

Qatar set to join FIA World Endurance Championship in 2024

The FIA World Endurance Championship has signed a six-year contract for a new race in Qatar. The inaugural 6 Hours of Qatar is set to take place in 2024, with the championship due to race there until at least 2029.

Revealed at an announcement ceremony in Doha this evening, the new 6-hour endurance is expected to form the 2024 FIA WEC season-opener and will be staged at the Lusail International Circuit, located on the outskirts of the country's capital Doha. The circuit is currently undergoing extensive renovation and remodeling to the paddock area and facilities with the latest renders revealed at tonight's announcement ceremony.

The WEC's official pre-season test, more commonly known as The Prologue, is to take place in Qatar preceding the race.

Also present in Doha were four Hypercars from renowned endurance racing manufacturers that will race in the WEC's headline category in 2024: the Ferrari 499P, the Peugeot 9x8, the Porsche 963 and Toyota's GR010 HYBRID Hypercar.

It marked the first time these four Hypercars have been seen together, with the 6 Hours of Qatar set to be a defining moment in endurance racing history as all four manufacturers will go head-to-head in the WEC's increasingly-popular Hypercar category which now has a minimum of eight manufacturers committed for 2024.

Since the WEC's inception back in 2012, Qatar will be the 13th country that the championship has visited as the series continues its mission to promote endurance racing and the spirit of Le Mans to new regions and territories across the globe.

First built in 2004, the Lusail International Circuit is the only circuit in the region to have both FIA and FIM homologation licenses. It has been home to MotoGP for several years, and hosted Formula 1 for the first time last year.

The event was attended by many notable and high-profile Qatari personalities including H.E. Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdul Aziz Al Thani, Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, H.E. Mr. Salah bin Ghanim Al-Ali, Minister of Sports and Youth, His Excellency Mr. Akbar Al Baker, Chief Executive Officer of Qatar Airways Group - the event's sponsor - and Chairman of Qatar Tourism, and Mr. Abdulrahman bin Abdullatif Al Mannai, President of Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation (QMMF). The event was also attended by representatives of the FIA WEC including ACO President Pierre Fillon, FIA Endurance Commission President Richard Mille, FIA WEC CEO Frédéric Lequien, as well as top FIA WEC drivers such as Kamui Kobayashi (Toyota), Laurens Vanthoor (Porsche) and Alessandro Pier Guidi (Ferrari).

More details about the 6 Hours of Qatar race will be revealed in due course. The event's date, along with the complete 2024 FIA WEC calendar, will be submitted for approval to FIA World Motor Sport Council, the decision-making body responsible for international four-wheel motorsport, next year.

Pierre Fillon, ACO President: We are delighted to extend the FIA World Endurance championship to include such a fabulous circuit. From 2024, Lusail will open the championship, offering competitors top-class surroundings. My heartfelt thanks to Abdulrahman Al-Mannai and everyone at the circuit for this superb opportunity for endurance racing.”

Richard Mille, President of the Endurance Commission: “Lusail International Circuit is a modern venue that is well accustomed to the demands of world-level motor sport events. Therefore, having it joining FIA World Endurance Championship is a positive and logical development. Enhancing regional diversity is something very important to the FIA. At the same time, promoting motorsport and promoting FIA WEC at new markets is something that will be beneficial for the fans, the manufacturers involved and the promoter. It’s good to see the FIA WEC ecosystem growing in a controlled manner and expanding through addition of events located outside Europe.”

Frédéric Lequien, FIA WEC CEO, said: “We are delighted to have signed a minimum six-year contract with Lusail International Circuit to bring the WEC to Qatar for the very first time. The extensive renovations that are currently underway at Lusail will make it one of the most prestigious race circuits in the world. 2024 will be a very memorable year – not only will we have several global manufacturers competing in the Hypercar category, but we’ll be taking endurance racing to another new territory.”

Abdulrahman bin Abdullatif al-Mannai, President of Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation: “We are proud to have established a solid position in the local, regional and international sports scene. The WEC is widely followed and it is currently one of the most globally recognised racing championships. For what the event represents worldwide, Qatar is immensely honored to host the opening round in the 12th season of WEC in 2024. Undoubtedly, hosting this much-anticipated edition of WEC is yet another major milestone and another Qatari dream fulfilled. We’ve already made the necessary circuit renovations and upgrades to deliver a world-class state-of-the-art experience to both spectating fans and participating drivers, implementing all the changes that are needed for us to conform with the FIA’s technical standards and bringing in advanced technologies that are fitting for one of its sporting events, but we’re certain that this six-year journey we’ve embarked on will motivate us to push the boundaries of what we previously thought to be achievable even further, allowing us to make tremendous improvements to the venue come 2030.”

Mr. Akbar Al Baker, Qatar Airways Group CEO and The Chairman of Qatar Tourism: “We are excited to see another premier motorsport category; the FIA World Endurance Championship coming to Qatar in 2024. Like Formula 1 - that will race again at Lusail Circuit in 2023 - these Hypercars use best-in-class technology to push the boundaries of engineering. The series involves the most prestigious manufacturers from around the world and draws a global audience. These attributes of advanced technology and global appeal are pivotal to the ongoing development of tourism in The State of Qatar. We congratulate the QMMF on securing the race annually until 2029 and look forward to more world class motorsports events to come.”

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About QMMF

QMMF (Qatar Motor and Motorcycle Federation) was first established in 1987 as an NGO to promote motorsports in Qatar by hosting local, regional and international motor and motorbike championships. Since its inception, QMMF has created the Qatar Motorsports Academy to nurture, empower and motivate young and promising riders and drivers in Qatar to pursue their dreams, and it's been at the helm of the sport's promotion in the state through the hosting of major international racing events such as MotoGP and F1. The FIA WEC is the most recent addition to the Federation's extensive international championship hosting portfolio.

About LCSC

Built in 2004, the Lusail Circuit Sports Club (LCSC) is a world-class racing circuit situated 20km away from the center of Doha, and it is the only circuit in the region to host both the FIA F1 and the FIM MotoGP international championships. Widely recognized for its iconic floodlights, LCSC is one of the largest permanently lit venues of any kind in the world which is equivalent in size to 70 FIFA playing fields. Designed to be a high-speed circuit with a mix of high and medium speed bends, 5.4 km long with a 1km straight.

About the FIA World Endurance Championship

The WEC is the premier international sportscar championship in the world, offering motor manufacturers a real-world relevance to advances in road car design and crossover technology, performance and safety. Strong, stable regulations allow for complex yet beautiful sports prototypes featuring the latest in hybrid technology, independent chassis and engines suppliers competing at the highest levels, and the world's leading luxury car marques going head-to-head in the GT categories. Over 30 cars are on track at the same time, leading to action, excitement, endless passing and entertainment for fans worldwide.

The WEC offers teams, drivers, partners and stakeholders a unique stage on which to compete, at premier race circuits around the world. Ranked alongside the Olympics, the Super Bowl and the soccer World Cup, the cornerstone of the WEC remains one of the world's greatest sporting events, the 24 Hours of Le Mans. Contested over six rounds across North America, Europe, Asia and the Middle East – there are races of varying distances, from the shortest at 6 hours to the longest at 24 hours.

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