

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## Sleeping Beauty №5: Aston Martin Virage



**For such an important model, it's surprising that Aston's stylish Virage still lingers at the bottom of the 'Aston desirability' charts.**

It was introduced in 1988 as a replacement for the long-serving **V8 Coupé**. The styling, by **John Heffernan** and **Ken Greenley**, was curvaceous with more than a nod to older, more sporting Astons. Computer-aided design was used extensively and the chassis was lighter, stiffer and simpler to make than the outgoing model. Four-valve heads (by American specialist **Reeves Calloway**), catalysts and revised fuel injection allowed the car to go 'global'; i.e. an identical-specification engine could be used worldwide, running exclusively on unleaded fuel.

Performance was impressive on paper (an automatic coupé could accelerate to 60mph in approximately six seconds, to 100mph in 15, and have a maximum speed of 155mph) yet testers – and new owners – found the car lacked 'snap' and handling finesse. This was addressed by both **Works Service** and respected independent specialists who produced **6.3-litre** and **7.0-litre** conversions, coupled with wider bodywork and revised rear suspension.

That said, the car's imposing presence on the road, and classic understated **Aston** style, meant it could never be mistaken for anything else and for most people it certainly fitted the bill. A convertible version, the '**Volante**', was introduced in 1990 as a two-seater, with a 2+2 following in 1992. Buyers would have to wait for the twin-supercharged **Vantage**, also revealed in '92, for some tyre-shredding performance as 'standard'.

As with any car costing £135,000 when new and now available from 20,000 euros, when looking for a **Virage** it is **essential** to seek professional advice and buy the very best possible car you can afford. If you do find something that has passed an informal 'health check', you'll be the owner of one of the last hand-formed Astons, built at **Newport Pagnell** with the legendary **Tadek Marek**-designed V8 in one of its final iterations.

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