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Vintage cars on 18-day tour

Cheah Chor Sooi in London

VINTAGE Rolls-Royce and Bentley cars dating back to 1909 will line up alongside models of the 1990s for an 18-day tour of Malaysia come October.

More than 210 of the car owners and enthusiasts from all over Europe are expected to join the trip.

The tour will bring the participants to Kuala Lumpur, the Formula One circuit in Sepang, the historic city of Malacca, Cameron Highlands and the islands of Penang and Pangkor.

Organised by the Rolls-Royce Enthusiasts Club (RREC) in collaboration with the Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board, the tour marks the first time such a diverse collection of Rolls-Royce cars will be seen in Southeast Asia.

Many of the cars have fascinating history, having previously been owned by nobility such as the Duke of Westminster, the Maharajah of Jodhpur and Lord Brabourne, a former governor of Bombay.

The oldest car in the rally - a 1909 Silver Ghost barker Style Roi Des Belges by Crailville - was restored after it was discovered in south-east England covered in green paint.

The current owner, Tony Dyas from Ickenham, bought the car in Pebble Beach in 1995 and has since driven her on numerous tours.

A 1999 Bentley Continental SC Coupe, owned by Norman Yung from Oxford will also be taking part.

Among the highlights of the tour will be a drive around the Sepang race circuit and a cavalcade through the Kuala Lumpur city centre.

The visit has the full support of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and a number of prominent figures including the Sultan of Perak and the Yang di-Pertuan Besar of Negri Sembilan, both of whom will be hosting receptions for the participants.

For many of the participants, the tour provides a first-hand opportunity for them to savour the beauty of Malaysia.

Said Peter Cameron, chairman of the organising committee: "The whole exercise has taken almost two years to organise."

Tourism Malaysia's United Kingdom and Ireland director Yazid Mohamed expressed delight that the RREC had selected Malaysia for its 2001 tour.