



Rétromobile 2027: Bluebird K7, the record-breaking hydroplane, on display in Paris

Paris - October 21st 2026

- A human and mechanical adventure to discover in Hall 7.2 at Rétromobile from February 3 to 7, 2027.
- The legendary Bluebird K7 hydroplane, with which Donald Campbell set seven world speed records on water, will be on display to the public.
- In partnership with the Ruskin Museum, the exhibition will trace the history of the Campbell family and Bluebird lineage, featuring speed records, technological innovation, and a tragic fate.



From February 3 to 7, 2027, Rétromobile will celebrate speed records with a monumental exhibition dedicated to Bluebird K7. Donald Campbell's legendary hydroplane will make a special trip from Great Britain to Paris Expo Porte de Versailles.

Produced in partnership with the Ruskin Museum, this exhibition will trace the history of the Campbell family and its pursuit of speed, from the records set by Sir Malcolm Campbell with his Blue Bird vehicles to the achievements of his son Donald with Bluebird K7. Through archival images and personal artifacts, visitors will discover the story of Bluebird K7, from its design to its restoration, nearly six decades after it sank in Coniston Water.

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The Ruskin Museum is incredibly proud to be part of Rétromobile 2027 and to have the opportunity to share the extraordinary story of Donald Campbell CBE and Bluebird K7 with an international audience.

Following the historic return of Bluebird K7 to Coniston Water in May 2026, it is particularly fitting that we continue to celebrate Donald Campbell's remarkable achievements and the pioneering spirit that made him one of the most iconic figures in world speed record history.

As the custodians of Bluebird K7, we are passionate about preserving this unique piece of British engineering heritage and ensuring that Donald Campbell's courage, determination and extraordinary legacy continue to inspire future generations.

We are very much looking forward to attending Rétromobile 2027 and being part of this prestigious international exhibition. **Tracy Hodgson, directrice du Ruskin Museum**

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The Campbells: A Family on a Quest for Speed

Faster and faster, farther and farther. These are the words that define the story linking the Campbell clan to the Bluebird line of vehicles.

It all began with Sir Malcolm Campbell, a pioneer of speed records in the early 20th century. His cars and hydroplanes bore the name Blue Bird, inspired by Maurice Maeterlinck's play *The Blue Bird*. His son Donald later adopted the name Bluebird for his own record-breaking vehicles.

After setting several land speed records, Malcolm Campbell turned his attention to the water. On August 19, 1939, Blue Bird K4 reached 228.108 km/h, setting a new water speed record.



Following his father's death in 1948, Donald Campbell continued the family's quest for speed. He initially pursued water speed records with Blue Bird K4 before commissioning Bluebird K7, a three-hull aluminum hydroplane powered by a turbojet engine. Between July 1955 and December 1964, Donald Campbell set seven world water speed records.

In 1964, he also became the only person to hold both the land and water speed world records at the same time, after setting a new record with Bluebird CN7 on Lake Eyre in Australia.

Bluebird K7: At the Heart of the Quest for Absolute Speed

In early 1967, Donald Campbell returned to Coniston Water in northwestern England with a goal that had never before been achieved on water: to break the 300 mph barrier, or 484 km/h.

On January 4, during his first attempt, Bluebird K7 reached nearly 311 mph, or about 501 km/h. Donald Campbell then set out again to confirm his performance. During this second run, the engine flamed out, causing the hydroplane to lift into the air before crashing back onto the water and breaking apart. Donald Campbell was killed in the accident, and Bluebird K7 sank in Coniston Water.



But the story didn't end there. Although the wreck's location was known to the Campbell family and trusted local individuals, Bluebird K7 was recovered from the water in 2001 by Bill Smith and subsequently restored to its original condition by him and a team of volunteers. On May 11, 2026, Bluebird K7 returned to Coniston Water for Bluebird K7 Festival.

A British Legend at Rétromobile

In 2027, 60 years after Donald Campbell's death, Bluebird K7 will once again cross the English Channel to attend Rétromobile.

Its journey to Paris promises to be spectacular: transporting, handling, and installing a hydroplane of this magnitude requires exceptional logistics. This monumental exhibition follows in the footsteps of the major successes that have marked the history of Rétromobile, from the Berliet T100 in 2019 to the Bugatti railcar in 2026.

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For many years, showcasing Bluebird K7 at Rétromobile seemed like an unattainable dream to me.

Great human adventures have always fascinated me. When I was barely 15, I bought a book about Malcolm and Donald Campbell, which I still treasure to this day. Their quest for speed-that determination to push the horizon ever further-has never left me.

Being able to present Bluebird K7 at Rétromobile today makes this exhibition particularly meaningful to me. **Thierry Farges, head of exhibitions at the Rétromobile show**

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Two events, one shared passion for exceptional cars

At the same time, Hall 6 will host the Ultimate Supercar Garage, a premier event dedicated to modern supercars. Both shows will open their doors together during a joint preview on Tuesday, February 2, 2027; combined tickets will provide access to both events. Tickets are now on sale.

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RÉTROMOBILE 2027

February 3-7, 2027 - Paris Expo Porte de Versailles

Discover this monumental exhibition

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