

# Around the world in 13 days

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11/03/2018 Blogger and influencer Daniel Fuchs, also known as Magic Fox, looks behind the scenes of Porsche Motorsport by embarking on a motorsports world tour, with visits to the legendary 24-hour race in Daytona, the 12-hour race in Bathurst, Australia, and an electric go-kart circuit in Singapore.

While other passengers rush to the car rental counter or catch the bus to head downtown, we have Porsche vehicles waiting for us. Right at the front is my 718 Boxster S in Miami Blue. If there was ever a car that was tailor-made for the Florida sun and beaches, this is it! My body is pressed back into the sports seat as I accelerate onto Highway 95, and a smile finally returns to my face after the exhausting flight. It always amazes me how the four-cylinder boxer engine kicks with the same amount of force as the six-cylinder engine in my 911 at home. We activate the cruise control as we head straight for the north. Four hours and no back pain. Good sports seats truly are a fine thing. Daytona, here we come!

**Friday, January 26, 7:00 am – Daytona Beach**

Due to my jet lag, I wake up even before the alarm on my iPhone goes off. You cannot trick your internal clock. In Germany, it is already six hours later. Before I've even had breakfast, I drive across the beach in the Boxster as the sun rises. "World's most famous beach" is emblazoned in large letters above the main entrance. It is supposed to cost 20 dollars to drive across the white sand, however the cashiers are not yet up and about at this early hour. Tough luck! I get my blood pumping with a short morning jog. The firm and level sand is the perfect surface for running. I basically don't sink into the sand at all, yet every step is cushioned. It's no wonder that races were held here up until 1958 and that this beach was the birthplace of the NASCAR series.

**Friday, January 26, 9:00 am – Daytona International Speedway**

After a brief morning coffee, we drive to Daytona International Speedway – which happens to be the largest motorsports stadium in the world alongside Indianapolis. Even from a distance you can see the gigantic main stand, which is 52 metres tall. There is space for a total of 200,000 spectators.

**Friday, January 26, 11:00 am – Hardcore fans**

At Rolex 24, other than at the start of the race, most fans do not tend to sit in the giant stand. Instead, they sit on camping stools in the infield. Here, BBQs, music and partying are the order of the day. As I walk through the rows of giant caravans with extending bays, a group invites me to join them for a beer and some barbecued pork. They also want my signature – on the leg of a mannequin. After this ritual, I will be a member of their club, says Dave Cunningham. As a sign of my membership I receive a wristband and a black pair of plastic biker sunglasses. These guys are hardcore...

**Friday, January 26, 12:00 pm – Porscheplatz**

There is a much more civilised atmosphere amongst the fans at Porscheplatz. No – this is not a rail station like the one in Stuttgart-Zuffenhausen. Porsche Club America, which is the biggest single-brand club in the world with over 100,000 members, refers to the meeting place for its members on the race track as Porscheplatz. Nearly 150 Porsche are parked here in row upon row. From the 356 to the 911 GT3 RS, here it's one beauty after another. And of course the owners love to talk about what their car can do...

## Friday, January 26, 1:00 pm – Troublemaker

Now it's time to take a closer look at the paddock. The wildest 911 of all time stands in one of the last boxes: the 911 RSR. The Porsche works team is deploying two of these racing cars, which deliver an output of over 500 hp, in the 24-hour race in Daytona. I know some of the drivers from Le Mans and it seems that they know me too. And before I know it, I'm being asked if I would like to sit in a 911 worth almost one million euro. "Can I take it for a lap?" I joke. But the world champion and Le Mans winner Earl Bamber just shakes his head and says "nice try". Well never mind, the guys need the car to be in perfect condition for Saturday and Sunday, I suppose...

**Friday, January 26, 2:00 pm – Steep, steeper, Daytona**

The steep curves don't look nearly as steep from afar, I think to myself as I make the most of a break in the training session to get a close-up view of the famous Daytona finishing line. Even here, in the flattest part of the oval circuit, I almost need to use my hands to help me climb up the so-called banking. With a signature, I will be immortalised on this piece of asphalt, which is sacred for racing fans. Tomorrow, when the 50 starters drive over my name for the first time with their wide rubber tyres, then the 24-hour race in Daytona will be underway.

**Saturday, January 27, 10:00 am – It's race day**

The drivers, engineers and mechanics are starting to get more nervous. Yesterday at the communal dinner, Laurens Vanthoor told me that even during winter in rain and snow, he still goes out on his racing bike every day. He went on to ask me what sports I do. Now he is in the tunnel. During the qualification round, Laurens secured the third starting place while driving the 911 RSR with the giant rear wing. Yesterday, he said that he is going to start the race and be careful to avoid any early mishaps. "You cannot win the race during the first few hours, but you can certainly lose it", he says. He should know – after all, he has already won the 24-hour race in Spa and the 24 Hours Nürburgring...

**Saturday, January 27, 2.40 pm – The start**

Before the vehicles with almost 28,000 hp between them are sent on their way at 2:40 pm, first, it's time to get a little patriotic. A priest prays that the drivers get through the race safely. A singer belts out an a cappella version of the American national anthem, and holds the notes for so long that you begin to wonder where all the air is coming from. Shortly after, the command "gentlemen, start your engines" booms through the loudspeakers. As the engines of the racing cars are started, the sound resembles a rock concert. I have goosebumps.

**Sunday, January 28, 12.20 am – The crash**

Since the start of the race, the cars in the GTLM class have been incredibly close. The lead changes hands again and again. The 911 RSR also briefly takes the lead. But then all of a sudden, the guys in the command station on the pit wall all put their hands on their heads. Nick Tandy has lost control of his car in the bus stop chicane and crashed hard into the wall. They all run quickly into the garage, where parts now need to be replaced under high pressure. What I see next is pure teamwork. Even the drivers help to get the car back on the track. Now 13 laps behind, the 911 finally sets off again. The race is pretty much lost, but the Porsche GT team deserve a medal for their team spirit.

**Sunday, January 28, 2.40 pm – 24 hours later**

Even though Porsche, the record winner, didn't make it onto the podium this year, when the two 911 RSR vehicles cross the finish line, one closely followed by the other, the mechanics and engineers are waiting in the wings and applauding. A 24-hour race like this pushes both man and machine to their

limit. All team members stand in a circle and do not allow disappointment to set in. This ability to look towards the future with confidence, even in defeat, is something that has truly impressed me. When one race ends, another begins. In just one week, many of the drivers will be facing their next big challenge in Bathurst, Australia, as they take on the 12-hour race across the hills and slopes of Bathurst.

**Wednesday, January 31, 6:00 am – My longest flight ever**

"When was it Tuesday?" I ask myself as I wake up early on Wednesday morning on board Quantas flight QF008 as we soar above Australia. I flew from Miami to Dallas at midday on Monday, and from there I boarded the huge Airbus A380 in the evening. The flight to Sydney takes 16 hours – give or take 90 minutes depending on wind strength. This my longest flight ever. I generally don't sleep very well on aeroplanes. So, as you can imagine, I felt somewhat exhausted while waiting for my suitcase to appear on the carousel. But my fatigue was outweighed by my curiosity to explore this new continent (well, new for me at least). Australia, here I come!

**Wednesday, January 31, 10:00 am – The wrong side**

After a shower and breakfast at the hotel, I explore the city in a Porsche 911 Carrera. For the first time in my life, I am sitting in a car with the steering wheel on the right-hand side. Cautiously, I navigate my way through the dense Sydney traffic. I travel along Harbour Bridge with a view of the famous opera house. On the other side of the bay, right next to the Olympic swimming pool, you get a breathtaking view of the Sydney skyline. A perfect backdrop for my blue 911.

**Thursday, February 1, 9:00 am – Temptation for speed**

We leave the Sydney Porsche Centre in a convoy of Porsche vehicles and head inland. For around 180 kilometres, we travel on the winding roads through the picturesque Blue Mountains. Even with the banked curves tempting us to put our foot down, we make sure to stick to the speed limit. The Australian police have little tolerance when it comes to speeding. Soon enough I will be able to test the limits of the 911 myself. On the race track in Bathurst – where there is no speed limit – between the training sessions of the famous 12-hour race.

**Thursday, February 1, 12:00 pm – Kangaroo stop**

When you take the exit to Katoomba, which has a resident population of 8,000 people, at first, there is no indication that just a few metres away there is a disused racetrack. Nobody is allowed to take to the track on the 2,100-metre-long Catalina Park raceway now. But this venue hosted races from 1961 up until the 1980s. Yet, exploring the course on foot, I discover stretches with dilapidated wooden crash barriers. The anticipation for my racing driver training on Friday and Saturday is growing. I turn and go back onto the A32 highway. Just before reaching Bathurst, I see the most brilliant street sign I have ever laid eyes on: a warning about kangaroos hopping across the road. This is a photo opportunity that can't be missed.

**Friday, February 2, 7:30 am – Porsche 911 GT3 R instead of 911 RSR**

We drive to the Mount Panorama Circuit on a grey morning. The "best race track in the world", as it is known by Australians, winds its way from the paddock 174 meters up the hill and to the summit, where it leads down into the valley with descending gradients of up to 16 degrees. And I'm supposed to drive on this circuit myself later? First I get a few tips from the professionals. Immediately, I spot some familiar faces in the pit area. Just like me, Fred Mako, Earl Bamber and Laurens Vanthoor travelled directly to Bathurst from Daytona. Only, instead of driving the 911 RSR from the extremely technically complex GTE class, which costs around one million euro, the boys will be driving a 911 GT3 R here. This is half the price and features a classic design with the engine installed in the rear rather than in front of the rear axle. Perhaps a little less spectacular, but the colourful design from the Porsche Team makes up for this. Fred starts together with his factory driver colleagues Dirk Werner and Romain Dumas in the green-yellow car from Manthey Racing, which is also known from the 24-hour race on the Nürburgring. They call it "Grello" because of the colour combination of green and yellow. The GT3 R from Craft Bamboo features a white, green and black design. The car from Competition Racing is black with red accents. And the 500-hp racing car from Black Swan Racing reflects the Australian sun with a mix of chrome and dark green.

**Friday, February 2, 4:55 pm – The best race track in the world**

The moment has finally arrived. The racing professionals have had four training sessions, along with a few accidents, and at last it is our turn to tackle the circuit for the first time. This exclusive programme offered by Porsche Australia is called the Porsche Driving Experience. Three sessions with guided driving behind an instructor are included as part of the customers' package: luxury camping on the track, service in a VIP lounge directly above the Porsche pits and three hours of driving fun to top it all off. Not long after we have turned out of the pit lanes and increased our speed as we enter the track, I have almost forgotten that I am on the wrong side of the road (well, for me at least). This route is addictive. Blind corners, gradients, downhill sections, super-fast sections where you can put the pedal to the ground – driving doesn't get better than this! Mainly because you always have to respect the course in light of the narrow track and the lack of run-off areas. Le Mans winner Earl Bamber had the following warning for me before I took to the track: "Just one mistake and your car is done". However, even a completely standard 911 Carrera sticks to the track like glue – and when it's driven close to its limit as well. The steering, brakes and tyres – you can see the effort the engineers have gone to in terms of tuning the car and how many race track kilometres go into the development of every Porsche series vehicle. When I pull the helmet off my head an hour later, I am certain of one thing: This is the best race track in the world!

**Saturday, February 3, 11:40 am – Young and professional**

Now it is getting serious for the professionals taking part in the 12-hour race: During the qualifying round, 49 cars vie for the best starting positions for Sunday. The Australian Matt Campbell performs the best out of all the Porsche drivers. In 2017, the 23-year-old was claiming wins in the Porsche Mobil 1 Supercup. He starts the race this year as a Porsche Young Professional – an intermediate stage before

becoming a factory driver during which young professionals receive further coaching. Fourth fastest time, only 36 hundredths of a second behind the best time. Respect!

**Saturday, February 3, 3:15 pm – Make or break**

The clocks are reset for the top 10 individual time trials. Now, it is about determining the final starting order for the ten fastest cars. Together with Matt's team and Mark Webber, I follow his all-or-nothing lap from the pit. Our aim is clear: to secure pole position. Campbell takes off along the home straight and tries to keep as much speed as possible out of the first corner as he enters the straight uphill section. He is carried too far outwards and comes close to the line, leaving no chance for a quick lap. "Not so bad", says Mark Webber next to me. "If you want to get pole position in this field of great drivers then you have to risk everything." As Matt gets out of the car looking somewhat dejected, the whole team applauds and Mark claps him on the shoulder. Motorsport is a team sport – even in the individual time trial.

**Sunday, February 4, 5:15 am – The early bird and so on…**

When I first looked at the schedule for the 12-hour race, I thought there must have been a printing error. It says the race starts at 5:45 am. But in Bathurst, it is tradition for the race to start even before the sun has risen. My alarm went off at 3:45 am. Now everything is moving very quickly in the starting grid. Almost as soon as the cars are driven to their starting positions, the spectators are asked to clear the area and we're off! During the first 30 minutes of the race, the lighting atmosphere changes with each lap. From pitch black to the red hue as the sun rises through to full daylight – all while the photographers snap photos until their fingers are raw.

**Sunday, February 4, 5:30 pm – I see red**

There were only four safety car periods during the previous weekend at the 24-hour race in Daytona. But it has been a very different picture here in Bathurst. A constant stream of miscalculations with cars crashing into the walls and blocking the track. The safety car has been deployed 15 times in total. The drivers from the four 911 GT3 R teams have had the most success in staying out of trouble. As a result, there are four Porsche vehicles in the top six places. Manthey Racing has held the lead for a long time. In the final phase, the most important factor is: who needs to refuel and who doesn't? The Porsche teams knows that the Audi in pole position and the Mercedes behind it both need to refuel at the pit. Thanks to its low fuel consumption, the 911 is able to carry on. A quadruple Porsche victory is on the cards. The only thing that could prevent a win now is if the race were to be declared. And 15 minutes before the end of the race, it happens: a heavy collision between a Mercedes and a stranded Audi. First of all the safety car is deployed for the 16th time, and then the race is waved off with the red flag. Instead of a victory, Porsche holds the third, fourth, fifth and sixth positions. Not bad in itself – but incredibly bad luck that the Weissach team didn't get the win.

**Monday, February 5, 9:55 pm – Clean**

Another day and another new country. This time it's Singapore. This is another place that I have never visited before, which makes it all the more exciting. Two things strike me as the automatic doors of the excessively air-conditioned airport building open: it is oppressively warm here even at night, and there is nothing on the floor, not even chewing gum. It is incredibly clean.

**Tuesday, February 6, 10:00 am – Electrified**

You can even take part in motorsports outside of the Formula 1 weekend in Singapore. Yuey Tan, a racing driver at the Carrera Cup Asia, who is planning a promotion into the Porsche Mobil 1 Supercup for 2018, runs a shopping centre and "The Karting Arena", a purely electric go-kart circuit. I almost feel like a Formula E driver as I step on the accelerator pedal and am pressed back into my seat as the kart begins to purr. For Season 6, which begins at the end of 2019, Porsche is joining the booming Formula E. If there is room for another driver, you have my number. And a win against my journalist colleagues in an electric go-kart should surely be enough to support my application, shouldn't it?

**Tuesday, February 6, 6:00 pm – The view**

This view – just wow! I am standing on the observation deck of the Marina Bay Sands Hotel, taking in the Marina Bay skyline. The perfect place for a farewell dinner. At midday tomorrow, I will be back home. I have seen and learned so much in the two weeks of my motorsports world tour. I got a look behind the scenes of the Porsche factory race with the spectacular 911 RSR in Daytona and celebrated with the wild fans. I got to know Mark Webber in Australia. What a cool guy. I shared the thrill of the race with him and the teams at the 12-hour race in Bathurst, and learned that even a well-deserved victory can be ripped away from you at the last minute if you don't have that little bit of luck. Of course, watching this race was even more exciting having been able to explore the track myself at racing speed.

**Link Collection**

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