

CLASSIC DRIVER

Join the custom Fiat Panda 4x4s movement with these creative restomods

Lead

Unique Fiat Pandas are all the rage now. Gulfblue from Bologna specialises in the restoration and customisation of the iconic city cars; its two latest creations are the aptly named PandAgnelli and PandAppennino.



It doesn't seem too long ago that thousands of Fiat Panda 4x4s were roaming the streets of Italy. Now the modest off-roaders are hunted by collectors worldwide and influential companies like Garage Italia and Kessel have turned to creating playful restomod versions. One of the key players in the Panda movement is Gulfblue.it, a company from Bologna that specialises in the restoration and sale of historic cars. In 2016, it started to bet on the return of the Panda – or, more accurately, the return of the first series, produced between 1983 and 1985 featuring the 965cc rods-and-rockers engine, with the simple and original shape by Giorgetto Giugiaro.

“At first sight, people don't notice it, but between the first series and the ‘Supernova’, produced from 1986 to 2003, there are so many differences,” explains Enrico Rondinelli, owner of the company. It's essentially a different car, since the only common parts outside are the roof and bonnet; everything else is different, not to mention the interior and the mechanicals.” Because the first series was produced for only three years, these Pandas are infinitely rarer than the later generation – even in Italy, only about 7,000 examples are still registered. Furthermore, they require specific parts that are hard to find and increasingly expensive.



After the restoration of a 1985 Panda 4x4 ‘Bianco Corfù’, presented at the [first Classic Driver Panda 4x4 Meet in St Moritz in 2019](#), Gulfblue continued its ‘Edizione Limitata’ with two one-off custom Pandas for clients in the United States. The first is called the PandAgnelli and pays homage to the Fiat 130 Familiare, famously driven by Avvocato Gianni Agnelli. Painted in metallic grey, the car features yellow foglights protected by a bullbar, Cromodora alloy wheels, sides finished in wood, a rattan basket on the roof and a grass-green wool interior. “Avvocato Agnelli was a great lover and user of the Panda. While he was never photographed with a first series, we like to imagine he would have wanted it to look this way.” says Enrico.



The second restomod is named PandAppennino, after the Italian mountain range that runs from Liguria to Calabria and which still today sees the greatest concentration of Panda 4x4s, regularly used for the most demanding and disparate jobs. Commissioned by another American customer, the car is painted in the first series colour 'Verde Alpi' and sports a rare double sunroof. While the exterior modifications are limited to white rims and a bullbar with foglights, the interior has been wrapped in psychedelic Missoni fabric.



For their restoration and customisation projects, Gulfblue is applying the kind of craftsmanship and attention to detail usually applied only to high-end sports cars. During a complete restoration, the Panda 4x4s are disassembled, their floorpans are sandblasted, their external sheets are replaced, their mechanicals are completely revised and their fabrics reproduced. Restored according to the criteria of originality, with reversible customisations, the cars are now certainly more refined than in the 1980s, when they were assembled at Termini Imerese in Sicily.



Meanwhile, a fourth Panda – a metallic grey Edizione Limitata that was registered in Switzerland and spent most of its life around Lake Como – just arrived in the Swiss Alps after a nut-and-bolt restoration and [spontaneously joined our latest Showtime photoshoot](#). We're looking forward to seeing it again at the second edition of the Classic Driver Panda 4x4 Meet in St Moritz.

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