

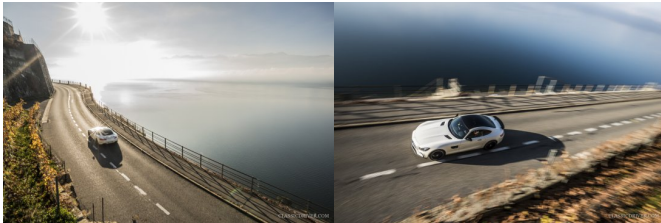
CLASSIC DRIVER

Grand Touring with the Mercedes AMG GT S

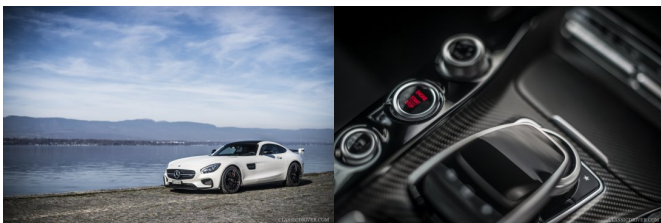
Lead

A Porsche-pounding wonder of the road – the new Mercedes-Benz AMG GT was burdened with high expectations following the mighty SLS AMG. We took the ‘S’ version of the sporty Grand Tourer on a week-long tour through Switzerland...

It's hard being an automotive journalist in Switzerland. We'd been behind the wheel of the Mercedes-Benz AMG GT, one of the most desirable new sports cars on sale, for barely 15 minutes, when the distinctive snout of a LaFerrari appeared in the rear-view mirror, quickly shrinking our inflated egos.



Out of the shadow of the LaFerrari, though, Mercedes' new baby sports car certainly has what it takes to draw people's attention. It's a compact car and, without its predecessor's signature 'gullwing' doors, looks sleek and sexy. Porsche 911 drivers should take comfort – while the icon of Zuffenhausen was always the benchmark against which the Mercedes would be compared, its lines (in our opinion) can be clearly seen in the GT's sloping rear roof. Admittedly, that's where the similarities end...



With its long bonnet and full hips (it's actually wider than an S-Class), the architecture of the AMG GT makes for quite an unusual driving experience. While it doesn't feel as big as the vast SLS that came before it, its shape makes it inherently difficult to drive in any direction other than forward. The visibility is so poor while changing lanes or reversing that you really need to make use of the helpful assistance systems and video cameras. In the cockpit, meanwhile, the two occupants are separated by a mammoth centre console, which houses the cumbersome navigation and entertainment system (maybe we're just getting old).



Regardless, this is a car in which to throw your weekend bag in the boot, buckle up, thumb the Start button, and drive a long, long way. The handmade 4.0-litre bi-turbo V8 is immensely powerful, yet docile and refined while loping along the highways between Zurich, Geneva, Basel and Lucerne. On the other hand, its small dimensions coupled with 510HP and 650Nm of torque make it a great car in which to have fun. To really understand how this beast handles, peel off the motorway and head for the twisties.



Enter the 'Sport' mode and the firmed-up suspension and open exhaust valves reveal the true, brutish AMG character. With slightly more weight on the rear axle, the AMG GT is a born drifter, but be warned – in the wet it demands the utmost respect. The engine's location, so far back, means the car is extremely agile and manoeuvrable, while the steering is direct and accurate, and it's only when you really push on along the tighter roads that the car's 1.6-tonne weight becomes noticeable. A Lotus Elise, this is not.



After almost a week spent on the road, we've no doubt that AMG has succeeded in building a sports car that is more than a match for the fabled Porsche 911 GT3 and the other new kid on the block, the Jaguar F-type R. It's mastered the balance between sportiness and capable Grand Tourer, without making too many concessions to comfort. Might the AMG GT become one of the usual suspects in the streets across Europe, just like the icon from Zuffenhausen? We wouldn't bet against it.

Photos: Rémi Dargegen for Classic Driver © 2015

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