

CLASSIC DRIVER

Maserati GranCabrio - a Breath of Fresh Air



Hello clouds! Hello sky! Here comes summer and the latest convertible from Modena. All very fine and dandy, but how does the GranCabrio fit into a marketplace bracketed at one end by Jaguar's impressive XK and at the other by the Italian's close family relation, the Ferrari California?

A short drive in the **GranCabrio** formed part of Maserati GB's UK press launch of its 2010 model line-up. Held near **Prodrive**'s proving ground not far from Coventry, the event also made it possible to assess **GranTurismo** and **Quattroporte** performance on the track. Both models impress greatly, so, leaving a brand-new **Sport Line-spec GranTurismo S** to quietly get its breath back, I jumped straight into the cabriolet.

It's a hard act to follow, as the most sporting of all **Maseratis** (with its paddle-shift transmission) is a terrific car, one of my favourites. The automatic-only **GranCabrio** is intended for a more sybaritic lifestyle.



In the metal, it looks utterly gorgeous: roof up or down, it's more feminine than the coupé, seeming to lose the aggressive 'bite' of the radiator grille in its smoother, seemingly longer lines. The **Poltrona Frau** leather interior (chocolate brown in our car) is top-notch and, should the outlook be showery, the triple-layer fabric roof makes for a cosy, cossetting environment.

The roof can be activated in just 28 seconds and raised at speeds up to 18mph, while the '**Summer Opening**' feature allows the driver to raise, or lower, the top with a simple twist of the key in the door lock. Buyers can choose from a six-colour palette for the external fabric: **Black, Blue, Burgundy, Chocolate, Titanium Grey** or **Java** (beige). Match one of these shades to an external paint colour from **Maserati's** tasteful range and you are going to end up with a stylish, discreet cabriolet in the best traditions of the marque.



Blu Oceano/Blue, Grigio Alfieri/Burgundy or Grigio Touring/Black – all very sexy, classy combinations which you can have fun [configuring online](#).

Maserati has installed the biggest capacity (that sounds good, doesn't it?), 4691cc V8 from the 'S' models in the **GranCabrio** and matched it – as standard – to a six-speed, torque-converter automatic. Also carried over are the dual-cast front discs: really good stoppers that I had tested in the **GranTurismo S** on the track that day.

Both the increase in power (440HP vs. 405HP for the 4244cc) and the improved brakes make themselves felt, and it's a fine combination that means performance for the convertible (as promised by the factory) is only a touch lower than that of the similarly equipped S coupé. Carrying, as it does, an extra 100kg or so, the **GranCabrio** will do the 0-62mph sprint in 5.3 seconds (5.0 seconds for the coupé), while top speed is down from 183mph to 175mph. No, you won't notice it.







On the road, it feels (quite appropriately) a softer car than the coupé – more like the standard non-S, in fact. And there's nothing wrong with that. Pressing the '**Sport**' button on **Skyhook** suspension-equipped cars just makes things unnecessarily uncomfortable and is best avoided. On all **GranCabrios**, Sport sharpens the engine mapping, holds lower gears longer and creates a little more V8 roar.

Motorway speeds, roof-down with the optional '**Windstop**' barrier in place, are easy; there's little buffeting or noise. When carrying rear-seat passengers, the **Windstop** folds in half (without an instruction manual, that procedure is one for Mensa members only...) and stows in the boot – pretty well filling it up, it has to be said. At 173 litres it makes the **DB9 Volante** (only travelling toothbrushes, please) appear the antique dealer's friend.



However, for medium-length journeys only, like the **GranTurismo** it's a genuine four-seater; on a par with a **Bentley Continental GTC**, and far and away the best in a group comprising **California/V8 Vantage Roadster/DB9 Volante/XK Convertible**. The roof has to go somewhere, and decent-sized seats have to be fitted, so it's the boot-space that suffers – as simple as that.

In the UK, a generously-equipped-as-standard **Maserati GranCabrio** carries a price of £96,175. Marque loyalties apart, I would say that this compares very favourably with the opposition, being lower-priced than a **DB9 Volante**, roomier than a **V8 Vantage Roadster** and considerably more affordable than the much faster, metal-roofed/CCM-braked/twin-clutch transmissioned **California**. All of these cars make the £73,500 **Jaguar XK 5.0 Portfolio Convertible** we tested last year look considerable value, yet it has much less space behind the front seats.



With deliveries only just arriving, to April this year **Maserati GB** had sold 28 cars. That's another 203 to go but, for those looking for a deluxe convertible, a quick drive in the **GranCabrio** could have this figure tumbling by autumn-time.

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Photos: Maserati GB

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