

CLASSIC DRIVER

Over the Alps and far away - driving the new Porsche Cayman S

Lead

After our first date in Portugal, we swore eternal love for the new Porsche Cayman S. Now our holiday romance has moved on to Italy; but by a not-quite-direct route...

The narrow mountain road as steep as the Himalayas

The best day of the year was always the last day of school before the summer holidays. I'd throw my satchel into the corner, forget at one stroke the year's laborious lessons, and dig out the right holiday reading for the next day's drive to the Mediterranean – which would see me in the back seat of our bright yellow VW Beetle convertible. Often we'd head 'over the Gotthard', the narrow mountain road that seemed as steep as the Himalayas. At the top of the Pass, there would be the inevitable stop to add coolant (to the passengers, of course, not the air-cooled Beetle), and to clamp towels over the windows to protect us from the midday sun. When, after much motoring, we at last saw the first palm tree in Bellinzona, I'd know that the first stage of the holiday was already over.



Sports crocs and campervans

How times have changed. The bright red Porsche Cayman S we're in today can tackle the trip through Ticino in scorching mountain sun, even when it comes to the challenge of the Gotthard Pass, while hardly drawing breath. The six-cylinder boxer engine behind us purrs softly to itself, the automatic shifts are silk-smooth and the air-con blows icy polar air at our retro sunglasses. The gift of 325HP from Stuttgart's engineers, along with a 66lb weight loss and sharp chassis, means this car is made for hairpin bends of exactly the Gotthard kind. How one could roar through the switchbacks to the summit... were it not for the Dutch campervans and coaches from Offenburg, filing down the road at a snail's pace.



Horses fit for the Tremola

A picnic at the Pass, with cheese and salami bought from Ticino's highest market stall (strongly recommended), helped to compensate for the rolling blockade. Then it was time for the descent. It's hard to believe that these yawning chasms and granite chunks of the Tremola gorge were once the backdrop to horse-drawn stagecoaches – heaven knows what happened when the horses ran out of puff, but that's no problem for our Porsche. At this point, we play harder with the throttle, the brakes and the taut suspension, until we begin to suspect – so perfect is this car for the job in hand – that the 'S' on the back of our Cayman is in truth a stylised version of a sweeping Tremola curve.



Wild Ticino

The shore roads along Lake Maggiore and the sweeping curves through the dark woods are made for the 'little' Porsche. Praise, too, is deserved for the luggage space: our bags sit happily under the bonnet and, in the rear, there's even room for our hiking gear behind the engine. The following day, on our return trip over the mountains, we take the Passo del Bernardino route, with its wild mountain lakes and deep forests. We save a full inspection of the area's curving roads for the next trip: perhaps in the new Cayman R – or a Beetle convertible?

Photos by Jan Baedeker

Gallery



















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