



GETTING THE BEST OUT OF A TRACKDAY

There are many pitfalls to tuning your own car for trackday usage and these are what RSRNurburg's Standard vs Modified programme is designed to avoid

BY MATT KEW

Founded by racer Ron Simons, from whom the company takes its first two initials, RSRNurburg offers keen drivers a chance to rent performance-based cars and push them as their engineers intended on some of the world's most revered circuits. With workshops at the Nurburgring and Spa-Francorchamps, RSRNurburg sees all manner of drivers, cars and indeed mistakes take place on its doorstep. On the big compressions and bumpy surface of the Nordschleife, simply lowering a road car doesn't mean it'll work on track. In fact, with the wrong set-up, a modified car can be more unforgiving through the corners and over the crests, and as a result be more likely to spit you into the barriers. That's why RSRNurburg has launched its new 'Standard vs Modified' YouTube

series. The videos follow the progress of taking a stock Mk7 Volkswagen Golf GTI and show the host of upgraded parts, work and tuning that go into making it fit for extensive trackday use. "It's not just about entertaining or getting lots of views – that's not the main target," says workshop manager Thomas Wenzel. "It's about passing on knowledge and technical information. "We get a lot of customers asking us what parts we use, what suspension, alignment and so on that we run on our cars. We want to answer these questions properly and let the people see how we modify a track car." With the fleet of cars offered by RSRNurburg spanning from the 240bhp, front-wheel-drive Golf GTI up to a 991-generation Porsche 911 GT3 RS, customers can lean on the guidance of the company's instructors to make them a much faster and safer circuit driver as

they progress through the range. The 'Standard vs Modified' programme adds another element to that. Customers can test a modestly priced performance car such as the Golf, view the modifications – most visible are the new bolt-on wheelarches to house wider tyres and a stripped-out interior – and feel how they improve the driving experience. Afterwards, they then copy them with their own car. That makes the programme "a true win-win-win situation", according to Simons. "The first who is benefiting is the customer who drives the car. Now they can test something on a certain model before they actually buy it. That is unheard of. "Since we have most of the top-of-the-line cars in a segment where people do modify their cars, it's likely that we have exactly the car the customer has in standard trim. Now they can drive it to test the suspension or the tyres, the BBS wheels,



Clockwise from top: saving weight and adding a rollcage are first steps to improved performance; Wenzel marks out enlarged wheelarches; company works with top partners



everything. We can test all these add-ons before they buy them, and the suppliers can showcase their products on the best cars in the world and at the best tracks." What makes the 'Standard vs Modified' programme different to the rest of the cars RSRNurburg extensively develops is that achieving the quickest possible lap time is not the ultimate goal. "Contrary to many builds we do, with the Golf we aren't focusing on absolute numbers," Wenzel adds. "Instead, we want to offer the most rewarding experience with the car providing better feel, fun and driveability." It's a smart trade-off. As the Golf becomes more uncompromising, it is undeniably no longer quite as comfortable and refined as its unmodified counterpart. But, crucially, it remains totally road legal, which puts a natural limit on which tweaks are made. Fitting new coilovers, upgrading to a Big Brake Kit, and engine remapping are relatively low-hanging fruit for tuners, but it can soon turn into a law of diminishing returns. It's why the 'Standard vs Modified' Golf features the installation of adjustable suspension from VLN supplier KW and treaded Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres, which offer the best balance of price against performance. "You're not guaranteed more fun if you put more money into a car," says Wenzel. "With the Golf, you get a car which is really good on track

and you enjoy a lot. But you spend a lot less money than on a Cayman GTS or a 911." An upshot of not blowing the bank balance is that it leaves more money for modifications that do not follow the road-car market. Whereas a Golf GTI is more than £100,000 less expensive than a GT3 RS, a rollcage costs about the same regardless of which car it's being fitted in, likewise the Recaro bucket seats that save half the weight of the Golf's standard seats. "The goal is to have a very capable car without it being too aggressive," Simons concludes. "It has to function in the hands of everyone to be the best for a mainstream experience." Like many project cars, the GTI is still a work in progress as refinements to the set-up are continually being made. But when RSRNurburg brought out the stopwatch at Spa for a comparison between a standard Renault Megane RS265 and one that had received the modified treatment, the end result was a six-second saving in lap time. ■



SIMONS'S TOP TIPS

The top six ways to modify a car for the track, according to RSRNurburg founder Ron Simons.

1 Get tuition from an expert. The best place to start is actually with the driver. Modifying a car stays with that car, so as you sell it on you lose your investment. But improving your own skill stays with you for life. It's not only making the package fast but also safer at the same time.

2 Strip out excess weight. It's the cheapest way to go quicker. Throwing out everything you don't need helps with braking, cornering and acceleration.

3 Upgrade your tyres. They are your only contact with the road, so every input and force goes through them. It's simple: the more grip the tyre gives you, the faster you go.

4 Better suspension. You need to help the tyres out and the best way to do this is with revised suspension – updated springs, shock absorbers and anti-roll bars allow the tyre to do its best work in the corners.

5 More stopping power. Modern road-car brakes are quite good already, but they tend to collapse when used on a track. Fitting a better set of pads gives huge improvements, but if you're serious about this then you will need new calipers, discs and even enhanced cooling.

6 More power. The last thing to upgrade is the engine. A lot of power means nothing for your lap times when the car is heavy, has no brakes, no suspension and bad tyres. Luckily, modern turbocharged engines are cheap to tune.