

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Across the Alps to Geneva with the new Touring Sciàdipersia Cabriolet](#)

Lead

At the Geneva Motor Show next week, Carrozzeria Touring will present the drop-top version of the Sciàdipersia. Design director Louis de Fabribeckers made his way from Italy to Switzerland via the Alps, in the exact manner for which the car was conceived...



Leaf through the history books of the major Italian design studios and you'll inevitably find amusing anecdotes about how legendary show cars were finished just hours before the Geneva salon opened, or how after countless nightshifts by caffeine-fuelled designers, the cars were driven across the Alps to Switzerland with Prova number plates taped to their tails.

It's telling of the sportsmanship and tradition of Milan's [Carrozzeria Touring](#) that it did not send its 2019 Geneva star in an air-conditioned trailer through the Mont-Blanc tunnel but rather had design director Louis de Fabribeckers personally drive the sole Sciàdipersia Cabriolet over the Alps to the show instead. The chosen route encompassed the 2,469-metre St. Bernard Pass, one of the most beautiful Alpine stretches, which connects Valais with Piedmont. Incidentally, it was also once used by the Romans and their chariots to capture Celtic Geneva. Chief designers of large corporations can only dream of undertaking such maiden journeys in their self-designed Grand Tourers.



Of course, there's a historical story behind the name of Touring's unique variation of the Maserati GranCabrio. Like the Coupé, which [we also exclusively revealed ahead of its Geneva debut in 2018](#), the Cabriolet tilts its hat to the opulent Maserati 5000GTs that were bodied by Touring for Mohammad Reza Persia, the immeasurably wealthy Shah of Persia. Beneath the unusual bodywork resided a 5.0-litre V8 from Maserati's retired 450S racer and the chassis of the conventional 3500GT. And just like the Shah's Maserati, the new handmade Sciàdipersia Cabriolet is supposed to revive the romantic days of travelling, when the journey was every bit as important as the destination.

"Just as riding the Orient Express is all about staring out of the window and taking in the breath-taking scenery, the Sciàdipersia has been designed to allow its occupants to truly enjoy and savour their journeys," De Fabribeckers told us last year about the Coupé. "The Cabriolet, on the other hand, evokes the idea of the Italian dolce vita - it's an elegant and pure car that generates feelings of romance and fantasy and can be guided by your imagination."

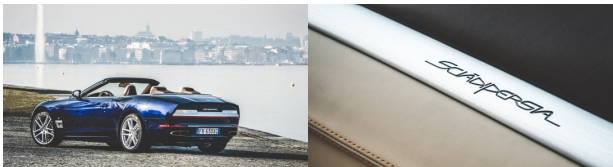


Like the Coupé, a total of 15 Sciadipersia Cabriolets will be built. Carrozzeria Touring appeals to those well-to-do and conscientious customers who don't want to burden their individuality with an 'off-the-peg' car. The fact that not only small traditional Italian companies such as Touring but also major luxury brands such as Ferrari, Bugatti, and Lamborghini are building their show cars in sinfully expensive small series confirms the growing global demand for unusual automotive collectables. But is a convertible always the logical next step following a coupé?



"When we start working on a new project, we're already thinking about different possible configurations," explains De Fabriceckers, "and for a designer that's quite logical." Yet the transformation of the Sciadipersia was anything but straightforward. "We always pay special attention to proportions – after all, we sell tailor-made suits for cars and these suits must fit perfectly. You can always argue about individual lines, but proportions are universal. They're either right or wrong."

For the Coupé, Touring's design team focused on the arrow-shaped front, the long rear overhang, and the light and airy glasshouse. The proportions of the convertible, therefore, had to be completely re-examined to ensure the design remained consistent. "In this case, there are minor changes that make a huge impact on the final design – the waistline, for example, is subtly different and gives the open car a flowing silhouette. Despite being a coupé, it looks sportier than the coupé."



Compared to the Maserati GranCabrio on which the Sciadipersia is based, Touring's design is both timeless and dramatic. The interleaved styling element of the front and the geometric Kamm tail distinguish it almost entirely from its base. In the interior, meanwhile, which has four proper seats, the Maserati's character has been preserved. Touring, however, has given it its own elegant Lombard touch with chocolate and cream coloured leather and orange stitching.

In these times of forced induction, downsized engines, and hybrid electrification, the gorgeous sounding old-school 4.0-litre, 460HP V8 of the GranCabrio also perfectly suits the traditional GT character of the Sciadipersia. In theory, the car will accelerate all the way to 288kph, though, in reality, you'll likely find the Sciadipersia gliding along beautiful alpine roads rather than tearing down the outside lane of the autostrada.



“The trip across the Alps was great,” says a visibly relaxed Louis de Fabribeckers after arriving in Geneva. “The coupé is already very comfortable and you have a wonderful sense of space, but travelling in the Cabriolet feels just a little bit more romantic, light, and easier. Whenever I caught my reflection in the rear-view mirror, I suddenly realised I was inadvertently smiling a lot!” What more could you want from an automobile so beautiful?

Photos: Touring Superleggera

Gallery

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