

CLASSIC DRIVER

Alfa Romeo TZ1: The 'baby GTO'



Yes, 'baby GTO' and 'little jewel' are epithets often given to Alfa Romeo's 1,570cc GT car of the early 60s. Just over 110 were built and, like its big brother from Maranello, it became a dominant force on the race track. It also looked fabulous.

The TZ ('T' for its *tubulare* chassis, 'Z' for Zagato) superseded the already successful SZ series of customer racing Alfas. It was, though, a very different car.

Despite being revealed in its final form at the 1963 Geneva Show, the car had been under development since the late 1950s. Early prototypes included a roadster with hard-top and a coupé that was similar to the final version, yet carried rectangular lights.



The engine was Alfa Romeo's trusted 1,570cc, four-cylinder DOHC unit from the Giulia, slightly canted-over in its installation to lower the bonnet line. The familiar TZ power-bulge covers one cam cover. With twin Weber carbs, a twin-plug head and tuning by such specialists as Virgilio Conrero, the little motor pushed out 160bhp.

A 5-speed gearbox was standard.

Zagato produced the body and interior trimmings, and the car was assembled by Carlo Chiti's Auto-Delta (later 'Autodelta') organisation for Alfa Romeo. Chiti, the generously proportioned engineer who had masterminded the 'shark-nose' F1 cars for Ferrari, had left the Maranello company in 1961.

Its hand-beaten, streamlined aluminium bodywork, coupled with a tubular frame weighing just 62kg, meant that despite its modest engine size a TZ was a very fast car. (As an aside, the last three TZ1s built had glassfibre bodywork by Balzaretto and Modigliani of Milan – a saving of 25kg.)





The little cars soon saw action on the track. In October 1963 TZs finished first to fourth at Monza — their debut — and for the next few years the 1300–1600cc class at Le Mans, the Nürburgring, the Tour de France Automobile and the Targa Florio was usually a TZ benefit. It was a useful rally car as well as a successful racer.

Famous drivers to have won in TZs include Lorenzo Bandini, Giancarlo Baghetti, Consalvo Sanesi and Roberto Bussinello. Nowadays, the cars are highly prized in historic racing, being eligible for the Le Mans Classic and the modern Tour Auto, as well as occasional invitations to race at the Goodwood Revival.



The TZ1 you see here was built in March 1965 and, in period, spent most of its racing life in France. Now available from [Classic Driver dealer William l'Anson](#), the impeccably prepared racing car has a thoroughly researched history and has also made the odd concours appearance at events such as the 2011 Salon Privé.

Finally, you will see references to 'TZ' and 'TZ1' – what's all that about? In October 1964 Elio Zagato presented a new version, the 'TZ2'. In doing so, earlier TZs should now be referred to as 'TZ1's. The TZ2 was an even more desirable car – that we will tell you about another day.



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