

# Land speed record

The **land speed record** (or **absolute land speed record**) is the highest speed achieved by a person using a vehicle on land. There is no single body for validation and regulation; in practice the Category C ("Special Vehicles") flying start regulations are used, officiated by regional or national organizations under the auspices of the *Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile* (FIA).<sup>[1]</sup> The land speed record (LSR) is standardized as the speed over a course of fixed length, averaged over two runs (commonly called "passes").<sup>[2]</sup> Two runs are required in opposite directions within one hour, and a new record mark must exceed the previous one by at least one percent to be validated.<sup>[3]</sup>

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*ThrustSSC*, driven by Royal Air Force pilot Andy Green, holds the current land speed record at 1,220 km/h (760 mph) set October 15, 1997.

## History

The first regulator was the *Automobile Club de France*, which proclaimed itself arbiter of the record in about 1902.<sup>[4]</sup>

Until 1903, trains held the land speed record for fastest vehicles in which people could travel.

Different clubs had different standards and did not always recognize the same world records<sup>[5]</sup> until 1924, when the *Association Internationale des Automobile Clubs Reconnus* (AIACR) introduced new regulations: two passes in opposite directions (to negate the effects of wind) averaged with a maximum of 30 minutes (later more) between runs, average gradient of the racing surface not more than 1 percent, timing gear accurate within 0.01sec, and cars must be wheel-driven.<sup>[6]</sup> National or regional auto clubs (such as AAA and SCTA) had to be AIACR members to ensure records would be recognized.<sup>[7]</sup> The AIACR became the FIA in 1947. Controversy arose in 1963: *Spirit of America* was not recognized due to its being a three-wheeler (leading the *Fédération Internationale de Motocyclisme* to certify it as a three-wheel motorcycle record when the FIA refused) and not wheel-driven so the FIA introduced a special jet and rocket propelled class.<sup>[8]</sup> No holder of the absolute record since has been wheel-driven.

In the U.S. and Australia, record runs are often done on salt flats, so the cars are often called salt cars.

## Women's land speed record

The FIA does not recognize separate men's and women's land speed records, but, for commercial or egalitarian or feminist reasons, unofficial women's records have long been claimed, seemingly starting with Dorothy Levitt's 1906 record in Blackpool, England, and, unlike the FIA and other car-racing organisations, the Guinness Book of World Records does recognize gender-based land speed records.<sup>[9]</sup>

In 1906 Dorothy Levitt broke the women's world speed record for the flying kilometer, recording a speed of 154 km/h (96 mph) and receiving the sobriquet the "Fastest Girl on Earth". She drove a six-cylinder Napier motorcar, a 75 kW (100 hp) development of the K5, in a speed trial in Blackpool.<sup>[10][11][12]</sup>



Ralph DePalma in his Packard '905' Special at Daytona Beach in 1919



Dorothy Levitt, in a 19 kW (26 hp) Napier, at Brooklands, England, in 1908

in 1963 Paula Murphy drove a Studebaker Avanti to 262 km/h (163 mph) at Bonneville Salt Flats as part of Andy Granatelli's attempt on the overall record.<sup>[9]</sup> In 1964 she was asked by the tire company Goodyear to try to improve her own record, which she raised to 364.31 km/h (226.37 mph) in Walt Arfons's jet dragster Avenger.<sup>[9][13]</sup> The rival tire company Firestone and Art Arfons hit back against Goodyear and Walt Arfons when Betty Skelton drove Art's Cyclops to achieve a two-way average of 446.63 km/h (277.52 mph) in September 1965.<sup>[9]</sup>

5 weeks later, Goodyear hit back against Firestone with Lee Breedlove.<sup>[9]</sup> While record keeping has not been as extensive, a report in 1974 confirmed that a record was held by Lee Breedlove, the wife of then overall record holder Craig Breedlove, who piloted her husband's Spirit of America – Sonic 1 to a record 496.492 km/h (308.506 mph) in 1965.<sup>[14]</sup> According to author Rachel Kushner, Craig Breedlove had talked Lee into taking the car out for a record attempt in order to monopolize the salt flats for the day and block one of his competitors from making a record attempt.<sup>[15]</sup>

In 1976, the women's absolute record was set by Kitty O'Neil, in the jet-powered, three-wheeled SMI Motivator, at the Alvord Desert.<sup>[16]</sup> Held back by her contract with a sponsor and using only 60 percent of her car's power, O'Neil reached 825.127 km/h (512.710 mph).<sup>[17][18]</sup>





















On October 9, 2013, driver Jessi Combs, in a vehicle of the North American Eagle Project running at the Alvord Desert, raised the women's four-wheel land speed class record with an official run of 632.40 km/h (392.954 mph), surpassing Breedlove's 48-year-old record.<sup>[19]</sup> Combs continued with the North American Eagle Project, whose ongoing target is the overall land speed record; as part of that effort, Combs was killed, on August 27, 2019, during an attempt to raise the four-wheel record.<sup>[20]</sup> In late June 2020, the Guinness Book of Records reclassified the August 27, 2019 speed runs as meeting its requirements, and Combs was credited with the record at 841.338 km/h (522.783 mph), noting she was the first to break the record in 40 years.<sup>[21]</sup>

## Records

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### 1898–1964 (wheel-driven)

Date	Location	Driver	Vehicle	Power	Speed				Comments
					Over 1 km		Over 1 mile		
					(mph)	(km/h)	(mph)	(km/h)	
December 18, 1898	 Achères, France	 <u>Gaston de Chasseloup-Laubat</u>	<u>Jeantaud Duc</u> <sup>[22]</sup>	Electric	39.24	63.15			[23]
January 17, 1899	 Achères, France	 <u>Camille Jenatzy</u> <sup>[22]</sup>	GCA Dogcart	Electric	41.42	66.66			[23]
January 17, 1899	 Achères, France	 <u>Gaston de Chasseloup-Laubat</u>	<u>Jeantaud Duc</u>	Electric	43.93	70.31			[23]
January 27, 1899	 Achères, France	 <u>Camille Jenatzy</u>	GCA Dogcart	Electric	49.93	80.35			[23]
March 4, 1899	 Achères, France	 <u>Gaston de Chasseloup-Laubat</u>	<u>Jeantaud Duc Profilée</u>	Electric	57.65	92.78			[23]
April 29, 1899	 Achères, France	 <u>Camille Jenatzy</u>	CITA No 25 <i>La Jamais Contente</i>	Electric	65.79	105.88			First purpose-designed land speed racer <sup>[24]</sup> First record over 100 km/h (62 mph) <sup>[23]</sup>
April 13, 1902	 Nice, France	 <u>Léon Serpollet</u>	Gardner-Serpollet <i>Œuf de Pâques</i> (Easter Egg)	Steam <sup>[4]</sup>	75.06	120.80			
August 5, 1902	 Ablis, France	 <u>William Kissam Vanderbilt II</u>	Mors Z Paris-Vienne	Internal combustion	76.03	122.438			First internal combustion powered record <sup>[4]</sup>
November 5, 1902	 Dourdan, France	 <u>Henri Fournier</u>	Mors Z Paris-Vienne	Internal combustion V4, 9.2-litre, 60 bhp	76.59	123.25			[25]
November 17, 1902	 Dourdan, France	 <u>Maurice Augières</u>	Mors Z Paris-Vienne	Internal combustion	77.13	124.13			[23]
July 17, 1903	 Ostend, Belgium	 <u>Arthur Duray</u>	Gobron Brillié Paris-Madrid	Internal combustion	83.46	132.32			First time railway speed record exceeded <sup>[23]</sup>
November 5, 1903	 Dourdan, France	 <u>Arthur Duray</u>	Gobron Brillié Paris-Madrid	Internal combustion	84.73	136.35			[25]
January 12, 1904	 New Baltimore, United States	 <u>Henry Ford</u>	<u>Ford 999 Racer</u>	Internal combustion			91.37	147.05	[26]
March 31, 1904	 Nice, France	 <u>Louis Rigolly</u>	Gobron-Brillié Paris-Madrid	Internal combustion	94.78	152.53			[23]
May 25, 1904	 Ostend, Belgium	 <u>Pierre de Caters</u>	Mercedes Simplex 90	Internal combustion	97.25	156.50			[23]

July 21, 1904 <sup>[25]</sup>	 Ostend, Belgium	 <u>Louis Rigolly</u>	<u>Gobron-Brillié</u> Gordon Bennett	Internal combustion	103.56	166.66			First record over 100 mph (161 km/h), <sup>[23]</sup> 2 months after City of Truro's.
November 13, 1904	 Ostend, Belgium	 <u>Paul Baras</u>	<u>Darracq</u> Gordon Bennett	Internal combustion	104.53	168.22			<sup>[23]</sup>
December 30, 1905	 Arles, France	 <u>Victor Hémerly</u>	<u>Darracq</u> Special	Internal combustion	109.59	176.37			<sup>[23]</sup>
January 26, 1906	 Daytona Beach, United States	 <u>Fred Marriott</u>	<u>Stanley Rocket</u> <sup>[6]</sup>	Steam	127.66	205.44			First record over 200 km/h (124 mph). First speed greater than contemporary rail speed record. Held record for steam-powered vehicles until 2009. <sup>[27]</sup>
November 8, 1909 <sup>[28]</sup>	 Brooklands, United Kingdom	 <u>Victor Hémerly</u>	Benz No. 1 200 hp (150 kW)	Internal combustion: 21.5 L (1,310 cu in) inline-4 Benz engine	125.94	202.68	115.93	186.57	First run using electronic timing <sup>[6]</sup>
June 24, 1914	 Brooklands, United Kingdom	 <u>Lydston Hornsted</u>	Benz No. 3 200 hp (150 kW)	Internal combustion: 21.5 L (1,310 cu in) inline-4 Benz engine		—	124.09	199.70	First 2-way record, set at Brooklands under new <i>Association Internationale des Automobile Clubs Reconnus</i> (AIACR) 2-way rule <sup>[6]</sup>
May 17, 1922	 Brooklands, United Kingdom	 <u>Kenelm Lee Guinness</u>	<u>Sunbeam</u> 350 hp	V12, single ohc, 18.3 litre, 350 b.h.p. engine	133.75	215.25			The third and last time the record was set at Brooklands <sup>[25]</sup>
July 6, 1924	 Arpajon, France	 <u>René Thomas</u>	<u>Délage</u>	Internal combustion, V12, ohv, 10.6 litre, 280 bhp engine			143.31	230.634	<sup>[25]</sup>
July 12, 1924	 Arpajon, France	 <u>Ernest Eldridge</u>	FIAT <i>Mephistopheles</i>	Internal combustion: 21.7 L (1,320 cu in) inline-6 FIAT A.12 aero engine		—	145.89	234.98	Fastest land speed record ever on a public road <sup>[6]</sup>
September 25, 1924	 Pendine, United Kingdom	 <u>Malcolm Campbell</u>	<u>Sunbeam</u> 350HP	Internal combustion: 18.3 L (1,120 cu in) V12 Sunbeam aero engine		—	146.16	235.22	First land speed record by Malcolm Campbell <sup>[29]</sup>

July 21, 1925	 Pendine, United Kingdom	 Malcolm Campbell	Sunbeam 350HP	Internal combustion: 18.3 L (1,120 cu in) V12 Sunbeam aero engine	—		150.87	242.8	First person to travel over 150 mph (241 km/h) <sup>[29]</sup>
March 16, 1926	 Ainsdale beach at Southport, United Kingdom	 Henry Segrave	<i>Ladybird</i>	Internal combustion: a 4-litre Sunbeam Tiger			152.33	245.15	
April 27, 1926	 Pendine, United Kingdom	 J. G. Parry-Thomas	<i>Babs</i>	Internal combustion: 27 L (1,600 cu in) V12 Liberty L-12 aero engine	169.29	270.864	168.74	269.984	<sup>[30]</sup>
April 28, 1926	 Pendine, United Kingdom	 J. G. Parry-Thomas	<i>Babs</i>	Internal combustion: 27 L (1,600 cu in) V12 Liberty L-12 aero engine	172.09	275.341	171.69	274.590	<sup>[31]</sup>
February 4, 1927	 Pendine, United Kingdom	 Malcolm Campbell	<i>Napier-Campbell Blue Bird</i>	Internal combustion: 22.3 L (1,360 cu in) W12 Napier Lion aero engine	—		174.88	281.44	<sup>[29]</sup>
March 29, 1927	 Daytona Beach, United States	 Henry Segrave	<i>Mystery</i> (aka "Sunbeam 1000 hp")	Internal combustion: 2 × 22.4 L (1,370 cu in) V12 Sunbeam Matabele aero engines	203.79	327.97			The first car to reach a speed over 200 mph (320 km/h) <sup>[32]</sup>
February 19, 1928	 Daytona Beach, United States	 Malcolm Campbell	<i>Napier-Campbell Blue Bird</i>	Internal combustion: 23.9 L (1,460 cu in) W12 Napier Lion aero engine	206.956	333.048			<sup>[7]</sup>
April 22, 1928	 Daytona Beach, United States	 Ray Keech	<i>Triplex Special</i>	Internal combustion: 3 × 27 L (1,600 cu in) V12 Liberty L-12 aero engines	207.552	334.007			<sup>[33]</sup>
March 11, 1929	 Daytona Beach, United States	 Henry Segrave	<i>Golden Arrow</i>	Internal combustion: 23.9 L (1,460 cu in) W12 Napier Lion aero engine	231.446	372.459			Segrave was knighted for this effort <sup>[34]</sup>
February 5, 1931	 Daytona Beach,	 Malcolm Campbell	<i>Campbell-Napier-Railton Blue Bird</i>	Internal combustion: 23.9 L (1,460 cu in)	246.09	396.025			Campbell was knighted for this effort <sup>[34]</sup>

	United States <sup>[25]</sup>			W12 Napier Lion supercharged aero engine					
February 24, 1932	 Daytona Beach, United States	 Malcolm Campbell	Campbell-Napier-Railton <i>Blue Bird</i>	Internal combustion: 23.9 L (1,460 cu in) W12 Napier Lion supercharged aero engine	253.97	408.73			First 250 mph (400 km/h) pass. <sup>[29]</sup>
February 22, 1933	 Daytona Beach, United States	 Malcolm Campbell	Campbell-Railton <i>Blue Bird</i>	Internal combustion: 36.7 L (2,240 cu in) V12 Rolls-Royce R supercharged aero engine	272.46	438.48			<sup>[29]</sup>
March 7, 1935	 Daytona Beach, United States	 Malcolm Campbell	Campbell-Railton <i>Blue Bird</i>	Internal combustion: 36.7 L (2,240 cu in) V12 Rolls-Royce R supercharged aero engine	276.816	445.472			<sup>[34]</sup>
September 3, 1935	 Bonneville Salt Flats, United States	 Malcolm Campbell	Campbell-Railton <i>Blue Bird</i>	Internal combustion: 36.7 L (2,240 cu in) V12 Rolls-Royce R supercharged aero engine	301.129	484.598			First 300 mph (480 km/h) pass, first absolute record set at Bonneville <sup>[34]</sup>
November 19, 1937	 Bonneville Salt Flats, United States	 George Eyston	<i>Thunderbolt</i>	Internal combustion: 2 × 36.7 L (2,240 cu in) V12 Rolls-Royce R supercharged aero engines	311.42	501.16			<sup>[34]</sup>
August 27, 1938	 Bonneville Salt Flats, United States	 George Eyston	<i>Thunderbolt</i>	Internal combustion: 2 × 36.7 L (2,240 cu in) V12 Rolls-Royce R supercharged aero engines	345.49 <sup>[34]</sup>	556.012			
September 15, 1938	 Bonneville Salt Flats, United States	 John Cobb	<i>Railton</i>	Internal combustion: 2 × 23.9 L (1,460 cu in) W12 Napier Lion supercharged aero engines	350.2	563.566			<sup>[34]</sup>
September 16, 1938	 Bonneville Salt Flats, United States	 George Eyston	<i>Thunderbolt</i>	Internal combustion: 2 × 36.7 L (2,240 cu in) V12 Rolls-Royce R supercharged aero engines	357.5	575.314			<sup>[34]</sup>



August 23, 1939	 Bonneville Salt Flats, United States	 John Cobb	<i>Railton Special</i>	Internal combustion: 2 × 23.9 L (1,460 cu in) W12 Napier Lion supercharged aero engines	369.74 <sup>[34]</sup>	595.04	367.91	592.091	
September 16, 1947	 Bonneville Salt Flats, United States	 John Cobb	<i>Railton Mobil Special</i>	Internal combustion: 2 × 23.9 L (1,460 cu in) W12 Napier Lion supercharged aero engines	394.196 <sup>[6]</sup>	634.397	394.19	634.39	First single pass at over 400 mph (402 mph)
July 17, 1964	 Lake Eyre, Australia	 Donald Campbell	<i>Bluebird CN7</i>	Turboshaft: 1 × 4,000 hp (3,000 kW) Bristol Proteus gas turbine			403.10 <sup>[35][36]</sup>	648.73	Last wheel-driven absolute record that was superseded by the ratification of <i>Spirit of America</i> (see below)

### 1963–present (jet and rocket propulsion)

Craig Breedlove's mark of 407.447 miles per hour (655.722 km/h),<sup>[8][37]</sup> set in *Spirit of America* in September 1963, was initially considered unofficial. The vehicle breached the FIA regulations on two grounds: it had only three wheels, and it was not wheel-driven, since its jet engine did not supply power to its axles. Some time later, the Fédération Internationale de Motocyclisme created a non-wheel-driven category, and ratified *Spirit of America's* time for this mark.<sup>[8]</sup> On July 17, 1964, Donald Campbell's *Bluebird CN7* posted a speed of 403.10 miles per hour (648.73 km/h) on Lake Eyre, Australia. This became the official FIA LSR, although Campbell was disappointed not to have beaten Breedlove's time.<sup>[38]</sup> In October, several four-wheel jet-cars surpassed the 1963 mark, but were eligible for neither FIA nor FIM ratification.<sup>[38]</sup> The confusion of having three different LSRs lasted until December 11, 1964, when the FIA and FIM met in Paris and agreed to recognize as an absolute LSR the higher speed recorded by either body, by any vehicles running on wheels, whether wheel-driven or not.<sup>[39]</sup>

Date	Location	Driver	Vehicle	Power	Speed				Comments
					Over 1 km		Over 1 mile		
					(mph)	(km/h)	(mph)	(km/h)	
August 5, 1963	 Bonneville Salt Flats, United States	 Craig Breedlove	<i>Spirit of America</i>	Turbojet			407.447	655.722	[8][37] Initially considered unofficial since the vehicle had 3 wheels. Later ratified by FIM.
October 2, 1964	 Bonneville Salt Flats, United States	 Tom Green	<i>Wingfoot Express</i>	Turbojet			413.2	665.0	[8]
October 5, 1964	 Bonneville Salt Flats, United States	 Art Arfons	<i>Green Monster</i>	Turbojet			434.03	698.50	[8]
October 13, 1964	 Bonneville Salt Flats, United States	 Craig Breedlove	<i>Spirit of America</i>	Turbojet			468.719	754.330	[23]
October 15, 1964	 Bonneville Salt Flats, United States	 Craig Breedlove	<i>Spirit of America</i>	Turbojet			526.277	846.961	[23]
October 27, 1964	 Bonneville Salt Flats, United States	 Art Arfons	<i>Green Monster</i>	Turbojet			536.710	863.751	[23]
November 2, 1965	 Bonneville Salt Flats, United States	 Craig Breedlove	<i>Spirit of America – Sonic 1</i>	Turbojet	555.485	893.966	555.485	893.966	[40]
November 7, 1965	 Bonneville Salt Flats, United States	 Art Arfons	<i>Green Monster</i>	Turbojet	576.553	927.872	576.553	927.872	[23]
November 15, 1965	 Bonneville Salt Flats, United States	 Craig Breedlove	<i>Spirit of America – Sonic 1</i>	Turbojet	594	955.950	600.601	966.574	[41]
October 23, 1970	 Bonneville Salt Flats, United States	 Gary Gabelich	<i>Blue Flame</i>	Rocket	630.478	1014.656	622.407	1001.667	[42]
October 4, 1983	 Black Rock Desert, United States	 Richard Noble	<i>Thrust2</i>	Turbojet: 1 × Rolls-Royce Avon	634.051	1020.406	633.47	1019.47	[42]
September 25, 1997	 Black Rock	 Andy Green	<i>ThrustSSC</i>	Turbofan: 2 × Rolls-	713.990	1149.055	714.144	1149.303	[42]



	<u>Desert, United States</u>			<u>Royce Spey</u>					
October 15, 1997	 <u>Black Rock Desert, United States</u>	 <u>Andy Green</u>	<u>ThrustSSC</u>	<u>Turbofan: 2 × Rolls-Royce Spey</u>	760.343	1223.657	763.035	1227.986 <sup>[43]</sup>	<u>First to break the speed of sound</u>

## See also

- List of vehicle speed records
- British land speed record
- Production car speed record
- Land speed record for rail vehicles
- Motorcycle land speed record
- Aero-engined car
- Pioneer 2M – Soviet Union attempt at the land speed record in early 1960s
- Budweiser Rocket – Claimed but not verified to have reached 739.666 miles per hour (1,190.377 km/h) and to have broken the sound barrier in 1979
- North American Eagle Project – Aiming for 808 mph (1,300 km/h) to break current record.
- Bloodhound LSR – Project aiming for 1,050 mph (1,690 km/h).
- Rosco McGlashan – Australia's fastest man on the land. His Aussie Invader team is building a fully rocket-powered LSR car with an attempt at the record currently on hold pending funding.<sup>[44]</sup>

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## External links

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- [Autoracing Speed Records \(https://curlie.org/Sports/Motorsports/Auto\\_Racing/Speed\\_Records\)](https://curlie.org/Sports/Motorsports/Auto_Racing/Speed_Records) at Curlie
  - [Aussie Invader official website \(http://www.aussieinvader.com/\)](http://www.aussieinvader.com/) – Australian challengers to the supersonic showdown
  - [Speed Record Club \(http://speedrecordclub.com/\)](http://speedrecordclub.com/) – The Speed Record Club seeks to promote an informed and educated enthusiast identity, reporting accurately and impartially to the best of its ability on record-breaking engineering, events, attempts and history.
  - [The Land Speed Record in the Sixties: an on-line collection \(http://www.samuelhawley.com/lsr.html\)](http://www.samuelhawley.com/lsr.html)
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