

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## Lamborghini Gallardo LP 550-2 Valentino Balboni

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The latest version of the Gallardo has been announced, a model named in honour of the famous Lamborghini test-driver Valentino Balboni. The Gallardo LP 550-2 Valentino Balboni name-tag also reflects the 550HP power output and a '2' for rear-wheel drive - a technical feature unique among current Lamborghinis.

Although **Balboni** is now officially retired, for several decades he had a strong influence on the character of the Lamborghini range. His fine-tuning and testing work helped to shape many automotive legends, from the **Miura** of the 1960s through to the current **Gallardo** and **Murciélago**. It's hoped that the new model bearing his name will adhere to Balboni's theory: "A Lamborghini must always combine the precision of a race car with the reliability of a good friend."



The manufacturer assures us that controlled oversteer will be no problem in the 5.2-litre V10-powered supercar, because the new rear-wheel drive model has 'refined road manners and perfectly tuned assistance systems', making it 'an exceptionally safe sportscar to drive'. Let's hope it is still as much fun to drive, without too much interference from those assistance systems...

But the technical changes go far deeper than that: the Gallardo had to be adjusted and tuned, we're told, in every element of its driving dynamics - from springs, dampers, stabilisers and even the tyres, through to the aerodynamics. The rear axle differential, with a 45 per cent limited slip, was also redeveloped, as was the calibration of the e-gear transmission.



With its 550HP, the LP 550-2 is catapulted from 0-62mph in a smart 3.9 seconds, while the top speed of 199mph places it in the rarefied atmosphere of the top supercar segment.

The Valentino Balboni can be recognised by a white and gold stripe running from the front panel, over the roof and parts of the engine cover, all the way to the rear spoiler – inspired by classic sportscars from the 1970s. The special edition is available in eight colours, from **Bianco Monocerus** and **Verde Ithaca**, through to **Arancio Borealis** and **Nero Noctis**. Inside, the leather upholstery is black, although both seats feature a white stripe. Meanwhile, the centre console is completely upholstered in Polar white leather.

The Gallardo is Lamborghini's most successful model to date, with more than 9000 units of the supercar already made and sold. Production of the new Valentino Balboni special series will be limited to just 250, with a UK price-tag of £137,900 – but that's exclusive of taxes.

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*Photos: Lamborghini*

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