex surrounded by contemporary art sculptures and installations, which will transport you straight into the Dilmun era giving a glimpse into ancient artefacts, coins, jewellery, seals, stone burial mounds etc. The exhibition also will take you a walk through you to the current Islamic period from a short-lived Greek influence.

A'ali village

Best know for its pottery tradition, the village is must visit if you like watching potters in action. You can also get your hands dirty at the Delmon pottery by learning how to work with the wheel.



Al Fateh Grand Mosque

With more than 7,000 worshippers at a time, Al Fateh Grand Mosque is one of the largest mosques in the world. Austrian-made Chandelier, Italian marble floors and carved doors are especially noteworthy



Shopping



Opportunities are aplenty when it comes to shopping options with several malls to visit. Need local experience, head to Bab Al Bahrain, a historical building in Manama where you can buy local products. Or you can walk through the alleys of Manama Souq where you will find all that you need.

Al Jasra Handicrafts centre

The centre offers a glimpse into Bahrain's long legacy of arts and crafts. Artisans there will offer you a chance to watch them at work. The centre was established in 1990.

Muharraq

When it comes to knowing old Bahrain, Muharraq, the former capital of Bahrain has many valuable tales to tell. Muharraq will speak volumes about traditional architecture and the 'pearl trail'.



Local cuisine

Influences from all around the world, especially from India, can be easily tasted in the rich variety of dishes on offer at various local restaurants in the kingdom.

Qal'at al-Bahrain



The fortified Portuguese fort stands over layers of Bahrain's history and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Adventure

Next to Grand Prix circuit, this 3.5 km off-road track help you negotiate the twists and turns either alone or as a passenger. Gravity indoor, scuba, snorkelling, diving tours, horseback riding and pearl diving tours will offer you enough instances to satisfy your craving for adventure.