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[Sleeping Beauty №15: Lancia Thema 8.32](#)



A dark blue Lancia Thema was a favourite of Italian businessmen in the 80s and 90s. At a time when a Ferrari on the Autostrada was a rarity, the sober three-box saloon said little about its owner. And then Lancia shoe-horned a 3.0-litre Ferrari V8 under the bonnet...

How did that reflect on the driver? Well, that he had the equivalent of around £40,000 to spend, for a start, and that he or she really did want 'something different'.

The **Thema** was **Lancia's** version of the **'Type Four'** chassis, jointly developed with **Alfa Romeo** (164), **Fiat** (Croma) and **Saab** (9000). It was available in saloon and estate bodywork, powered primarily by the Fiat Group's most powerful four-cylinder turbodiesel to make the most of Italian tax rules.

The **Ferrari**-powered version appeared mid-way in the **Thema's** lifespan (1986) and can best be compared with some of the early big-engined **Mercedes**. It could only ever appeal to a certain sort of owner; one who could afford a **Ferrari** but wanted a four-door for family, or business, reasons. In fact, exactly the market served by the **Maserati Quattroporte**, **Porsche Panamera** and **Aston Martin Rapide** today.

A big **BMW** or **Mercedes** saloon misses the point in a market where exclusivity and luxury are all. From a performance point of view, despite its transplanted engine, the **Thema 8.32** in catalyst form could just be bested by a turbocharged petrol four-cylinder **Thema** from 0-62mph. But you wouldn't get the **Poltrona Frau** leather and fine wood interior - nor the wailing sound that only a **Ferrari** motor can produce. And top speed was an impressive 149mph.

All cars were left-hand drive, although despite that a few did find their way into the UK. At that time, a **BMW M5** would have made a much more sensible purchase but buying Lancias has never been a matter of logic or common sense.

Feeling adventurous? Have a look for a Lancia Thema 8.32 in the [Classic Driver car database](#).

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