

CLASSIC DRIVER

Extracting maximum joy from the shortest day of the year in a Morgan

Lead

To give the new Morgan Plus Four a thorough shakedown, we took it on a 650 Mile road-trip down to Cornwall during one of the shortest days of the year. Let's see if it lived up to our expectations...



You would be forgiven for thinking that, from the outside at least, this Dove Grey Morgan may not look very different from its predecessors. Underneath, however, it is a completely reengineered British beast, bringing the marque bang up to date. Whether you're blasting down the motorway or weaving through the narrow Cornish lanes, nothing is too much trouble for the lightweight and powerful Morgan.



Virtually sitting on the rear axle, peering out over the long louvered bonnet, it feels special, but can also make for the occasional interesting junction! It's forgivable, though, as this set up gives the car its addictive go-cart handling. Whilst at £70,000 the price tag may seem steep, we can guarantee that every mile behind the wheel will paint a huge smile across your face as you speed through the open countryside.



We considered booking into a hotel in deepest darkest Cornwall for the night, but two people, plus camera gear, wet weather clothing – this is England – and on-route food rations meant we didn't want to worry too much about the lack of substantial luggage space, although there is room for a couple of small soft bags if you pack lightly. Instead, we chose to drive all the way to Cornwall and then simply turn back, because why not? There's a special sensation when you clamber into the hot seat, look out across the louvered bonnet, grip the small, sporty steering wheel, and fire that glorious BMW engine into life. The Plus Four may be completely new, but it instantly feels familiar. It's a classic driving experience packaged into a modern, reliable car - a place from where you feel you want to explore the open road in search of the next undiscovered ultimate driving route.



With the new drivetrain, the Plus Four sheds all the worries around whether it will start in the morning, or whether you'll be stranded on the highway that accompany classic cars. Thoughts can instead be directed to where you'll be heading next. The BMW engine may seem underwhelming when you fold back the bonnet, but with the whole car weighing just over a tonne, it certainly packs a punch. Put your foot down, and the car lifts its skirts and swiftly charges off, emitting a glorious exhaust note that is quite frankly addictive! The lack of traction control keeps you on your toes, but also adds to the car's charm, reinforcing it as a car that needs to be driven, rather than one that will drive you.



Small manufacturers like Morgan offer us a breath of fresh air: they don't conform to the new norm of driver assists and sensory isolation, and for us that makes it worth considering when you're searching for your next driving thrill machine. Combining styling from the halcyon days of motoring and modern mechanics, it is the recipe for the ultimate practical classic. That's why the Morgan is a modern-day hot-rod, and if you haven't given these cars the time of day in the past, then they're now certainly worth a look.

Photos by Tim Hutton

Gallery

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