



8 in millions, the number of copies of **Super Mario Kart** sold, making it the third best-selling Super Nintendo Entertainment System game of all time. The first game in the Mario Kart series was released in 1992 and the latest, for the Wii console, was released last year

Buying into history

Times Square Mall in Dubai hosted an auction of unique and antiquated vehicles. **Jola Chudy** tries not to put her hand up

An impulse buy for most people might be a purchase from a favourite clothes store or some unplanned additions for the villa. We've all come home with little gadgets, confectionery or a pair of shoes that wasn't strictly on the shopping list. But Ibrahim Mohammed Redha al Ansari's impulse buy is in a different league.

Attending the 2010 Dubai Classic Car Auction at Times Square Mall last weekend, al Ansari was the winning bidder for a 1968 Mercedes-Benz 280 SL convertible. He looked understandably pleased as his new acquisition was driven slowly out of the auction pit to await his collection.

"I just came in, it was something unexpected. I wasn't planning to come in and buy it," said al Ansari. "I'm looking forward to going cruising in it when I take it home, but I think one purchase today is enough." The car was bought for Dh150,000 and was the highest-priced item of the day in an auction that saw classic cars from around the Emirates up for sale.

The auction featured 19 cars and five motorcycles, among them antique and classic vehicles, trucks, 4x4s, military vehicles, and custom bikes. They were wheeled into a makeshift auction area in front of Yellow Hat car accessories store in the mall. Bidders paid their Dh10,000 deposit and took to their seats as onlookers crowded around and watched from the gallery above.

Among the stars of the auction was an undated Peter Banham Porsche 550 Spyder replica rally car, which was sold for Dh58,000, a 1990 Bentley that was snapped up for Dh41,000 and a 1968 Camaro SS sold for Dh58,000.

The auction, which was organised with Leo Sterling real estate agents and Yellow Hat, provided a new platform for buying and selling classic cars and supported the Dubai Autism Center. The centre supports the families of children with autism, provides care and intervention programs and runs an assessment and diagnostic unit.

Members of the Desert Warriors Dubai, a motorcycle club that aims to increase awareness for social causes, were also in attendance, with a fleet of shining bikes parked outside in readiness for a post-event parade down Sheikh Zayed Road.

Hayula Mourad, head of business support and communications at Dubai Autism Center spoke about the charity's involvement with the auction.

"Leo Sterling thought it would be a great way to raise funds, to organise a classic car auction and give proceeds towards the charity. As a charity, we reach out into the community, lecturing at schools and universities as well as supporting families of children with autism. We do a lot of awareness campaigns, so something like this auction is extremely valuable. The most important thing is that it involves a larger part of the community, people who are interested in classic cars."

The former owner of al Ansari's Mercedes, Shahriar Khodjasteh, was one of the most active bidders, putting in offers for a few cars and bikes that didn't quite meet their reserve prices.

He finally struck gold with a winning bid for a custom motorbike, an old-school, 2007 customised model with 883cc Harley Davidson engine, which he bought for Dh36,000.

"I like classic cars and bikes; my father is big into motorcycles and I think a new bike will be a very nice addition to his collection," said Khodjasteh. "This is all for a good cause, so I am very happy that we're able to help by putting some of the sale proceeds into the Dubai Autism Centre."

Bruno Martorano, managing director of Leo Sterling, explained how the event came about: "This was the first event of its type and size, combining classic cars and custom bikes. Leo Sterling has always been interested in being a good citizen in the region and we decided to generate revenues for charity by organising events such as this. Five per cent of the proceeds of the total sales goes to charity and the remainder to the owner. The charity is largely dependent on donations so this is really important."

All cars on sale were from private individuals and collectors, and the idea for a regular classic car auction holds appeal. Organisers hope that this will be the first of many charity car auctions in the years to come.

"We started off with about three or four cars but ended up with a lot of phone calls from people with collections of cars, in addition to the support from the Sharjah Old Cars Club and Museum, which contacted their 800-plus members. There's been a lot of support from private individuals."

Dr Salah Tahir from the Sharjah Old Cars Club and Museum said, "We invited all the members and a good number has come today to support the charity. I hope this will become an annual event with more participation."



Classic cars such as an immaculate old Rolls-Royce (top) and a sporty red Spitfire (above left) were auctioned last weekend to raise money for Dubai Autism Centre. Ibrahim Mohammed Redha al Ansari (above right) was the top bidder for a 1968 Mercedes-Benz 280 SL convertible. Paulo Vecina / The National

* top five kart tracks

Inspired by the thrill of the 24-hour karting race at Dubai Kartdrome, we take a look at five unique courses around the world that whet our appetites for some track action. From a two-level indoor track in New Zealand to a racecourse in South Africa where the spectators are of the stripy kind, to 2.5km of pretzel-like tarmac. Now, where did we leave our passports and helmets?

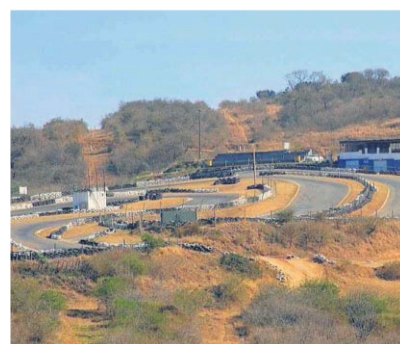


1 Extreme Indoor Karts, Auckland, New Zealand

Indoor go-karting tracks are common all over the world because it all means you can race in all weather, but the Extreme Indoor Karts in Auckland takes it to the next level – literally. It is New Zealand's only two-level go-kart track with racers flying up a ramp, around a sweeping curve and down again with a buffer zone of tyres in case the extremeness of it all gets a bit much. There's a minimum age of 10 and a maximum driver weight of 120kg.

2 Suzuka Kart Circuit, Suzuka, Japan

Considered the best kart circuit in Japan, FIA kart events are held at Suzuka's karting track. As well as public go-karting, there is the "Motopia" theme park, a resort, traffic education facility and motorcycle training school. The main track is where the Japanese Grand Prix has been held since 1987, apart from two years where it was held at Fuji Speedway. But as of last year, the Japanese Grand Prix returned to Suzuka and you can again kart near this legendary track.

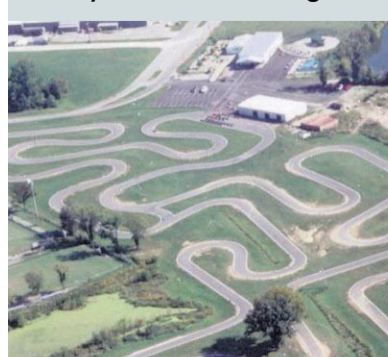


3 iDube Racetrack, Natal, South Africa

The iDube track, named after the Zulu word for zebra, is not only a challenging 1.056km clockwise circuit but it also offers the possibility of a chance encounter with South African wildlife. Surrounded by rugged hills, the Lion Park track is located in a nature reserve. Early morning karters have spotted zebras in between laps, but they'd be better off paying attention to the tight curves and sweeping bends that make it popular for competitive racing.

4 Go Kart Kountry, Shepherdsville, Kentucky, US

Dubai has the world's tallest building, but Shepherdsville, Kentucky, trumps the Autodrome with their claim to have the world's longest go-kart track. The 2.5km track is a swirling pretzel of tarmac. There are five different karts, from a double-seater for an adult and child up to the Thunderbolt, where the driver has to be at least 16 years old with a valid licence or permit. Go Kart Kountry also offers mini golf, boats, arcade games and, bizarrely, medieval water fights.



5 Patong Go Kart Speedway, Phuket, Thailand

You're relaxing in an island paradise, the water is blue and inviting, the weather is perfect as you lie on the beach. Obviously, a spot of go-karting is required. The Patong Go Kart Speedway on the lively island of Phuket is one of the world's most picturesque go-kart tracks. Surrounded by lush, tree-laden hills, the track combines three turns with three straights and there are mini tyre trophies for the winners. The facilities also include an off-road buggy track.

the quote

This system targets reckless drivers who are dangerous to the safety of others and their lives as well as our country's roads from all nationalities without distinction between nationalities.

From www.saher.gov.sa, a Saudi site linked to the kingdom's new camera-based system of fining bad drivers.

your view

What's your favourite classic car of all time, and why?

Have your say at www.thenational.ae/motoring and follow the "your view" link on the left hand side.