

CLASSIC DRIVER

Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano



With its 620 HP Enzo-based V12, *Manettino* on the steering wheel, and F1-Trac and SCM driver aids, the casual observer would think Ferrari's latest GT is a car fit solely for the racetrack. It'll do all that for sure, but a few days driving from Goodwood - via Reims - to Maranello reveals another side to the 205 mph heir to the F40.

Why the F40? Well of course the outgoing 550/575 series is the direct predecessor, but Ferrari feel so strongly that the F40 really did set the benchmark for driving passion, excitement and performance that the main criterion with the new car was for it to evoke these emotions, but be not only a devastatingly fast machine on a circuit but also the perfect Grand Tourer for long journeys or a trip to the theatre. Something you couldn't do in an F40.





It's the third car in the 21st Century model range that employs very powerful engines in super-lightweight chassis with extensive technical input from the F1 team in the areas of gearbox, suspension and traction management, joining the unbelievable **F430** and sublime **612 Scaglietti** (an example of which we also tested, and will be reporting on in weeks to come).

The **Goodwood Festival of Speed** was the 599 GTB's UK debut and Ferrari had several cars on hand to demonstrate to the third largest market in the world after the US and Germany. Our task was simple; leave Goodwood circuit on Monday morning, take the 2.04 pm Euro Tunnel train and, with a stopover at Reims in North East France that night, then travel straight on to Maranello the following day.

And a private room had been booked at the *Ristorante Montana* on Tuesday night to celebrate the latest car's homecoming.



A nice schedule with the opportunity of really testing the 599 GTB's ability to cover some 1,500 kms (over 900 miles) at speed with life's everyday problems of traffic jams and enforcement mixed in with twisting Alpine roads and clear motorway sections in France and Italy. The Grandest of Tours.

I first saw the car at Geneva this year (this very car in fact, finished in a new colour; Rosso Monza) and was immediately bowled over by its looks, interior and also - let's be a little boring now - by its practicality. It's roomy with quite a large boot to take as much luggage, I would guess, as the four-seater 612, and a comfortably spacious cabin with styling touches that in both design and execution can only be Ferrari. As you'd expect, the personalisation programme can truly make 'your' 599 unique, and ours had the optional

'Daytona' perforated leather seats, carbon-fibre trim kit for the door panels as well as the 'Enzo-inspired' carbon-fibre steering wheel with LED rev display.



The fully electric carbon seats (with 3-position memory) can be infinitely adjusted and provide not only good support over a long trip but also have separate controls for adjusting (by air) the lumbar and thigh bolsters for serious track work. The cabin works fantastically well and the *Manettino* (the F1-style switch on the 'wheel introduced in the F430), logical dials and instruments including a very fine (optional) sat-nav system would do justice to any luxury car in the world in both form and functionality.

Turn the key, press 'Start' on the steering wheel and clicking the F1 paddle into first, off you go. It's as easy as that. The steering at low speeds is lightish, no doubt a function of the colossal wheels and tyres (optional 20" 'Challenge-style' for us) but firms up with a little mph to the point of delicate precision at really high cornering velocities. Driving in Southern England's congested roads was not exactly a pleasure (it never is) but certainly no problem even with a LHD example. Watch the width though, at nearly two metres it's a big, if elegantly proportioned, car.





Emerging blinking from the French side of the tunnel and it's time to let the car have its head, A long-standing criticism of the 575 Maranello was its lack of distinctive engine note, so the Ferrari engineers have come up with a solution that is not only utterly addictive, but is clearly there to optimise the performance of the car rather than be a Bond St. affectation. The chain-driven cams whirr, the induction system roars and the exhaust can rip and wail at high revs - it's manna from heaven in any of the many tunnels on our route.

And the performance it produces is staggering. Just think, it's some 50 kgs lighter than the 575 with another 80 HP and the latest F1 gearbox shifts cogs in just 100 milliseconds. Taking it up to 7,600 rpm where all 620 HP is deployed and changing up produces monstrous acceleration only matched in impressiveness by rolling the throttle on at (say) 3,000 rpm in 5th or 6th where the car will still launch itself ever onwards.

Ferrari have taken all the traction and suspension developments introduced so far in the 612 and F430 one stage further in the 599 GTB. The *Manettino* effortlessly transforms the car according to the wishes of the driver. We didn't try 'Race' or the option of removing the driving aids altogether, but switching around from 'ICE' to 'Normal' to 'Sport' means the SCM MR (magnetorheological) dampers quickly stiffen up, the F1 gearchange gets even faster, and the F1-Trac (phew!) traction control system readies itself for action.



The result when really pitching the car into a tightening upward Alpine bend at, or around, the 600 HP-mark in third gear is some rearward movement from the tail - but no more. Like the [F430 we tested at length last summer](#), this car really flatters the driver and almost says 'Hey, you thought *you* did that didn't you? Don't worry - enjoy yourself, I'll look after you.'

At highish (200 km/h +) speeds the aerodynamics come into play and the big engine will just bowl the car along for kilometre after kilometre. We hit Reims on time and took the opportunity of revisiting the scene of many Ferrari triumphs of the past (from a British perspective how about Mike Hawthorn's French GP win in 1953? Or the Maranello Concessionaires 250 LM coming 1st overall at the 12 Hours in 1964?). In baking temperatures, the car's powerful a/c soon restored your correspondent's composure within minutes - despite the almost mid-mounted V12 just behind the 'dash.

So on through Switzerland (and the snarling nightmare that is the border entry at Basle), through the San Bernardino tunnel (more noise!) and into the car's homeland via the Aosta Valley.

After innumerable photo stops, it's getting late now, but the big car spears ever southwards, pulling into the legendary *Ristorante* around midnight. The table is set and there is a feeling of 'coming home' - and not just for the car.



This is the Ferrari family, the passion that produces some of the most exciting cars in the world and yet now mixes that with state-of-the-art engineering excellence bar-none. The F40 has a son, and he has a First in engineering - long live the 599 GTB.

The 'Rosso Monza' car tested featured the following options

*F1 gearbox
Daytona seats
CCM braking system
Scuderia Ferrari Shields
Electrochromic internal mirror
Satellite Navigation System
Parking sensors (front and rear)
Bose Sound System
Carbon inserts (kickplates, door panels paddles, steering wheel with LEDs)*

Full electric Recaro seats
20"Challenge-style wheels

The On-The-Road price for the 599 GTB Fiorano in the UK is as follows:

599 GTB Fiorano £171,825

599 GTB Fiorano F1 £177,325

Editor's Note: *With grateful thanks to everyone at Ferrari for organising the trip in their customary great style, and a special thank you to the owners and staff of the **Ristorante Montana** - 'Una Tradizione Vincente', or 'A Winning Tradition'. For further information please visit www.ristorantemontana.it.*

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