

A transatlantic crossing for the Éclair: A symbol of Michelin's 120 years' active involvement in motorsport!

The Éclair, a highlight of the Aventure Michelin exhibition in Clermont-Ferrand, France, was the first car to travel on pneumatic tyres. More than a century later, it is about to embark on a journey to, and around the United States of America.

Its U.S. visit will begin with Monterey Car Week (August 11-16) in California, one of the world's most esteemed classic car gatherings. The event culminates in the prestigious Pebble Beach Concours d'Élégance where more than 50,000 visitors are expected to attend the event's 65th edition.

Then, subject to final confirmation, Éclair could possibly make appearances in San Francisco, New York and Chicago before returning to its Clermont-Ferrand home in early November.

This vehicle was designed by the Michelin brothers in 1895 and features a Peugeot chassis powered by a Daimler motorboat engine. Its forward movement was a little erratic and it tended to zigzag along the road, hence the name 'Éclair', which is French for 'lightning'.

It was made by a team of passionate engineers and was the first vehicle to ride on pneumatic tyres. It was a bold gamble but Édouard and André Michelin chose to prove the value of their invention by entering as one of the 30 teams in the 1895 Paris-Bordeaux road race, recognised as the first major race in motorsport history.

They were the only entrants to tackle the 1,178-kilometre competition (which ran from Versailles to Bordeaux and back, via Orléans, Blois, Tours, Poitiers and Angoulême) on pneumatic tyres, a pioneering feat that paved the way for modern mobility.

The replica of this remarkable machine will leave its home in France on July 30 and arrive in Monterey on August 7 – 120 years after the original's landmark performance – ahead of its three other star appearances in the U.S.

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