

CLASSIC DRIVER

[We joined the fabulous Flitzer club on its grand tour of Switzerland](#)

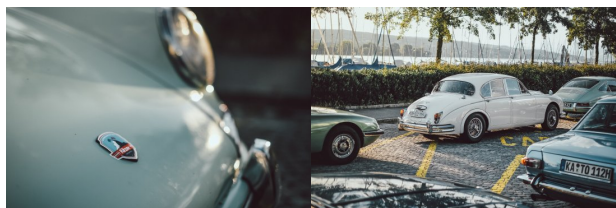
Lead

Seven passes in two days – as the summer season draws to a close, our man Błażej Żuławski rode shotgun on Flitzer Club's first international outing in Switzerland...



When the two pre-planned routes are called 'Forza' and 'Gran Turismo' and the list of participants' cars ranges from an MG Midget to a 5.3-litre aircraft carrier otherwise known as an Aston Martin Lagonda, you realise that you've left 'Kansas' and that the whirlwind of hydrocarbons has carried you away to the heart of Flitzerland.

Any event that bears the signature of Flitzer's mastermind Dirk Rumpff follows the same precise recipe. There's a meticulous selection of pre-1990s cars, spirited driving on fantastic roads, the odd culture-oriented stop to drink in some history and a happy bunch of like-minded enthusiasts who, time and again, prove that a good car event isn't necessarily about the metal, but rather the people.



Roughly a year has passed since the Flitzer Club's first outing and although the scale of the event has changed from a single day of driving on the outskirts of Berlin to a weekend assault on the Swiss Alps, the basic principles remain the same. I therefore found myself, yet again, hopping from one passenger seat to another, riding shotgun in cars that once adorned my childhood bedroom walls and forging new friendships. Oh, and accidentally discovering that a drop-top Dino 'Ferrari' makes for an excellent camera car.

For a smaller contingent on the 38-strong Flitzer group, the journey began two days earlier when a colourful cavalcade of cars left the hip districts of Berlin and pointed south towards the snowy Alpine peaks. During the course of their journey, they stopped to admire some outstanding modernist buildings and a spectacular collection of Italian automotive exotica. Other participants either joined them on the way, travelling from other parts of Germany, or met at the first assembly point in Switzerland.



On the evening before the off, dinner was served at the Kloster Fahr, a twelfth-century monastery where the nuns still manage the farm and the vineyard. We all enjoyed the farm-to-table produce and excellent wine very much.

As dawn broke on Saturday, and in an attempt to beat the weekend traffic, the group left the impressive Greulich Hotel for coffee and a light breakfast in Hafen Enge, one of the many marinas on the shores of Lake Zurich. We then split into two groups – the bigger cars such as the Lagonda and the Maserati Kyalami were not so well suited to the narrower and steeper hairpins on the way to the al fresco lunch stop atop the Klausenpass, hence the two different routes.



My first ride of the day was with Dirk Rumpff in his green Maserati Khamsin. The recently fitted Ansa exhaust did a marvellous job of highlighting the majestic burble of the thoroughbred V8. Mere moments later, I found myself holding on for dear life onboard a second-gen 1.3-litre Lancia Fulvia as we ascended a small mountain road heading towards Sihlsee.

Despite the Fulvia not being a particularly rare classic, and it being one of my favourite models from the Italian marque, I'd never actually sat in one before. I was equally impressed by the rev-happy four-pot engine and the skill of its driver. The car felt fast, nimble and only too happy to tackle the steep, winding ribbon of tarmac. The all-round visibility was also fantastic.



As we climbed, we were sat what felt like 10mm away from the rear bumper of a modern V12-powered Aston Martin Rapide, which was serving as the Flitzer pace car.

Fabio Don's Ferrari Testarossa was a completely different animal – powerful, wide and very red. Over the course of the previous Flitzer outings, I've learned to appreciate the Testarossa as more of a fast Grand Tourer than an outright sports car. It's spacious, comfortable and doesn't shake, rattle or vibrate. You could climb in it in London and get out in Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat and not feel at all tired.



I would have been equally relaxed had Fabio – an extremely stylish Italian architect based in Zurich – hadn’t put all his luggage behind the passenger seat. As a result, my forehead was virtually touching my knees as we drove! I asked him why he’d chosen to put his luggage there and his response was typically Italian: because he couldn’t be bothered to get out of the car in order to get his things.

Forty-five minutes later and I found myself sat beside Stefan Talkenberg as he listed all the things that don’t work on his Japanese-import Porsche 911 G. Interval switch for the wipers? Broken. Heater? Broken. The list went on. But his philosophy was that you can either pay a fortune to fix them, or you simply avoid driving the car in the rain. It’s a good thing that none of the predictions for inclement weather on this particular weekend came true.



This Porsche 911 wasn’t a complete dog, however. Investments have been made where it matters. There were sharp brakes, sports suspension, fresh rubber connecting us to the road and extremely good period-correct bucket seats. And as we slalomed between the cows who ventured onto the road, I was amazed by the G-forces the car was pulling in the corners. Perhaps that’s why they called it the G generation.



The remaining part of the day was mostly spent in traffic jams – most of the roads had stretches that seemed to be permanently under construction, but it was also a warm and sunny weekend towards the end of the driving season and it felt like all of Europe was out motoring. And quite right, too! From the Swiss Dodge Viper club to the Supercar Owners Circle, the roads were crowded with all sorts of interesting machines, be it beach buggies or Zagato-bodied Ferraris. And motorhomes, of course – crawling behind them until we reached the day’s end at the top of the Gotthard Pass was excruciating.

Some Flitzer-goers immediately disappeared into the mountain for a guided tour of the fortress hidden within, while others enjoyed a glass or two of Kessler Sekt, Flitzer’s only sponsor, as the temperatures dropped from a balmy 22 degrees to a biting seven degrees. Although the wind brought a change in the weather, dinner was served as planned at the Ospizio San Gottardo, where we all stayed overnight.



We woke the next morning to find a row of classic cars covered with condensation. The eerie silence of the mountaintop was promptly interrupted by the firing order of six-cylinder inline Jaguar engines, followed by an Italian V8 or two, several flat-12s and the clanking of boxers that could have only been made in Stuttgart. The hills came alive with these sounds as we rolled down the slippery cobbles of Tremola and headed towards Nufenenpass and subsequently Furka and Grimsel.



This was a day of pure and epic driving. The early start meant the roads were completely deserted and I managed to secure a seat in one of my all-time favourite cars: a red Dino 246 GT 'Ferrari' expertly driven by Enzo Stegel. Throughout the day we raced against his father's Ferrari 512 BB and Marick Baars' wonderful dark-blue Ferrari Mondial. It was a hoot.



As a fan of *The Persuaders!* And Tony Curtis's portrayal of the millionaire-turned-detective Danny Wilde in the cult series, in which he drives an identical car, I was happy to discover how well the Dino performed against these newer and more powerful Ferraris. The one of two brave pills swallowed by the driver might have had something to do with that, but I was genuinely astonished by the acceleration and grip levels of the little sports car. I might have even exclaimed '*forza*', '*fuoco*' and '*avanti*' on several occasions.



The timing of our Ferrari-fuelled morning of driving bliss was very well times, because shortly after we'd conquered all the day's passes, the weather failed us and the rain settled in. Lunch was served at the foggy Grimsel Hospiz, which is normally known for its stunning views, and proved a welcome stopgap between the constant flow of speed. I could once again focus on the shapes of the other cars that didn't pump quite so much adrenaline but were equally stunning to behold. Take the oh-so-futuristic green Citroën SM, for example, or the incredibly elegant Maserati Mexico.



As we descended back towards Zurich for a dinner of beef and cheese, I was once again overwhelmed by how the organisers managed to meticulously plan this whole event while maintaining the casual, laid-back atmosphere. Having lived the experience on a number of occasions and made a lot of new friends in the process, I for one cannot wait for the next Flitzer Club outing. Italy perhaps, Dirk?

Photos: Błażej Żuławski for Classic © 2020

Gallery

