



WELCOME TO THE WORLD'S MOST
EXCLUSIVE TRAVEL PACKAGE ONE WHERE
YOU HAVE TO OWN A FERRARI TO QUALIFY
STORY BY JOHNNY LUCAS PHOTOGRAPHY
BY JOHNNY LUCAS AND FERRARI

PISTON ENVY



The first half hour in a Ferrari Spyder is sublime: all your boyhood fantasies converge and materialize in reality and you know that you are surfing on a cosmic intersection of time and space. In case there were ever any doubts, driving a Ferrari is all about me. Me, me, glorious me.

I was in charge of the universe, I was driving on top of the world, I was conducting my own symphony of sound and motion with virtuosic perfection. My hands on the wheel, my foot on the gas, my fingers stimulating the paddle shifters on the steering column – all with the art and grace of a man born to do nothing else. You only get your first Ferrari once per lifetime, but maybe Heaven is millions of miles of first-half-hours in Ferraris.

Ferrari's problem

In the meantime, back here on Earth, Ferrari has a problem. The brand is indelibly lodged in the brain of every male in the world who knows that anything on wheels is not just a "car-car." All models sell out before they're built. These machines deliver on the promise of power and panache and if you want people to notice and envy you, Ferrari would be able to supply a guarantee to that effect with every purchase.

The problem is that if you drive these beasts on any public road (the way they were meant to be driven), you're going to lose your licence in about 30 seconds. Then you're left with a lovely, expensive lawn ornament with which to impress your friends. It's like the dilemma facing the dog chasing a bus: what does he do with it when he actually catches one?

But there's no way the people with enough imagination to build these things would leave the question of "what to do with your Ferrari" unanswered. For this, the Ferrari Rally was invented.

A new level of exclusivity

A Ferrari Rally is probably the most exclusive travel package ever offered. In order to even think about participating you must, of course, own your own Ferrari. Not just any Ferrari. Although it can be any model you like, it has to have been purchased from an authorized Ferrari dealer. No interlopers, substandard or mistreated machines allowed. Oh sure, there are rallies organized by clubs of local Ferrari owners, but this one is "corporate." And how good do you think a rally is going to be that has the official endorsement of Ferrari? That's right, pretty darn good.

But again, reality strikes a dull blow. I don't own a Ferrari. I know it's a shortcoming, kind of an

oversight on my part, but foolish life choices such as being a writer, and not being a member of the Lucky Sperm Club mean that there is not going to be one of these motorized Italian sculptures in my driveway any time soon.

On the other hand, Ferrari knows that they have an interest and a responsibility to keep the myth alive by occasionally opening the kimono ever so slightly to a few of us non-Ferraristi. So I was invited into this exclusive world for a couple of days to participate in the Ferrari Rally out of Portland, Ore.

You know there's something different going on when you arrive at your hotel and you see that the parking garage is closed to the public and guarded by a handful of guys who look like gigolos and/or upper class thugs. But wait, they are on my side – they're all wearing Ferrari badges. The entire underground parking lot had been given over to the Ferraris coming in from around the continent for this event – almost 50 of them. These cars have base prices that start at over \$200,000 and go upwards and over a million. Do the math on the value of the contents of that garage – you can see why they got a bit protective.

Rally round

The evening before the rally began we had a group sit-down with Nigel. He and his rather large crew had been in Oregon for about a month laying out the course, arranging lunch stops and doing the logistics for these few days. All Nigels are English, of course, as was this one. He told us in calm, measured terms the "rules" of the game we were there to play.

Do you know the basic rules of car rallies? I didn't. Rallies are not races. The object is to follow the instructions, sometimes deliberately cryptic instructions and to get to the end point only by the pre-determined route. In all other rallies, it's the car to get there first that wins. Not so with this Ferrari rally. Nigel announced that there would be penalties for coming in too soon. It would be bad public relations to have 50 Ferraris screaming though small town Oregon at triple the speed limit. Poor Nigel, the room did not take this well. Speed limits, obviously, are for others.

The rally instructions are provided in a handy bound book, and it's pretty much a full-time job to follow them. There are diagrams of intersections, drawings of signs to look for, mileage measurements such as "turn 6.4 miles past the pine tree with the yellow triangle" – but – and this is key – no maps! That would be cheating.

The genius of this is that it gives a full-time and important job to the passenger in the car. And since it's a known fact that men, as soon as they get into any car, are incapable of understanding a map or reading directions, it's usually the female half of the Ferrari-owning couple that has the important job of telling her partner where to go. It's a bit weird, but it works.

* cent'anni! ferrari celebrates a very special anniversary



Salesperson Adriano Carlino, president Joey Spinetti, director of special events Sabrina D'Amico and director of sales Umberto Bonfa

Ferrari. The name alone evokes grand fantasies and passion. What started out as a racing outfit in 1929, Ferrari has grown into an international brand name synonymous with prestige, all the while hand-building its cars in Maranello. In the 60 years since Enzo Ferrari started selling street-legal cars as a way to finance his Scuderia's racing activities, the company has dominated on the track while producing memorable cars coveted by owners, collectors and dreamers alike.

From the moment Gilles Villeneuve took the wheel of one of Enzo's F1 cars, Montreal and Ferrari have enjoyed a special love affair. It seems fitting then that the company who makes "belle macchine" should celebrate its 60th anniversary in "la belle province" in grand style. A collection of vintage Ferraris greeted lucky guests at the invite only event, held in Old Montreal. Included in the walk down memory lane were three of the most revered Ferraris ever.

A Canadian collector brought a 1967 330 P4, the only completely original car in existence. The 330 P4 claimed the top three places at Daytona and until his death, Enzo used to keep a photo of the trio on their last lap. Also on hand was a 1962 250 GTO, one of the most desired Ferraris and a car that regularly fetches millions at auctions. With his death two years earlier, the 1990 F40 was the last car introduced and commissioned by Enzo Ferrari himself. Its name and launch coincided with Ferrari's 40th anniversary as a car company.

There's a traditional Italian toast that wishes a century of health, happiness and prosperity to the guest of honour. So raise your glasses and cling them together for Ferrari. Cent'anni! GZ

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Male bonding

Ferrari provided cars for me for this event, but they did not provide me with a lovely female navigator. Instead I got Angus who is, for all his fine qualities, nice but not lovely. He's the editor of Calgary's *Elemente* magazine and he does not have a big red beast in his driveway either. We were like happy 10 year olds with new toys for the two days we screamed around Oregon together. My solution to world peace would be to get 50 representatives of any sticky political situation, pair them with 50 of their most bitter enemies and send them off as odd couples in Ferraris for a few of days. Throw in confusing rally instructions and you've got global harmony by the end of the week. Since I wasn't at war with Angus to begin with, we spent most of our two days together saying "oh wow" and "you try it," and generally feeling as if we were Huck Finn and Space Commander Bob rolled together.

The Spyder

The first day we drove the Spyder F430. This is your "classic" Ferrari. It's what kids think of when they say the word Ferrari. It's red, it's a convertible, it's got the engine in the back, it seats two people and no more, and it's noisy. When pulling into a small town in Oregon it gets more attention than a flatbed full of naked supermodels.

To jump start the day, Nigel's crew set up a timed course beside the Portland race track just for the group and away from speed traps. With helmets on we screamed around the many bends. Adrenalin surged with the tachometer. Later in the day, with Angus at the wheel, the Ferrari slipped into racing mode where it ought not to have. The nice state trooper let us off with just a \$263 US ticket.

Speed is not the most amazing thing a Spyder has to offer. Two amazing things stand out for me about how this vehicle responds: it corners like no car I've been in. The vehicle rides so low the centre of gravity must be three inches above the road. This is helped, I'm sure, by tires that seem to be a third as wide as the car. It corners with no leaning and goes like a self-drive roller coaster on the "mad mouse" track.

The other marvel was shifting gears. There's no clutch pedal in this car. There are paddle shifters on the steering column (not the steering wheel) and if you don't use them, it has what I hesitate to call an "automatic transmission." The transmission has multiple personalities ranging from racing to a completely ridiculous setting for ice and snow. Ever seen a Ferrari Spyder on an icy road. No? There'd be a reason for that.

While the Ferrari owners were counting their minutes in the rally, Angus and I took time out to savour a bit of the classically beautiful forests of Oregon, to stare up at the biggest Sitka spruce tree and to try out all the shifting modes on a straight stretch of road. That ice and snow was good for a laugh: floor it and you rev to about

15 per cent of maximum RPM before the shift. You run through all gears and are still within the speed limit. What is that setting doing there? Decoration?

The most aggressive setting is startling in a different way. You're at the speed limit by the time you hit second gear and the shifts seem to be made by a muscular dwarf with a sledge hammer positioned atop the engine – in other words six inches behind your head.

The Scaglietti

This Ferrari is not even red – so much for that cliché. Angus and I had a royal blue chariot for our second day. Twelve cylinders, 540 horsepower (as opposed to the mere 490 hp in the eight cylinder Spyder) this car is like the jet stream compared to the Spyder's hurricane.

The design is almost an optical illusion. It is as if it's a larger-than-scale model of a normal size sports car. Everything is bigger than you'd expect. Obviously they have to put those 12 cylinders in a bigger package. The sleek hardtop had something the Spyder has not heard of: sound insulation. Not too much however – you can still hear the engine just enough that you don't need to consult the tachometer.

How fast is it? Way too fast. We left a blue streak all along the scenic Oregon coastline. We started looking for cars to pass in a predatory way: hunting them down and then putting pedal to the metal for a few seconds, pulling up just short of lift-off speed. Looking back in the mirror, as one does to confirm that you've finished passing the overtaken vehicle, was one of the best laughs. The cars we passed appeared as specks. Juvenile, okay. Fun, definitely.

The caviar of cars

There never was, nor will there ever be, many Ferraris on the road. Cost, maintenance, capacity and other tedious practical considerations just don't allow that. But they're like the perfect flower on the dark side of the moon that gets so much discussion in first year philosophy classes: it's better that they exist than that they're merely an idea. I had many laughs and happy moments in "my" Ferraris in Oregon and I've come to terms with the fact that my Ferrari-less life is still worth living.

Some years ago I flew on the Concorde. They served caviar. I accidentally dropped some on my shirt and made a stain. Whenever I wore that shirt again and the stain was pointed out to me I tried to casually say, "Oh, that's from caviar when I was on the Concorde." By now I'm used to people hating me and I know how to answer questions about what I was driving in Oregon. As an exercise do this: look in the mirror and try to say in a casual manner, "Oh, I was driving a couple of Ferraris." Can't be done. Piston envy is just one of the facts of life for we Ferrari people.

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