



The world's most elegant cars: Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance 2015

by Jared Zaugg, for CNN

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Pebble Beach, California (CNN)—Just over the hill from Monterey is Carmel-by-the-Sea, a small town on the central coast of California known for its rugged natural scenery, white sand beaches, artistic culture and relaxed ambiance.

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One week each August, however, this quiet enclave is overtaken by tens of thousands of motoring enthusiasts from around the world. Suddenly the roads are swollen with every conceivable automobile ever created, with supercars sharing lanes with horseless carriages and the soft crush of waves suppressed by the sweet music of RPMs.



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Check out the stance on this 1949 Aston Martin DB2 prototype. It was the originally delivered new to none other than David Brown and later owned and raced by Motorsports legend Lance Macklin. #AstonMartin #DB2 #prototype #PebbleBeachConcours #stancenation #alljackedup #groundclearance

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Motoring aficionados migrate here each summer to celebrate the automobile and its rich and excitingly diverse history. Anchored by what's widely considered the most prestigious show of its kind, the [Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance](#) (established in 1950), this ever expanding week of motoring events known as the

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Legendary cars from all eras set to break sales records in Monterey

Monterey Car Week has become the largest, single most important date on the global collector car calendar, replete with multiple concours d'elegance, historic races, private tours and rallies, new model unveilings, lavish parties, and classic car auctions.

It is the best of the best in every regard and nowhere is there more a concentration of automotive beauty, wealth and collective heritage on display than here. Simply put, it is the mecca of the car world.

With classic cars at the highest end now competitive in price with a Renoir or Monet, it's no wonder that the week's events celebrating and selling these cars should be such a draw. This year, for example, nearly half a billion dollars worth of automobiles were offered for sale by the various participating auction houses.

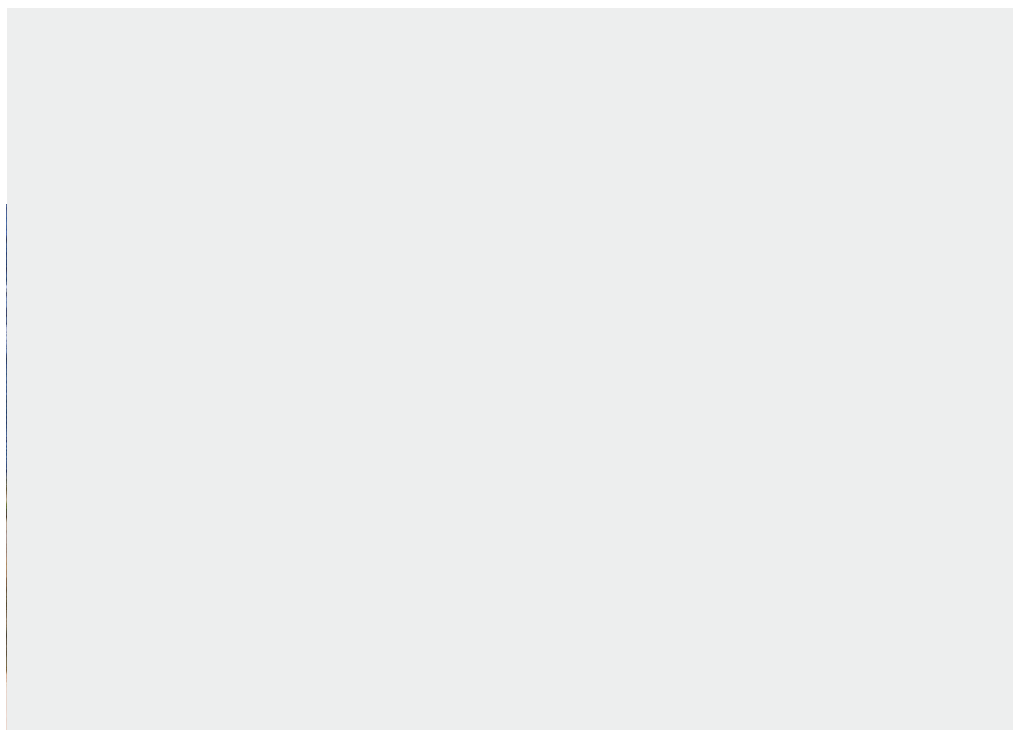
Last year, Bonhams auctioneers made history when they sold a rare 1962 Ferrari 250 GTO Berlinetta for over \$38 million -- the highest price ever paid for a car at auction. While most of the world balked at the Guinness Book of World Records price for a car that, by today's standards, is really not that potent, for aficionados it was the Holy Grail.

Meeting all the criteria of desirability -- limited production numbers, tremendous racing success, dual-purpose (road and track) functionality, and timeless design, not to mention the fact that it's a Ferrari, it's nearly perfection personified. As one collector remarked, "For the same price I could own a Van Gogh to hang on the wall. Instead, I get to own an artwork just as beautiful that I can also drive."



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It's this passion-meets-investment attitude combined with the style, allure, romance, excitement and universal appeal of the automobile that makes this week-long gathering so popular.

Capping off the week of activities is the pièce de résistance -- Sunday's Pebble Beach show held on the seaside golf greens of the 18th fairway. Now in its 66th year, it's not just the intense concentration of the finest cars in the world on display that makes it so famous, it's the strict selection and judging criteria by a panel of international experts that gives it global prestige.

The concept of a concours d'elegance -- literally meaning a contest of elegance -- is said to have originated in France in the 17th century when aristocracy paraded the parks in their horse-drawn carriages. As carriages became horseless, the concept carried over to motorcars. Although in principle a concours is totally

subjective, Pebble Beach's focus on historic originality and authenticity -- and the fact that each car must actually run (after all, they are machines) -- means that a car that wins its class here actually increases in value.

This year's Best of Show winner -- selected from all the First in Class winners from more than two dozen classes represented by a field of 220 entrants -- was a coachbuilt 1924 Isotta Fraschini Tipo 8A. Heralding from a time when many cars were still chauffeur driven, the bespoke Italian Isotta Fraschini is a massive, handbuilt luxury car that perfectly represents the mindset of its era. Beating out a 1914 Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost Torpedo Phaeton and a 1937 Delahaye 145 Cabriolet, the Isotta Fraschini was awarded the summa cum laude of the car world -- the ultimate honor that can be bestowed upon a classic automobile.



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In addition to sharing the field with some 20,000 other onlookers, spectators at Pebble Beach find themselves among the glitterati of the car world from automotive executives and designers like Piero Ferrari and Andrea Zagato, to celebrity "car guys" like Jay Leno and Jerry Seinfeld, to style mavens like Lapo Elkann and Ralph Lauren.

Truth be told, there are so many people that it's difficult to actually see the automobiles that are the reason for the gathering but the experience as a whole must be tried at least once by anyone who appreciates cars.

Regardless of the increasing recognition of cars as functional artworks and the commensurately increasing values, the mainstream attention now being afforded to this once esoteric interest is, in the larger picture, very positive.

Using the catch 22 argument that something is appreciated more when it's worth more, automobiles are now being preserved and protected greater than ever, which is invaluable to our collective culture and heritage, especially when the automobile represents one of the greatest revolutions in human history.

Strolling down Ocean Avenue in picturesque Carmel perfectly encapsulates what Car Week is all about. Yes, the sensation of money, status and excess is palpable but so is beauty, design, style innovation and exhilaration. And one needs only to look at the smile on everyone's face to know the most important feeling Car Week imparts -- that of fun.

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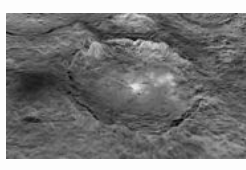
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