



The Formula One (F1) SingTel Singapore Grand Prix race track with City Hall as the backdrop.

A ROARING SUCCESS

In many ways, Singapore had never looked so good, as the floodlit city came aglow with glitz and glamour for the world's first night race at the Formula One SingTel Singapore Grand Prix held from 26 to 28 September 2008.

"It is a valuable buzz, publicity for us around the world, which will benefit us in many ways," said Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

An estimated 50,000 motorsports fans from around the world had gathered excitedly in Singapore for this world-class event, including big-name VIPs who flew in specially to grace this red carpet occasion. Some celebrities spotted were Hong Kong film star Jackie Chan, Bollywood siren Shilpa Shetty and Malaysian-born Hollywood actress Michelle Yeoh, who were in town to soak up the adrenaline-fuelled atmosphere.

Supported by the Singapore Government, the \$150-million event made history as night was transformed into day in the country's central business district with the help of 1,500 floodlights. Ferrari driver Kimi Raikkonen said that driving on roads lit up by 3.2 million watts of electricity was "like driving in daytime".

The Marina Bay Circuit, also known as the Singapore Street Circuit, spanned 5.07km in length and racers had to complete 61 anti-clockwise laps in total. The challenging circuit, with a generous amount of twists and turns, took racers through a route lined with symbols of history and modernity.

Drivers whizzed past a glittering backdrop including colonial landmarks like the old Supreme Court and City Hall, Singapore's modern financial district and the world's tallest observation wheel, the Singapore Flyer.

The race marked the 15th round of the 2008 FIA Formula One World Championships and its top-quality Singapore Street Circuit was expertly put together in just under a year.

"The most impressive thing for me is what an amazing job they have done here in Singapore to prepare the circuit," racer Lewis Hamilton, who has since gone on to win the Formula One Championship at the Brazilian Grand Prix on 2 November, told the media. "I think they did a tremendous job."

Apart from a new road, Singapore also built from scratch an impressive pit building housing team garages, a media centre and a Paddock Club. Formula One Management President and CEO Bernie Ecclestone told the media that this was a feat bound to make international audiences sit up and take notice of Singapore, catapulting the island to the global stage.

"For years I've been saying go East, not West. When you think about it, most parts of Asia where people have visited, they sort of put everything in one basket - 'Singapore is the same as India, Malaysia and Thailand'. That's how they feel because they don't know any better. Hopefully this will open people's eyes and they'll say, my God, Singapore really is alive and well," he said.

The timing of this night event meant that it could be broadcast live at a convenient timeslot for European audiences that make up a substantial proportion of the 500 million Formula One viewers internationally.

In Singapore, the telecast on the national TV station MediaCorp Channel 5 was by far the country's highest-rated programme this year, reaching a viewing population of 1.96 million people aged 4 and above.

The historic Grand Prix race was part of an exhilarating line-up of events and attractions that formed part of Singapore's unique transformation strategy.

"Singapore is entering an exciting phase in its tourism development, and the Formula One night race will add to our growing reputation as a world-class destination, offering some of the most unique and cutting-edge experiences," said Mr Jason Ong, Area Director of Middle East and Africa at the Singapore Tourism Board.

TWISTS AND TURNS OF F1 IN SINGAPORE

This was not the first time that Singapore has witnessed such speed-demon thrills up close. The Singapore Grand Prix, held from 1963 and 1971, was the nation's first taste at hosting a motorsports series.

The race was initially named the 'Orient Year Grand Prix' and ran as part of the Formula Libre and Australian AF2 rules. It was renamed 'The Singapore Grand Prix' in 1965 when the country gained independence.

The 4.87 kilometre route ran along the Old Upper Thomson Road in Singapore and had many nicknames such as Devil's Bend, the Rothman's corner and Nee Soon Hairpin. However, as support for the event flagged, 1973 marked the last year that Singapore saw such races.

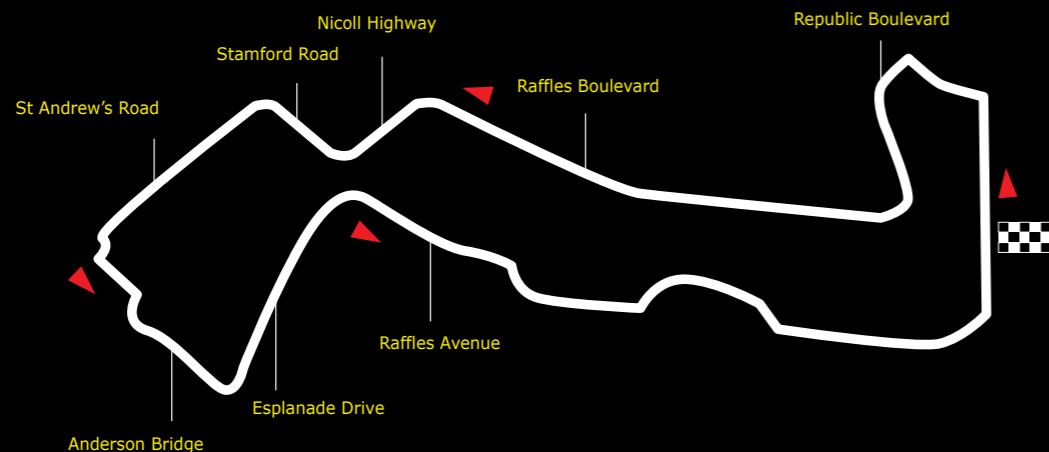
Enter 2007 and the dawn of a new beginning of motorsports in the island-state. In May last year, it was announced that Singapore entrepreneur Ong Beng Seng and the Singapore Tourism Board had signed a five-year deal to host the Formula One SingTel Singapore Grand Prix, with the first to be held in September 2008.

True to its promise of delivering an unforgettable experience, the Singapore race thrilled audiences around the world with an incident-filled 61 lap race that saw Spaniard Fernando Alonso climb from a low 15th position initially to emerge champion of the track.

The race had initially begun with Ferrari's Felipe Massa in pole position but a shocking mistake involving him driving off from the pit-lane with a fuel hose still connected to the race car, had cost him the lead. Teammate Kimi Raikkonen did not fare much better, losing control and crashing his vehicle four laps from the finish line.

Chockfull of nail-biting moments, the Singapore race received rave reviews from around the world, with Formula One Management President and CEO Bernie Ecclestone naming Singapore the "new jewel in the crown of Formula One". London's Sunday Times columnist and former race driver Martin Brundle called Singapore a "world-class venue" with an "electrifying" atmosphere.

The success of this year's Singapore Grand Prix has led motorsports enthusiasts to eagerly anticipate next year's Formula One which is slated for the same time period. The second instalment to its five-year run is touted to be the most exciting race of the season yet again. To welcome this exhilarating race, Singapore is already planning the buzz to heighten the Formula One fever in 2009.



ENTERTAINMENT EXTRAVAGANZA

To ensure that the experience of the Formula One Singapore Grand Prix was an unforgettable one for visitors and locals alike, the Singapore Tourism Board, along with several partners, collaborated to present a series of lifestyle and premium events alongside the action on the track. From waterfront entertainment to exclusive night parties to visual arts exhibitions, the festivities served to enthrall the public that rallied around central Singapore during and after the race period.

One of the highlights was the inaugural Singapore River Festival, which saw the historic river district come alive with nightly festivities. The free festival, from 19 to 28 September, celebrated elements of water, heritage and entertainment after sundown with live music, a mega illusion show and even a "water-less" dance party in a disused swimming pool.

"Legenda Singapura" was a dance drama spectacle on show for the festival and featured a float parade and tracks the journey of the legendary prince Sang Nila Utama to ancient Singapore which prompted the country's move to modernity. The River Festival closed with a big bang after the Grand Prix finale with a specially choreographed ensemble of cultural drums.

Experiencing art at the Singapore Biennale 2008 was another option for visitors. It was the sequel to the highly successful inaugural biennale of 2006. Public spaces dotted around the city centre served as exhibition venues, including the Central Promontory, a spot fringing Marina Bay that is set for redevelopment. The Biennale gave Formula One visitors a chance to be inspired by a provocative showcase of contemporary art by 137 renowned visual artists from over 36 countries. Apart from making art accessible to everyone, the Singapore Biennale is dedicated to providing a platform for outstanding innovation for the global arts community.

The Marina Bay circuit coursed through the exhibition and entertainment venues and gave visitors many things to do before the races.

And what better way is there to cool off after the races, than at the Singapore Beer Festival - another Asian first held from 2 to 5 October. Singapore played host to a global beer festival that offered the sampling of close to 300 different types of beer from around the world.



HEAD HONCHOS HEAD DOWN

With many corporate big-wigs in town to attend the Singapore Grand Prix, companies found it opportune to organise conferences and host international guests during this period. Corporate packages for the various VIP areas at the circuit such as the Sky Suites and the Paddock Club were snapped up despite the highest price for entry into the Paddock being tagged at a steep \$7,500.

As Mr Kees Stoute, Managing Director of EFG Bank Singapore, said in an interview in Singapore's Business Times: "We played host to customers, business partners, employees and visitors from the South and East Asia region, including India, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. The Formula One has redefined the boundaries of our relationship and put us on a fast track with these key stakeholders."

Millionaire Asia, a publication dedicated to celebrating the millionaire lifestyle, took advantage of the Formula One festivities to attract extremely high net worth individuals to attend Singapore's first Private Aviation Show. Officially supported by the Asian Business Aviation Association, the show was well-attended by some of the region's wealthiest individuals.

