

CLASSIC DRIVER

California Dreaming



There are few 'clubs' more exclusive than the informal group to which Ferrari 250 GTO owners belong, simply by virtue of owning one of the most beautiful cars in the world - of which only 36 were ever made. The Moët & Chandon Tour is an event which has been run over the last 20 years, with the aim of celebrating this rare automobile. This year's Tour took in the dreamy landscape of California.

On Sunday October 21st, under a warm Californian sun, the GTO owners met up at the Napa Valley Reserve in the heart of St Helena's most important vineyards. At the inaugural dinner, the guests enjoyed a splendid meal accompanied by the just-released Moët & Chandon Grand Vintage 2000, as well as the Vintage 1962, the wine that marks the year of the GTO's birth. As the directors of Moët & Chandon and Ferrari proposed a toast to the 'guardians' of the 250 GTO, news broke that Ferrari had just scooped the F1 World Championship in Brazil.

The following morning saw the Tour leave the rolling vineyards of Meadowood and head for the majestic Redwood forest. The drivers of the 21 participating cars wound their way through 200 kilometres of magnificent, ancient cedars, before ending up at the Pacific coast on the cliffs of Mendocino. One of the cult destinations for hippies in the 1960s, it was the perfect location for Nick Mason, Pink Floyd's drummer and proud GTO owner, to wax lyrical about some of the outstanding moments of rock music - and of his favourite car, which at that time was beating records around the world.



Tuesday saw the Tour take to the narrow, winding road that is the famous Route 1, clinging to the Pacific coast before moving on through the rolling hills of Alexander Valley. After lunch at Domaine Chandon and a guided tour of the Dominus vineyard, a spectacular private dinner was organised by Moët & Chandon and The French Laundry, the restaurant belonging to Thomas Keller, the only American chef to own two restaurants with three Michelin stars (New York's Per Se is the other).

Another bright, sunny morning followed, and the spectacular Infineon racetrack, carved out of a hill at the far end of San Francisco Bay, set the scene for the Grand Prix Moët & Chandon de la Régularité - the Speed Accuracy Prize. Once again, the GTOs demonstrated their agility, speed control and reliability.

By Thursday, it was time for the 21 GTOs to hit the road as a team for the last time... maybe a little too quickly for one charming lady driver, who was stopped by a local policeman. However, after watching the cars pass, the policeman declared that he would rather enjoy the cars' beauty than fine one of the drivers for speeding.



That evening, at Harlan Estate, the group enjoyed the Tour's final dinner and a prize-giving ceremony. In proposing a final toast to the organisers and participants of this 45th Anniversary Tour, Frédéric Cumenal, president of Moët & Chandon, extended an invitation for one and all to meet again in five years' time to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the great sportscar. In 2012, the Rally will begin at Epernay – home of one of the world's most loved champagnes – and finish at Modena, birthplace of the magnificent 250 GTO.





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