

# The Macau Grand Prix



Phil

## As a Macau resident, one's feelings are mixed

As Macau residents, a car race is not a strange thing to us. Ever since we were kids, my friends and I were excited by the fast moving, streamlining formula 3 cars, touring cars and motorcycles.

Some peopos say they go to Hong Kong each year to escape from the noise of engines of racing cars during the Grand Prix, and some schools just organize field trips to Coloane, since teachers' voice can never be louder in the class. But in the race days, hotels are fully booked, restaurants have good business, taxi drivers always find there are plenty of clients waiting for them in queues. Moreover, some say that Macau's image is well promoted to the world through this event. As things have two sides, so does the Macau Grand Prix.

Imagining the roaring engines, smoke and gas smell around us and the cheering audience at the Grand Stand, we drove by the pole position, fancying we were leading the rest of the racing cars. Turning left, we passed the Reservoir Stand, then we were on a straight road. Soon, we came to the Mandarin Oriental Bend. Leaving it behind, we soon reached the Lisboa Bend. This is the corner where incidents very often happen. If an incident happens, track marshals will wave the yellow flags, indicating danger. Racing cars overtaking under this flag is always prohibited.

Macau has her own track, with bends and narrow corners, uphill and downhill sections, requiring drivers' constant attention to keep changing their gear to fit the track. This, among other things, makes Macau a unique place in the world for car race. Along the track, patches of green areas, old European and Chinese houses dot the Guia Circuit.

Then our car ran uphill, to our left are the old Portuguese barracks in pink, built in 1864, after demolishing the Fort and Convent of S. Francisco. On our way, we found the famous old Guia Fort and Lighthouse, which still shines at night.

Before long, we ran up to a left turn, the Maternity Bend, behind it now stands the S. Januário Hospital, a public hospital which has expansion projects going on. Then we took a quick left turn, on the right side, is the Parsees' Cemetery, which has been there since 19th Century. It is said that the Parsees came to Macau with the Portuguese in the 18th Century.

Turning right, we entered the curves of Estrada de Cacilhas, with greenery all around us. Then we got to the Solitude Esses, in Chinese "Tong Gau Wan (割狗環)". Strangely but interestingly enough, "Tong Gau Wan" signifies a spot where dogs are slaughtered. It sounds just as remote and lonely as the word solitude denotes it, while dog-slaughtering sends out something creepy.

Then we went down to the bottom of the Estrada, while looking at the right, we found the beautiful sight of the reservoir. Pretty soon we passed the Moorish

## The start of the Macau Grand Prix

It was 1954. How was it started? Simply put, a group of Macau friends decided to hold a fun motoring "treasure hunt". They thought it to be informal. So they sought some advice on how best the hunt should be organized. Then they were told what was planned was not a treasure hunt. It was a Grand Prix. The Macau Grand Prix was then born.

## The circuit's various bends

Very often people talk about how difficult and challenging the Guia Circuit is. I have always wondered where the various parts are located. I tried to go through this circuit once myself. So I started, as competing drivers, at the Grand Stand at the start/finish point. Getting into the pits opposite, I do not find the sight we usually see during the Grand Prix race day. There will be a team of technicians working perfectly together for the racing cars, changing tires and the like in seconds. Nor do we find any formula 3 cars, motorcycles or touring cars.

Hill, seeing the typical Moorish style façade at the right. And then we turned into the Dona Maria Bend, with its Chinese name, "Hoi Kok lao Wen Wan (海角遊魂灣)", meaning "wondering soul by the corner of the sea". If one leaves out the surrounding buildings behind and looks outward, he will find the sea and the boundless sky and the horizon unbroken. Such Chinese name seems best to describe the place as the end of the world, like that of "Tin Ai Hoi Kok (天涯海角)", the famous southern tip in the second large island of China, the Hainan Island. I can imagine in the fifties or sixties, this area must have seen only a few people. And this must be how this place acquired its name in the old days among the Chinese community. Now, a tall chimney is most prominent.

Then we arrived at a very dramatic bend in the Guia Circuit, the Melco Hairpin. First gear is recommended, since the bend has only seven metres in width. Quickly, we were back on the wide track section at the Fisherman's Road. This is a long steep road, one should drive with extra care with the walls on the right side. Then we approached the flat part, with the Tin Hau Ancient Temple, in Chinese "Tin Hau Gu Miu (天后古廟)", came to sight in the right. It was firstly built in the Ching Dynasty. Its location tells us that the road should have been part of a sea shore. A Tin Hau temple is always constructed to face the sea to protect fishermen. Fishermen's Road, with its name telling

us Macau has so much to do with the sea. Then we headed for the Fishermen's Bend, in Chinese "lu lung Wan (漁翁灣)", a fast right-hander. The exit is critical to prepare for the final corner the "R" Bend, before passing the start/finish point, and commencing another lap of the circuit.

Very soon, the last turn was made. The Grand Stand came into sight. Once again, we could imagine being in the real Grand Prix event, crowds must be now yelling, dust flying up. With the checkered flag flying, it was time for the winners to get up to the podium. With the usual champagne to spray around themselves and the cheering crowds, they celebrated and relieved their nerves and muscles after the tense exercise of racing. So we came to the end of this 6.2 kilometre circuit, which have seen six decades of grand prix races.

## The future

In the future, environment issue may find its way into the grand prix. One may wonder if an electric car race will take place here, to pioneer a new kind of racing, with speed but no smoke, echoing the world's voice for a green planet.

"Courtesy of Macau Grand Prix Committee, Macau Government Tourist Office and Macao Magazine"

## Word list / 單詞表 :

Barrack	兵房	Mandarin Oriental Bend	文華東方彎
changing gear	轉換排檔	Maternity Bend	產房彎
Chapel of Our Lady of Penha	主教山小堂	Melco Hairpin	髮夾彎
Convent of S. Francisco	聖方濟各修道院	Moorish Hill	摩囉園
Estrada de Cacilhas	海邊馬路	motorcycles	電單車
façade	建築物的正面牆壁	paddock	集車處
formula 3 cars	3級方程式車輛	Parsees' Cemetery	白頭墳場
fun motoring "treasure hunt"	汽車 "尋寶" 活動	pit	維修站
Guia Hill	東望洋山	podium	頒獎台
Guia Circuit	東望洋賽道	"R" Bend	水塘北角彎
Guia Lighthouse	東望洋燈塔	Reservoir Stand	水塘灣看台
Hainan Island	海南島	S. Januário Hospital	仁伯爵綜合醫院
Lisboa Bend	葡京灣	touring cars	房車
Macau Grand Prix	澳門格蘭披治大賽車	track marshal	賽道工作人員