Formula One™ teams are restricted to a pair of four-day test sessions, prior to the season opener in Albert Park, Melbourne. 2019 sees the teams return to Circuit de Catalunya, home of the Spanish Grand Prix for another electrifying pre-season spectacle.

The advantages of the Circuit de Catalunya are myriad: it has good transport links, excellent garage facilities and is close enough to the team’s headquarters to have viable logistics, but more importantly it offers a good chance of dry weather. Barcelona is the best challenge for a new F1™ car boasting long straights, an eclectic mix of low, fast, and high-speed corners with geometry and kerbs that put tyres and suspension components to the test. Though with a brand-new car, pushing flat-out isn’t necessarily the aim. Teams will be intent on getting laps under their belt and gaining an understanding of how the new car performs in various set-up configurations. The benchmark is 500km a day, every day. Though more is always better...

Ranked one of the top three European city destinations, Barcelona isn’t just a popular destination for Formula One™ teams. The ancient Mediterranean port city boasts a wealth of dining, nightlife, art and entertainment opportunities that continues well into the evening once on-track action has concluded. Check out our top recommendations on page 11, we’ve included something for every Formula One™ fan.
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LOCATION
Montmeló, Catalonia, Spain

NO. OF LAPS
66

FIRST GRAND PRIX
1991

DISTANCE
307.104km

TRACK LENGTH
4.655km

RACE LAP RECORD
1:18.441
Daniel Ricciardo, Red Bull Racing, 2018

RACE CALENDAR 2019

RACE | DATE | GRAND PRIX | VENUE
--- | --- | --- | ---
R01 | Mar 17 | Australia | Melbourne
R02 | Mar 31 | Bahrain | Bahrain
R03 | Apr 14 | China | Shanghai
R04 | Apr 28 | Azerbaijan | Baku
R05 | May 12 | Spain | Barcelona
R06 | May 26 | Monaco | Monaco
R07 | Jun 9 | Canada | Montreal
R08 | Jun 23 | France | Le Castellet
R09 | Jul 30 | Austria | Spielberg
R10 | Jul 14 | Great Britain | Silverstone
R11 | Jul 28 | Germany | Hockenheim
R12 | Aug 4 | Hungary | Budapest
R13 | Sep 1 | Belgium | Spa
R14 | Sep 8 | Italy | Monza
R15 | Sep 22 | Singapore | Singapore
R16 | Sep 29 | Russia | Sochi
R17 | Oct 13 | Japan | Suzuka
R18 | Oct 27 | Mexico | Mexico City
R19 | Nov 3 | USA | Austin
R20 | Nov 17 | Brazil | Sao Paulo
R21 | Dec 1 | Abu Dhabi | Yas Island
Ask Christian Horner whether the new phase of competition his Team embarks upon is a voyage into the unknown and you’ll receive a straight answer – he is unequivocal that the changes at the Team represent carefully evaluated evolution rather than risky revolution.

“Competing at the top level in sport is about existing in a constant state of evolution, and it covers every aspect of the Team. You’re not only looking at how things work at the track – bringing out the best in your drivers, fine-tuning set-up and strategy, as well as making sure the guys in the garage have everything they need to deliver a perfect weekend – you’re also always looking to move things forward back at base in terms of development time and how the systems within the Team work as a whole.

“It’s a constant process of analysis and evaluation. You always have to believe that the next big step forward, the next thing that will win races, is just around the corner.”

And Horner is convinced that the Team has identified its next major evolution with its change of engine partner, as the four-time world champions forge a new alliance with Honda for 2019 and beyond.

“We’re excited about our future with Honda. A change of engine supplier represents a significant shift for a team, but in Honda we feel we have united with a partner whose passion for competition and the technical challenge of F1™ matches ours.

“The good news is that Honda have had a very strong winter. Red Bull Technology has been working with them for 12 months and through that process we’ve been able to see their progress first hand, and they’re definitely headed in a good direction.”

He remains cautious about initial outcomes, however.

“We have to be realistic about the immediate road ahead and we don’t expect overnight success – although I’d happily take it! There will be weekends of good progress but also, given the parameters of the engine rules, times when we will encounter difficulties too. However, we are confident that the enormous potential we see in this partnership will deliver consistent progress.”

Horner also sees great possibilities for the Team’s 2019 driver pairing, with five-time race winner Max Verstappen joined by French driver Pierre Gasly.

“Max scored seven podiums from nine races after the summer break in 2018 – that’s the sort of form you’d see from a championship contender. His performance in the second half of last year was phenomenal and definitely points to a driver who is ready for a title shot, if we can give him the tools to do the job.

“I have no doubt that in Pierre we have a driver who will push Max every weekend. Pierre’s performances with Toro Rosso last season were impressive, particularly his fourth place in Bahrain, and sixth in Hungary. Results such as those, in his first full F1™ season, were hard to ignore, so when we needed a new driver to partner Max, we had no hesitation in choosing Pierre. He’s definitely a star for the future.”

Horner is reluctant to set any 2019 targets, save for one – to close the gap to the front of the pack.

“We are looking for progress. The objective is to be more consistent across all circuits and hopefully with more horsepower than last year we will be able to reduce the gap to our rivals. If we can accomplish that then we know we have a team – at the track and at the factory – capable of delivering victories and ultimately championships.”
As the Team embarks on a new era, there's no better driver to lead the charge than Max Verstappen, who is fast approaching the peak of his racing powers.

In a sport driven by data, the numbers rarely lie, and even a cursory look at Max Verstappen's 2018 F1™ stats show that the young Dutchman is undoubtedly reaching the top of his game. Enjoying the most successful of his four seasons to date, Max racked up 11 podiums in 2018, including two exceptional wins at the Team's home track in Austria and in Mexico, where he took a second consecutive, almost flawless win. He ended the season fourth in the Drivers' standings, with a grand total of 249 points. The performance, some 81 points and seven podium finishes better off than the previous campaign, points to a driver ready to go wheel-to-wheel with the sport's multiple world champions.

"This will be my fifth season in Formula 1™, my third with the Team," he says, before bursting into laughter. "That's a bit weird, isn't it? Even for me to say I'm going into my fifth season and that I'm getting close to 100 races is a bit strange at just 21 years of age but that's how it is.

"Has all that experience had an effect? Absolutely. I think I approach Formula 1™ in a completely different way now, in terms of how relaxed I am. I know what to expect in general. I do my own thing and I just try to get the best out of the car, out of myself and out of the Team."

For 2019, that process began in January, with Max returning from a short holiday for a first taste of the RB15 – in the simulator.

"The first feeling was good," he smiles. "It was the same last year, but even with the new regulations for 2019, hopefully we'll have a great car to develop from – and with Honda, hopefully we can close the gap to Ferrari and Mercedes."

The Team's switch to Honda power is one Max is enthusiastic about.

"Sometimes it's good to change. I think it brings new energy. It is a new challenge and everybody is really motivated. Honda are working really hard on their side. They really want to perform and to win races, and they know that with Red Bull they can do that. We have to wait and see, but I think the main target is that throughout the season we pull closer to Ferrari and Mercedes."

The Dutch ace is under no illusions, however, and acknowledges that any new partnership takes time to bed in.

"We know that this is not going to be straightforward from race one," he admits. "They have to push the development, so maybe we'll have a weekend where it doesn't go that well, but I think we're all prepared for that and, at the end of the day, we want to win races and as long as you win a lot of races in a season, you can fight for a championship and that's where we want to get to."

The new era at the Team extends to a new team-mate in the shape of Pierre Gasly, and Max is sure the French driver will quickly find his groove with the Team.

"I've known Pierre since 2010 in karting. He's a good guy and he's a quick guy as well, so it's a new experience but I think it will be a good partnership. I'm looking forward to racing alongside him."

But while it is a period of change, the core of the Team remains the same and Max is sure that continuity can help propel the Team to new heights.

"Last year, there were some difficult moments for all of us and it's important to see how people react to those hardships," he explains. "I think in general it was extremely positive last year and I really enjoyed being with the Team. They are winners, they really want to win and there are no limits. I really enjoy that kind of environment. And because of that you can really get the best out of yourself and that's what we'll take into this year."

And while Max admits it's impossible to talk targets for the season, the racer in him can't help looking to the top step.

"What do I want out of 2019? Victories – a lot of victories!"
Pierre Gasly steps into the hot seat for 2019. It’s where he deserves to be.

Pierre Gasly is the latest in a long line of Formula 1™ drivers who were in the right place at the right time. When Aston Martin Red Bull Racing discovered they had a vacancy for 2019, the Frenchman from Rouen, just 17 races into his F1™ career, was at the top of a strong list of candidates. Pierre ticked all the right boxes: a graduate of the Red Bull Junior Programme, driving for sister team Toro Rosso, with a stellar junior career that suggested he was a young man going places. It wasn’t a straightforward no-brainer – because there are too many talented F1™ drivers for anything to be quite so simple – but when Pierre’s promotion was announced, no-one was particularly surprised.

It isn’t luck. Or rather, F1 drivers make their own luck. Pierre earned his promotion with an excellent run of results in the first half of 2018, grabbing every point on offer – and a few that weren’t: “I knew before the season that I would get three or four opportunities to score points, where the car was stronger or the conditions were in our favour,” he says. “I went into the season focussed on making sure that I was ready to take the best out of any opportunity that presented itself.”

That opportunity came sooner than anyone expected. In Bahrain – just the second race of the Toro Rosso-Honda partnership – Pierre qualified a magnificent sixth and finished the race fourth. It marked him out as very much the driver to watch in 2018. He followed that with an excellent seventh place in Monaco and a gutsy sixth in Hungary. A few weeks later, during F1™’s traditional post-Hungarian Grand Prix summer break, Pierre received word that he’d be moving up to partner Max Verstappen in 2019.

Given Max’s reputation, that’s a daunting prospect – but Pierre takes it entirely in his stride. “I’ve known Max since we were in karting. We have a good friendship and mutual respect. He’s super-fast – and if you want to learn and develop, the fastest way is to go up against super-strong drivers – so being in the same team as Max is going to be good for me.”

Pierre has knowledge to impart as well as things to learn. With Aston Martin Red Bull Racing having their first new engine supplier in 12 years, Pierre’s experience of working with Honda in 2018 is a useful fillip – though he argues, the value is more cultural than technical.

“Of course there has been lots of detail requested – but perhaps more useful from my side was sharing knowledge of how we developed the working relationship with the Honda guys last year: to get the most out of our feedback.”

Pierre is better prepared than most for the challenge of joining a new team, because Aston Martin Red Bull Racing isn’t a new team. In addition to change, he also represents continuity. As a leading light of the Red Bull Junior Programme, Pierre has been a familiar presence in both the factory and the garage for many years. Before joining Toro Rosso, he did a stint as our official reserve driver, and has the distinction of having completed hundreds of test laps in every Red Bull car from the RB11 onwards.

“It definitely helps,” he says. “The responsibilities of being a race driver are different to being a reserve driver, but understanding how the Team operates, knowing the cars, and a lot of the people, means that you can get down to work straight away.

“Of course, you always need to adapt to a new environment – but this is really exciting. I’m now where I’ve always wanted to be: driving in Formula 1™ for a team that knows how to deliver a World Championship-winning car. It’s a fantastic opportunity.”
Dry weather compounds
For 2019 F1 tyres will feature just three colours – red, yellow and white. However, the compounds used for each tyre will vary from race to race. Five different compounds will be utilised, numbered C1 to C5, with C1 being the hardest and C5 being the softest.

C1
The hardest tyre in the 2019 Pirelli range, sitting just below the 2018 hard. It’s designed for circuits that put the highest energy loads through the tyres, which will typically feature fast corners, abrasive surfaces – Silverstone for example.

C2
Effectively last year’s medium tyre. It’s suited to circuits that tend towards high speeds, temperatures, and energy loads. In 2018, the medium was offered at 10 of the 21 races and featured heavily in locations such as Bahrain and Spain.

C3
This is equivalent to the soft that was nominated for all but four races last year. An adaptable tyre, it could be used as the softest tyre at circuits that work the tyres particularly hard or could be used as the hardest tyre at less severe tracks or street circuits.

C4
This is closest to the 2018 ultrasoft and it works well on tight and twisty circuits – think Monaco, Hungary or Singapore. It has a rapid warm-up and huge peak performance, but the downside is a relatively limited lifespan.

C5
The softest 2019 compound is the heir to the 2018 hypersoft tyre. This tyre is suitable for all circuits that demand high levels of mechanical grip, but the trade-off for the extra speed is a short lifespan. This one’s about raw pace over longevity.

Wet weather compounds
The wet and intermediate tyres have been redesigned this year with new tread patterns and structures. This makes them more efficient and also more versatile. As a result, there are no longer two specifications of wet and intermediate tyre in 2019; instead just one wet tyre and one intermediate tyre will be available to suit all circuits and conditions.

Intermediate (green)
Intermediates are designed for use on a wet track with no standing water, as well as a drying surface. This tyre displaces 30 litres of water per second per tyre at 300kph. The new compound has been formulated to provide a wider working range and for a better crossover with full wets and slick tyres.

Wet (blue)
The full wet tyres are the most effective solution for heavy rain. These tyres can displace 85 litres of water per second per tyre at 300kph. There’s a new profile designed to increase resistance to aquaplaning, which will give the tyre more grip in heavy rain.
Formula 1™ is sometimes a victim of its own success. Teams have become highly proficient at extracting every last point of downforce from their aerodynamic packages – but in recent years that’s made it very difficult for one car to catch and overtake another.

Overtaking in F1™ shouldn’t be easy – but there’s been a groundswell of opinion that it’s become too difficult. A big part of the problem is ‘wake turbulence’. The aerodynamics of a Formula 1™ car work best with a smooth, consistent airflow over the bodywork. This is problematic as the front wheels tend to disrupt that airflow and create turbulence. Teams try to push this turbulent air out to the sides, allowing ‘clean’ air to infill. This works very well for your car – but not so well for the one following, which has to battle through a disturbed wake. Many of the aerodynamic changes coming in for 2019 are tasked with decreasing the amount of wake turbulence through which a car has to drive.

Front Wings

The most noticeable change for 2019 is a new shape of front wing. It’s wider, and has fewer elements attached. Wings act as vortex generators, designed to push turbulent air out sideways. In an attempt to limit this, in 2019, front wings are limited to five elements either side. They will feature simpler endplates and are limited to two strakes under the car. The wing is moved forward to 25mm, its height increases by 20mm and the width is increased to the full 2000mm width of the car, to make up for any loss of downforce.

Brake Ducts

The purpose of brake ducts was to ram cool air into the car’s braking systems to prevent overheating. However in practice, ducts have become more complex as teams seek to use them to channel air wherever it is most effective. The design of ducts will be simpler in 2019, again with the intention of controlling the wake.

Rear Wings

Changes to the front wing, bargeboards and brake ducts will make the wake narrower – but they won’t eradicate it. The redesigned rear wing is intended to deflect the turbulent air up and over the following car in an effect the aerodynamicists refer to as ‘mushrooming’. The rear wing is 20mm higher and 100mm wider than the 2018 edition. The number of endplate slots will be controlled this year, and the drag reduction system is made more powerful with the opening between the flap and main plane increased by 20mm, which is intended to make the DRS 25 per cent more effective.

Bargeboards

The bargeboards either side of the cockpit are being moved and shrunk for 2019, in an effort to make them less effective and thus, less disruptive. The new regs make them 150mm smaller, and pushed forward 106mm.
GOING OUT in Barcelona

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KEY:
- Restaurant
- Lounge bar
- Club