This prelude tour got us in the mood for Villa d'Este

Lead
For the first time, the Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este weekend started in Milan, with a gathering of cars and participants in front of the honorable Scala, followed by a road trip to Lake Como. Classic Driver joined the tour.

We at Classic Driver have always been strong supporters of an extended festival to support car culture around the Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este: a Como Car Week, so to speak. First of all, Italy in springtime is simply too beautiful to just stay for a weekend, and secondly, the triangle between Como, Milan, and Turin is rich in automotive history, so there are plenty of places and opportunities to create a format similar to the Monterey Car Week in the build up to the Pebble Beach Concours. With Fuori Concorso, another automotive event has been added to the calendar. Now, the organisers of the Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este and the event's partrons, the BMW Group, have extended the scope of their event as well. On Wednesday night, some of this year's participants gathered in Milan for a dinner at the world's most famous opera house, the Teatro alla Scala.

On early Thursday morning, the concours cars lined up on the Piazza della Scala, a sight that even brought Milan's fast-paced city dwellers to a hold. The Milanese are certainly used to the sight of beauty in all forms and shapes, but rarely can you marvel at an Alfa Romeo 6C Villa d'Este or an Aston Martin DB4 GT on your way to work. Many of the cars were not only gorgeous to look at, but also steeped in history: A Californian 1964 Alfa Romeo TZ returned to it's hometown for the first time since it was coachbuilt at Zagato in the 1960s, making it the most Milanese collector car one could wish for. Another small, but stunning lightweight racecar from the US was the 1961 Porsche 356 B Carrera Abarth GTL with its impressive tailpipe.

Parked next to a fin-tailed Bristol 404 one-off prototype, a Citroen SM Land Speed Record car, and a pearl-white Maserati MC12, the selection of cars had us yearning for more. Seeing these world-class cars parked in the heart of Milan, with the coachbuilt shapes sparkling in the morning sun, and the sound of the engines drowning out the city's trademark soundtrack of honking vespas and rumbling street cars, one had to admit that there was no better way to get in the mood for the Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este.

However, for us, the Concorso d'Eleganza is not just about seeing fantastic cars, but also about meeting truly passionate and petrol-headed people. It was only last weekend that the custodian of the Pearl Collection raced his Alfa Romeo 8C Monza at the Monaco Historic Grand Prix. On Monday morning, the car was back for a quick engine check in Switzerland. Fenders and headlights were installed, and just like that the car was back on the road towards Milan. After a spirited drive through the Gotthard tunnel, the pre-war car and its daring driver were taking part in the Prelude Tour from Milan to Como, setting the tone for the days to come. Oh, and did we mention that the owner's other car is the equally stunning Bugatti Type 59 that's set to compete at Villa d'Este this weekend?

Roaring northwards through the morning traffic escorted by local police, the cars embarked on their road tip towards Lake Como and Cernobbio, the prelude tour's final destination. BMW Classic had invited us to join the tour in a cooler-than-cool BMW 3.0 CSL painted in the iconic shade of Golf Yellow. It's safe to say we were cruising down the Autostrada in true 1970s style, singing along the Italian songs on the radio while following along with the fleet of legendary cars.

Already on the outskirts of Milan, in the inconspicuous industrial district of Rho, the cars left the motorway for their first pit stop. Situated in a nondescript warehouse, the famous Carrozzeria Touring Superleggera is preserving the fine art of coachbuilding with their distinguished classic car restorations and contemporary limited-edition collector cars. Many of the cars that have starred at the Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este over the years were in fact designed and built at the Milanese workshop, once founded by Carlo Felice Anderloni. After catching a sneak peak of Touring's latest projects, and spotting David Sydorick's mythical Ferrari 250 GT Zagato casually parked in front of Zagato's workshop next door, we hit the road again towards our final destination.

To be fair, there are more beautiful stretches of asphalt in Italy than the country roads between Milan and Como, but the industrial North is where most of the country's iconic automobiles were made, so the setting seems more than appropriate for the parade of concours cars. Plus, the lakeside estate of the Grand Hotel Villa d'Este certainly doesn't disappoint in terms of Italian eleganza.

Arriving at the harbour of Cernobbio for the annual group photo, with local spectators competing with the *hautevolée* of car spotters for the best angle, all while the wooden boats dance on the glittering waves of Lake Como, the vision of a full week of automotive extravaganza, with the Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este as the pinnacle, seems like a very good idea.

Photos: Remi Dargegen for Classic Driver

Gallery

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

\[page\]

Source URL: https://www.classicdriver.com/en/article/cars/prelude-tour-got-us-mood-villa-deste
© Classic Driver. All rights reserved.