



111  
Making a splash  
Mark Webber  
celebrates his  
Grand Prix win

## ACCESS ALL AREAS THE TOP FIVE TICKETS

○ **Monaco Grand Prix** Five days in a five-star hotel, dinners, parties, clubs, meet-and-greets with drivers, unlimited booze, first-class view of the course, personalised headphones in the pit-lane garage, chance to drive one lap of the course when the roads are closed between qualifying. Oh, and a shoo-in on some of the blue-chip superyacht parties. Only likely if you have access to teams, big-money sponsors, Prince Albert or Bernie. From £15,000 per person, but you can't really buy this kind of access unless you have contacts.

○ **Wimbledon** Hospitality in the Gatsby Club or Fairway Village, seat in a box or best court-side seat, champagne breakfast, four-course lunch, cream tea, possibly meet players. All for £4,000 per person, but may rise for an interesting final (are you reading this, Andy Murray?).

○ **World Cup in South Africa** Sponsors and their families are already heading out for long bouts of corporate back-slapping in boxes at the various stadiums. Hiring one for all matches costs £1m — that's before you've flown anyone out, taken them to dinner or put them up in a nice hotel. Tickets are relatively easy to come by, but rules and regulations around corporate jolly, plus the long flight, have put off many hospitality providers.

○ **Glastonbury** Four nights in the ultra-posh Camp Kerala in a five-star Bedouin tent, fully catered, hot and cold running everything, fine dining and VIP tickets that give you access to the backstage bar. No "rave butter" to roll spliffs, but you could get a chopper (to fly you in and out, obviously). About £4,500 per person.

○ **Serenata classical music festival** For the CEOs who don't do Glastonbury, here comes a rather more refined weekender, with an awful lot of champagne and oysters, personal butlers, more Bedouin tents (this time housing double beds and freestanding baths) and, of course, string quartets and sopranos.

can be. The company has put them up at the Monte Carlo Beach hotel, and leased Karl Lagerfeld's old home, the vast Villa la Vigie, for entertaining. The precious clients and potential new customers will watch the race from the McLaren apartment, a privately owned pad that is gutted and built solely for four days of hospitality porn. It overlooks a long stretch of the track, and guests are treated to casual visits from various key players in the McLaren team over the weekend. There will be trips to the pit lane and paddock, where all the teams have their trailers and where drivers' girlfriends slope about looking cutely camera-unready.

In the evening there are dinners, private parties on boats and tables at Jimmy's, at Amber Lounge, the pop-up club run by Sonia Irvine, sister to Eddie (she gave birth three weeks before the GP, but was working 24/7 — "My baby will get to know me after the race"), and at Patrick Cox and David Furnish's new copycat venture, Royale. These tables have been booked weeks in advance. Tables at Jimmy's start at £8,000 for a house-champagne all-you-can-drink package, rising a few grand if it's unlimited Cristal you want. Yes, it's naff, but this is how they roll down here. This is money chilling.

In the end, only the Chinese go to Jimmy's, and don't stay long. (Rather than leave an empty table laden with Cristal, some of the Quintessentially staff who organised the trip head down after work at 2am.) Hotels, restaurant and club bookings, tenders and cars are paid for in advance, cost at least three times as much as normal and are nonrefundable.

## EVEN A MODEST PACKAGE COSTS £15,000, BUT THIS IS WHERE BIG MONEY DOES BUSINESS

Steinmetz makes a few sales, and is still in negotiation with one of its grand prix guests over a flawless 50-carat briolette-cut boiled egg of a rock. Levin would "politely prefer not to comment on the price". Based on its size, another diamantaire hazards a guess that it will sell for anything from £10m to £30m. The diamond expert is just one small player among hundreds of companies that use the Monaco Grand Prix to business ends. One start-up entrepreneur I meet tells me that he has dropped a significant amount on getting potential clients out here. "I find the race a bit boring, frankly," he says. "God, you wouldn't come here if it wasn't good for business. It's expensive." One estimate has it that the aggregate worth of all the sponsors of the race lies somewhere between the GDP of China and Germany.

Red Bull, which placed first and second in the race, goes about things differently. At Monaco it ships in a pontoon, complete with swimming pool and various tiers of importance. Up top, on the third level, are the team's owners, VVIP money and celebrities. On the bottom level there are all sorts — "widget-makers and their girlfriends", as one person described it. The Energy Station rocks to a different beat. Dominick Mitsch, Team Red Bull's head of marketing, says: "What you see at Red Bull is the Top of the Pops of F1."

On a team such as McLaren, which is hugely reliant on sponsors, the PR value of your drivers is essential. With Lewis Hamilton and Jenson Button, they're laughing. Both are handsome and squeaky clean. Hamilton jokingly says: "Before Jenson joined the team, I'd see him strolling around in jeans and a T-shirt with an ice lolly, while I was all done up in my suit, stressed out." Both agree that 70% of their time is spent on PR. Neither appears to mind; this is an accepted part of the McLaren driver's job. The meet-and-greets — aka grip'n'grins — that will give their sponsor's seen-it-all clients a rare little-boy thrill are what keep their motors running. Martin Whitmarsh, the team principal, describes the varying levels of fans who follow the sport, before saying: "Then there are the people just into the sex, drugs and rock'n'roll of F1 that's exemplified by Monaco."

When Mark Webber leapt 30ft from the Red Bull Energy Station's swimming pool into the harbour, the Steinmetz clients were sitting in a Riva, one of those cream-leather-trimmed, glossy wooden-hulled speedboats, the aquatic equivalent of a chauffeur-driven Merc. Bobbing in the water, still in his racing gear, Webber pulled off his socks and hurled them into the air. Delighted, a Steinmetz customer caught one. In the end, the sex is the smelly sock of a winning racing driver. The sock costs nothing, but being in its path cost thousands. Perhaps it is the same client currently negotiating the price of that 50-carat diamond. ○