

COMMERCE

## McLaren cruises into Middle East with bespoke model

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*McLaren 650S Al Sahara for Middle East*

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

British automaker McLaren is looking to jump on the Middle Eastern market with a bespoke model inspired by the region's loyal consumer base.

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On Nov. 11, McLaren Automotive debuted the 650S Spider Al Sahara 79, created by McLaren Special Operations exclusively for the region. The Middle East is poised for significant growth in the future, and entering now with exclusive products is a step toward winning over the region's affluent consumers.

"This exclusive bespoke project by MSO is about meeting the tastes and styles of Middle East customers through a design that is empathetic to the region, with only five cars being built and all in a varying hue of the special pearlescent White Gold paint to reflect the evolving landscape and color pallet of the desert, said Ian Gorsuch, regional director Middle East and Africa at [McLaren Automotive](#). "We hope we have met the expectations of the luxury supercar buyers of the Middle East."

Designed with ME in mind

Fittingly, the Al Sahara made its debut at the Dubai International Motor Show in the United Arab Emirates, and will be on display through Saturday, Nov. 14. McLaren also took the opportunity to introduce the region to its Sports Series, Super Series and Ultimate Series vehicles.



## *McLaren 650S Al Sahara*

"McLaren Automotive is a true pioneer in its approach to the design and development of high performance sports and supercars, and the 650S Spider Al Sahara 79 by MSO is evidence of that," Mr. Gorsuch said in a statement. "This truly unique project our first in the Middle East is inspired by a region that is home to some of our most loyal customers.

"Since launching the brand back in 2011, McLaren Automotive has built extremely close links with the Middle East region," he said. "We are delighted to show examples of each Series for the first time together in the region here at the Dubai International Motor Show, underlining how far the company has progressed in such a short period of time."



### *Al Sahara interior*

The name Al Sahara translates to "desert" in Arabic and was chosen alongside the sand-colored, shimmering paint that is reminiscent of the region's landscape. To provide the shimmer, McLaren used 24-carat gold particles in the paint.

Gold remains a particularly opulent element in the Middle East today. Including it in the Al Sahara shows that McLaren knows its target market and will emphasize the vehicle's exclusivity and luxuriance.



### *650S Al Sahara detail*

Paul Mackenzie, executive director of McLaren Special Operations, said in a statement, The 650S Spider Al Sahara 79 project offered an exciting opportunity to create a truly bespoke car inspired by the rich history and culture of the Middle Eastern region, which is dominated by the beauty of the desert.

"It was fascinating to hear the feedback from McLaren owners, and to then assimilate this into a truly bespoke project that reflected the region's long history of luxury and craftsmanship which are the foundations of the MSO brand," he said.

As with other McLaren vehicles, the Al Sahara makes extensive use of carbon fibre in its build. It has a retractable hard top and electrically adjustable black-and-white leather seats. Its performance mimics that of the 650S Coupe and Spider, accelerating from a stop to 62 mph in 3 seconds flat and topping out just beyond 200 mph.



### *McLaren 650S Al Sahara*

The Al Sahara will retail at close to \$400,000. Creating a high-value, bespoke vehicle for a burgeoning region gives McLaren a chance to become the favored automotive brand among ultra-high-net-worth individuals in the Middle East.

"As we have fixed yearly production number at McLaren, and a growing retailer network, we must find ways for our retailers to achieve growth in their businesses as this enables sustained investment in maintaining the loyalty of McLaren owners," Mr. Gorsuch said. "We have seen the enthusiasm and passion for bespoke content from our Middle East customers through the uptake of McLaren Special Operations (MSO) personalisation being one of the highest for McLaren of all the regions around the world in which we operate."

#### Right on time

The growth and statistics of other sectors in the Middle East could indicate that the region is a hot spot waiting to happen for expensive sports cars.

The Middle East has emerged as a strong market for private aviation, according to a report by Wealth-X and WINGX Advance.

The typical private jet owner in the Middle East is younger than global jet owners and, despite an average net-worth of more than \$500 million less, has planes an average of three times as expensive, near \$50 million compared to the average global owner's \$16.4 million. The numbers show not only that private aviation is a viable market in the Middle East, but other high-priced luxury offerings could also find a home ([see story](#)).

Although for royal families of the region a jet may be a necessity rather than a status symbol, the higher price of each jet indicates an interest in luxury transportation. However, other automotive brands have already mapped other routes to win over Middle Eastern consumers.

In January 2014, Rolls-Royce Motor Cars hewed to the preferences of its Middle Eastern consumers with the new Arabian Nights-inspired limited-edition 1001 Nights Collection.

The collection drew upon cultural symbols and demonstrates the attention to detail with which the brand has studded its reputation. Additionally, the target of this and similar lines conveys the automaker's selective cultivation of markets that have shown significant growth ([see story](#)).

"We believe 650S Spider Al Sahara 79 by MSO meets demands of McLaren Retailers, and potential McLaren customers in the Middle East, which we have seen are the same as those of luxury consumers all around the world they expect exclusivity, high quality craftsmanship and innovative technology," Mr. Gorsuch said.

#### Final Take

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