

CLASSIC DRIVER

[A tour of the world through wild Ticino in the Porsche 911 Turbo S](#)

Lead

The Porsche 911 Turbo S might be the ultimate grand tourer. Behind the wheel, you instantly become a cosmopolitan, even without crossing continents. Join us as we embark on a Swiss journey of discovery to the legendary southern canton of Ticino.



Lush green meadows, vineyards and forests, picturesque towns with an Italian flair, natural stone villages on steep mountain slopes, wooden motorboats on glittering lakes: Beyond the Alps, Ticino has always been an attraction - and gives a premonition of the Mediterranean promises that have drawn travellers to the south for centuries. While in spring the snow is still falling in Basel and Zurich, you can stroll along the lake promenade in Ascona with your shirt sleeves turned up. And in autumn, when the fog drifts through the Swiss Plateau, you can still soak up some powerful sunshine for the winter with a glass of Maggia Merlot between Locarno, Bellinzona and Lugano. "There! Over there!" exclaimed Goethe on the way over the Gotthard. He was followed by Hermann Hesse, Thomas Mann, Richard Strauss, Billy Wilder, and Max Frisch. The days of the Belle Époque, when the European jet set strolled through Ticino, may be over, but since the first lockdown, when the Maldives and South Africa suddenly became unreachable, the Swiss people began to recall an almost forgotten gem in the south, still within the country's borders, waiting to be rediscovered.



The clouds hang low and dark between the mountains, the rain-soaked strip of asphalt winds narrowly between the steep cliff face and Lake Lucerne. The wiper blades swing over the windshield, fingers glide over smooth leather, the sports seats gently encircle your back, a piano concert can be heard from the loudspeakers - only in the tunnel is Alfred Brendel's keyboard play drowned out by the baritone of the biturbo engine in the rear. If you had to choose the perfect touring sports car for a grand tour to the most remote corners of Europe, you would inevitably end up with the latest Porsche 911 Turbo S.



No other 911 is so strong, confident and comfortable. A massive 650 hp is always ready to be unleashed with your right foot, while a lightning quick 8-speed dual clutch transmission, the PASM sports suspension, famous among Porsche drivers, and all-wheel drive with torque vectoring work diligently to keep that power safely in check. However, the snow is already piling up on the Gotthard Pass, so we dive into the tunnel – in childhood memories a place full of noise and the smell of petrol. Now you glide in gentle calm through the mountain range and moments later blink at the sun, which already shines promisingly at the tunnel exit.



The first destination is Lugano – and even if the tranquil Ticino metropolis is recognized as ‘Lugangeles’ by the local youth with a wink, the bay between the slopes, overgrown with chestnut forests, is somewhat reminiscent of the distant Rio de Janeiro. So open the windows, let the warm air flow through the cockpit, and settle the car into a more relaxed canter. Grand hotels and palm trees are reflected in the Agate Grey metallic paint, on the Lido di Lugano, skirts flutter like on the beach of Ipanema. Only in the distance do snow-capped Alpine peaks glow under a deep blue sky. If you climb the nostalgic funicular on Monte San Salvatore and Monte Brè – or let your cosmopolitan Porsche guide you towards the summit in private – look down at the panorama of the peaks and bays, you will definitely feel like you are on the Sugar Loaf.



Ticino might have been part of Switzerland for more than 200 years – but at least from the point of view of a “Tedeschi” susceptible to every Mediterranean cliché, the way of life south of the Gotthard is noticeably characterised by a casually elegant Italiana. And with every kilometre that you glide south along Lake Lugano, the taste of the lemons and salt of the Mediterranean becomes clearer in the air. Up on the mountain, between the villages of Carabbia and Carona, the streets are as narrow, the hairpin bends as tight, the cemeteries as marble white, and the church towers as baroque as anywhere else in Sicily. And the elegant older men, who with their battered Fiat Pandas head for the abyss with no fear of heights, clearing the way for the rather broad GT, certainly all stood in front of the camera as extras at Fellini and Visconti in their youth. In Ticino, the driving skills of local and foreign sports drivers are not measured in acceleration figures, but in the integrity of the rims, which you can inconspicuously check with a sidelong glance during a Caffè e Cornetto break in the wonderfully nostalgic port village of Morcote.



Push up your sunglasses, squint in the warm sun. The air currents shimmer above the engine. Just a daring jump into the cool lake, a few crawl strokes, and you would step onto Italian soil on the other bank, in Cuasso al Lago. But it is not supposed to be a pilgrimage to Italy, but a Helvetic trip around the world. And so we head back to Melide on the A2 in the direction of Bellinzona. The wind swirls around the rear wing. On the brutalist motorway bridges and viaducts of the 1970s, the lines of the Porsche 911 Turbo S with its air ducts and light strips must appear even more dramatic. The sky is also darkening. So we skip Locarno, Ascona and the mythical Monte Verità, where Europe's avant-garde once artistically defoliated, and follow the course of the Maggia into the mountain valley of the same name.



The landscape changes as quickly as the turbo pushes forward with every pulse of the right foot. The mountain walls move closer and closer together, and instead of palm trees blowing in the wind, dark chestnut forests and scree slopes now line the road. The path forks at Bignasco, and your intuition points to the left into Val Bavona – one of the steepest and most rocky valleys in the entire Alpine region. And already it gets wild: under vertical rockfalls lie granite blocks as high as a house, at the end of the Bavona valley the Kastelhorn rises pointedly into the sky; You are amazed and understand: Driving a Porsche to Patagonia or a quick trip to New Zealand, with nothing but a small weekend travel bag and the motorway vignette – that is only possible in Switzerland.



Following an old mule track, the winding path leads over old natural stone bridges and gurgling water deeper and deeper into the valley. The contrast between the hermetic high-tech cockpit of the Porsche and the wild natural world outside could hardly be greater. And yet the dramatic backdrop plays to the strengths of the Turbo S: The rough, timeless, sublime drama of the mountain world suits the character of the large touring sports car even better than the lovely magic of almost Italy. The alpine-loving head of design Michael Mauer and his team in Weissach must be true romantics in the tradition from Goethe to Caspar David Friedrich.



Between the prehistoric boulders, slate-gray, hardly less stone-age-looking settlements now appear on the rocky mountain slopes. There are simple, almost grown-up houses, goat stalls, pantries, which can usually only be distinguished from the rugged mountain-scape at second glance. It is a forgotten landscape like from J. R. R. Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings", a floodplain for hardened valley dwellers who have wrested vegetables or corn for polenta from the unruly soil since the distant past. In fact, the villages, which are only inhabited in summer, are still not connected to the electricity grid – the residents produce their own solar power. At Foroglio, a waterfall falls a spectacular 80 metres, the fine mist fills the valley and rests cool and clammy on the Porsche's body. Switch off the engine, get out and arrive at the end of the Swiss world. In the enchanted rock garden of the slow-food grotto La Froda, brassato con polenta is served, and in autumn also venison, wild boar or goat ragout, boiled goat and braised marmot. Everything is like it was almost 100 years ago, when the first hikers were entertained here. To do this, you sip on Gasosa Ticinese instead of Alpenmerlot – after all, the Porsche 911 Turbo S does not drive its passengers back to civilization by itself just yet.



Only the mountain peaks still glow in the evening sun when the headlights of the Porsche are already pointing the way back towards the Gotthard tunnel. A few years ago, the idea of a trip around the world within the borders of Switzerland would have seemed a bit absurd, a modest journey compared to all the real, great adventures that are waiting for us cosmopolitans out in the world. But after a weekend in Ticino, you know better: With a little imagination, the Sugar Loaf, Sicilian villages, the rugged mountains of Patagonia, the world's most exotic destinations are on your doorstep. And the continent-wide grand tourer becomes a time machine with which you leave the present for a few wonderfully analogue hours until the first Zoom meeting on Monday morning brings you back to virtual reality.

Photos: Andrea Klainguti

Gallery

