CLASSIC DRIVER

La Vita é Bella: Taking a Ferrari 458 Spider to Bellagio

Lead
The Ancient Romans often headed to Lake Como in summer, to spend a little leisure time on the Bellagio peninsula. We have revived that tradition – aboard the latest Ferrari Spider.

What are two thousand years when it comes to the eternal grace of Lake Como? Towards the end of the First Century AD, Pliny the Younger, a prominent Roman lawyer and prolific letter-writer, would travel here during the summer months to fish, to walk under the palms and lemon trees, and to hunt. The mild climate and stunning mountain and lake views is unchanged, but today luxurious villas and hotels have been added to arguably the most charming roads in Northern Italy. You wouldn’t choose to manoeuvre some great chariot along these narrow and winding lanes; the ideal transport needs to be agile in the tight corners, quick to accelerate out of the bends, and ideally open-topped to enjoy the fresh spring air. So we made a call to Maranello, to beg a loan of the new Ferrari 458 Spider. Perfect.





Only it didn’t quite turn out as we planned. Nothing wrong with the Ferrari – far from it – but the black clouds hanging thickly over the mountains soon broke open to pour gallons of water onto our car, the wiper blades fighting gamely to scoop it away from the windscreen. We hadn’t imagined that a late spring journey in an open-topped Ferrari would be quite like this, but at least our aluminium folding roof felt bomb-proof, the Manettino dial was switched to ‘Wet’, and we could enjoy a suitably apocalyptic soundtrack by Carl Orff blaring from the surround sound system. Then, at last, there was light at the end of the St. Gotthard Tunnel and the promise of a better world. A quick espresso in Bissone, then it’s time for roof down, windows open – and Ferrari driving as it’s meant to be.







We’ve already sung the praises of the ultra-fast and highly precise Ferrari 458 Spider, but in the tight switchbacks built into the steep slopes between mountain and lake, the 570HP horse feels more sprightly than ever. With the driving mode set to ‘Sport’, the transmission in ‘manual’, and some conciliatory words to the passenger, there’s nothing to prevent the driver from enjoying those curves to the full. It’s remarkable how easily and accurately you can point the big Spider, keeping its well-balanced potency in check before unleashing it when the road straightens out.



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Those seeking curvy roads for four wheels or two will find plenty of fun on the trip to Bellagio, situated on the edge of Lake Como. We save the next mountain roads for the following day and instead take a ferry from Cadenabbia, on the western shore of Lake Como, to reach Bellagio. The northern Italian lakes are stunning but the scenery is dramatic, rather than ‘pretty’, especially when blue skies and the white foam dancing with the Riva boats give way to torrential rain – which, at this time of year, can happen almost without warning.







Arriving at the Villa Serbelloni, we leave the Ferrari in the driveway with its eight-cylinder engine crackling as it cools, the air above it shimmering in a heat haze, while we enjoy an Aperol Spritz on the terrace. The

liveried waiters give us the latest news on the weather forecast and we study the map to plan the next day’s adventures. Pliny the Younger could not have had it any better.

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