

CLASSIC DRIVER

Lamborghini Murciélago Roadster

The following is an extract from Phil Ward's feature in Auto Italia magazine, Issue 106 2005. For access to the full feature, plus articles on driving the Ferrari F430 Spider, the restoration of a Lamborghini Miura, track testing the Maserati Trofeo Gransport and much more, see www.auto-italia.co.uk



Lamborghini's Murciélago can trace its handbuilt chassis and engine DNA back to the Diablo. The marque claims not to have imminent plans to replace the Murciélago, but Head of Design Luc Donckerwolke and his team are not just whispering in a huddle in the factory canteen because they like the excellent espresso. While a Murciélago replacement continues to be conjecture, energetic PR Director Sergio Fontana says that Lamborghini's next new car will be the Gallardo Spyder. And it will have a conventional, electrically-operated fabric roof - which the Murciélago Roadster doesn't.

Most of the Roadsters are destined for the American market, where the majority of Lamborghinis are sold. It is essentially a barchetta with a black serviette as temporary covering for emergency use, something you are unlikely to need in California unless you spill your pina colada. With its open roof and vibrant colours, this is a car to be seen in and you will certainly be seen. Even in the local area around Sant'Agata where Lamborghinis are a common sight, the yellow Roadster attracts huge attention. In nearby San Giovanni where we stopped to photograph the car in front of a primary school, lessons were suspended while the teachers led a procession of delighted children round the car - inspiration for the colouring books no doubt.

Test driver Moreno Conti accompanied me on a route in the Sant'Agata area which had a variety of road surfaces and traffic conditions. Given the local speed restrictions and vigilance of the Carabinieri it was impossible and unwise to explore the potential of the 6.2-litre, 580bhp V12 (it took me almost a year to recover my licence having experienced 'zero tolerance' first hand). Suffice to say that a quick blast along a decent stretch of wide open road by dabbing the throttle and rustling the clacky gearlever revealed that the world shrinks rapidly beyond 4500rpm. With the potential of 0-62 in 3.8 seconds and a 205mph top speed, this kind of performance can only be explored on a test track - and Lamborghini doesn't have one. There is talk of a purpose-built test facility being built on farm land behind the factory; and Modena, too, is considering a proper circuit. In the meantime it's the public road.

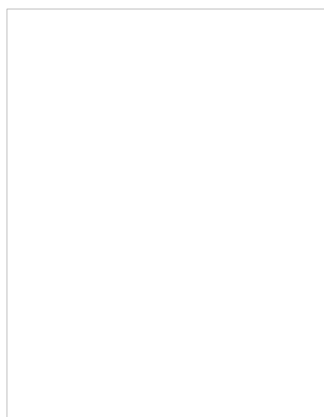
The Murciélago Roadster is a wide car, 2240mm in fact - 7 feet 4 inches in old money. You need a lot of space. Italian towns and minor roads are not best suited to this size of vehicle. Reversing needs pre-planning unless you have a driver's mate. An HGV licence would be an advantage (something, coincidentally, I actually possess), since HGV training wisely advises you not to drive into a space that you cannot drive out of. While the side mirrors provide a decent rear view, half the interior mirror vision is occupied by the hump in the engine cover. One benefit of reversing the Roadster, compared with the coupe, is that the driver can sit up and look over the back of the car whereas coupe owners must do the raise-the-door and sit-on-the-sill trick.

Rather than simply chop the top off a coupe, designer Luc Donckerwolke has installed a new, lower windscreen and fitted a streamlined engine cover. The problem with lowering the screen height is that the top of the surround can intrude on the driver's line of sight. This will be worse for tall drivers that might find themselves looking over the screen surround rather than under it.

The controls are light, especially the clutch which was a delight after the Diablo's thigh-bulging device. The close pedal spacing needs some concentration as it is easy to nudge the accelerator when feeling for the brakes. The fly-by-wire throttle is very responsive, the mapping also 'helps' the driver during manoeuvring and requires some concentration to avoid the engine sounding too busy.

Despite the extra strength in the sills, and the scaffolding cradling the engine, inevitably there is some scuttleshake at low speeds. This becomes insignificant as progress increases and your attention is diverted to the glorious growl of the big V12. Italian sun, an open Lamborghini - wonderful.





Words by Phil Ward and pictures courtesy of Michael Ward, and Auto Italia magazine.

See www.auto-italia.co.uk or call +44(0)1858 438817 for back issues and subscriptions.

ClassicInside - The Classic Driver Newsletter
[Free Subscription!](#)
Gallery

Hide gallery

Hide gallery

Source URL: <https://www.classicdriver.com/en/article/lamborghini-murci%C3%A9lago-roadster>

© Classic Driver. All rights reserved.