

5 Places Where You Can Drive Fast Legally

By **Gary Wollenhaupt**

Sometimes you just feel the need, the need for speed. Sure it's fun to squirt into a tiny open slot in traffic or goose the gas up a freeway onramp. Especially if you have a performance-oriented car, there's an itch to see what it'll do. But discretion (aka common sense) tells you to keep it under control when you're on the highway.

Take heart. There are some socially and legally acceptable places to drive above the legal speed limit. We'll take a look at a few places where you can test your driving skills and in some cases your own car's performance.

Car Clubs & Track Days

There's a club for just about every type of car, and if you live anywhere near a racetrack, the club may have a track day for members. There's no racing allowed, so many track days are called High-Performance Driving Events. While you won't be fighting to take the checkered flag, you can drive your car fast on the track for the cost of a membership and a few bucks for the track day. Chapters of enthusiast groups such as the Porsche Club of America and BMW Car Club of America run track days, autocross, and even full-fledged racing events at tracks across the country.

The Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) supports a range of autocross and rallycross events, which are timed drives around a course outlined in orange cones. AutoCross takes place on the pavement, while RallyCross includes dirt and gravel stages too. SCCA track events are on-track experiences at enjoyable speeds, but racing is not allowed.

The National Auto Sport Association (NASA) offers a similar assortment of events for amateur drivers at tracks primarily in the western U.S.



Amateur driver on track

Driving School

A performance driving school, usually operated under the name of a famous racer such as Bob Bondurant, offers opportunities to build your driving skills. Depending on the school and class you take, you may use your own car, or cars supplied by the school.

If you're interested in driving faster safely and perhaps getting involved in racing, the driving school is the best place to start. Driving schools are available for most sports, from drag racing to vintage sports cars to drifting. If you get bitten by the racing bug, schools have classes that lead to earning competition licenses necessary to compete in races.



Driving school

Racetrack Country Club

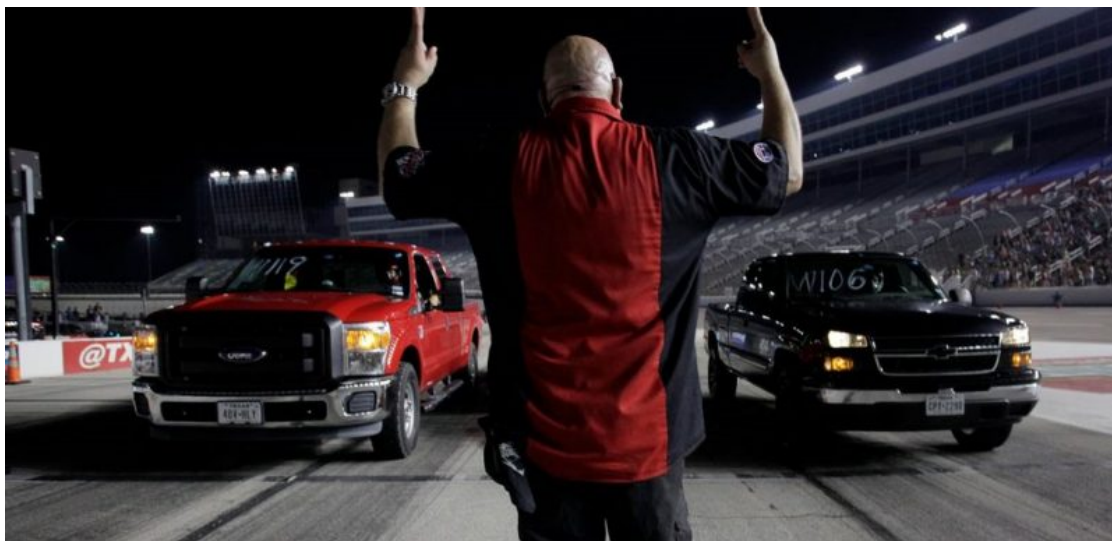
Racetrack country clubs or resorts operate like a country club, but instead of playing 18 holes of golf, the members drive their cars on a private track. Depending on the club, there may be garage condos to store your vehicle and entertain friends. Some of the clubs, like the Autobahn Country Club in Joliet, Illinois, offer individual and group driving programs with professional instructors. The Spring Mountain Motor Resort and Country Club in Pahrump, Nevada, calls itself a driver's paradise, with a six-mile track featuring 50 turns and a purpose-built 1.5-mile course for training on the Radical SR3 race car.



Racetrack country club

Racing

A number of organizations offer full-fledged racing opportunities for most types of cars. The Sports Car Club of America's programs include a variety of classes from race-prepped vintage Mini Coopers to a developmental open-wheel class-leading to Formula 1. So do Porsche, BMW, and Miata clubs among others. You'll have to work your way through approved driving courses and gain car handling and competition experience before organizations will let you race.



Racing event

Nurburgring

If you play racing video games like Gran Turismo or Forza, then you're familiar with the Nurburgring racetrack. For the rest of us, the Nurburgring is a massive racetrack in western Germany that opened in 1927. Since then it's been open for Touristenfahrten, or public driving days. Pay about 30 euros, and you too can drive the 13-mile long Nordschleife section of the track. In some sections, there are no speed limits, but still racing is not allowed. You could see just about any kind of vehicle on the track, from Ferraris to motorcycles to camper vans to tourist buses.

Closed track days are also available for those looking for a more game-like experience. For a higher fee, you can do multiple laps at high speeds. But if you go off the track, you're responsible for towing charges and any damage to the road or barriers you may cause.



Nurburgring