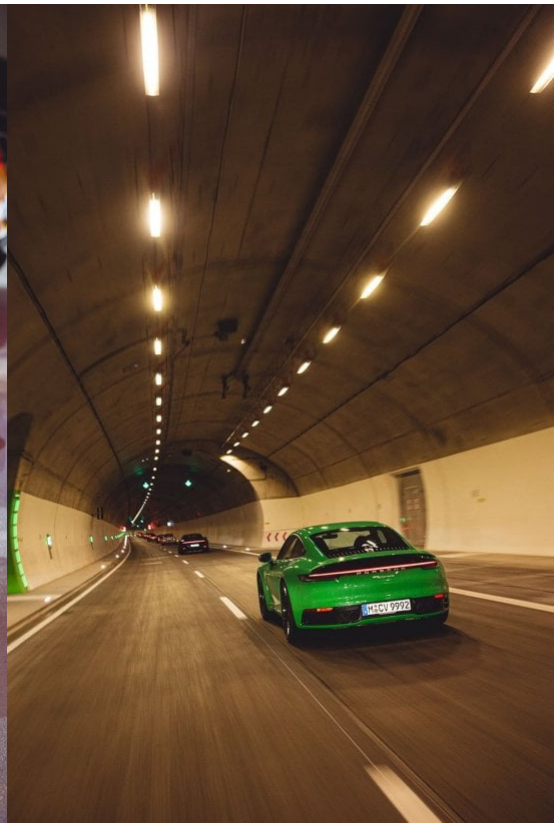
CLASSIC DRIVER

# Taking the long way to Imola for the Porsche Carrera Cup Deutschland

**Lead**
Even Franz Kafka praised South Tyrol as the most beautiful of all countries. From the cockpit of a historic Porsche, the picturesque landscape is somewhat blurred. But the petrolheads at the Porsche Passion Drive 2022 on their way to Imola ultimately succumbed to the beauty.

Alto Adige, or South Tyrol, is hidden between the peaks and valleys of the Italian Alps. It is a mountain-blessed region full of old castles, lush vineyards and lakes, mighty mountain ranges and the unique rock formations of the Dolomites. South Tyrol always provides unforgettable moments. Italian, German, Austrian and Ladin influences - an ethnic group native to the remote valleys of the Dolomites - inspire the country and its cuisine, architecture, history and traditions.

Recently, twelve historic sports cars combed through the idyll from Munich with one goal: Imola – the third seasonal stop of the Porsche Carrera Cup Deutschland. Among them were racing drivers, motorsport fans and enthusiasts who had logged on to the Porsche Passion Drive 2022 to enjoy the time between one race and the other. However, in their own way, as the name of the event reveals. So, you didn't find them on a sailing boat or on the driving range, but behind the wheel of a sports car – after all, it’s their destiny.



Their cars included two Porsche 911 GT3 Touring, a 911 Turbo S Cabriolet, a 992 Targa as well as the Coupe, a 993 in Coupe and Cabriolet form, the Porsche Boxster, two G models – and a Lancia Delta Integrale. On the race track, all drivers are steering Porsches, but during the Porsche Passion Drive everyone arrived in their own private treasures.

Around 8.30am on day 1 of the stage, everyone slipped out of the Munich underground car park and set off. The tour led the drivers via Garmisch-Partenkirchen past the Zugspitze - at 2,962 meters Germany's highest mountain – and through the Vinschgau, the northernmost part of South Tyrol. A few hairpin bends and passes later, the characteristic Reschen Pass greeted us with a special landmark: St. Katharina. The parish church, built in 1357, lies flooded in Lake Reschen , only its tower protruding from the floods. An extremely mysterious motif that has been shared thousands of times and featured in TV shows and films.

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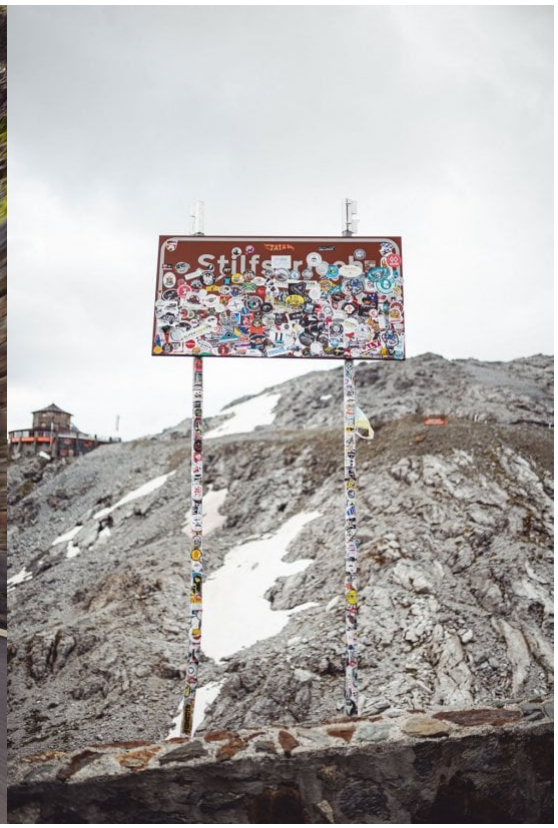
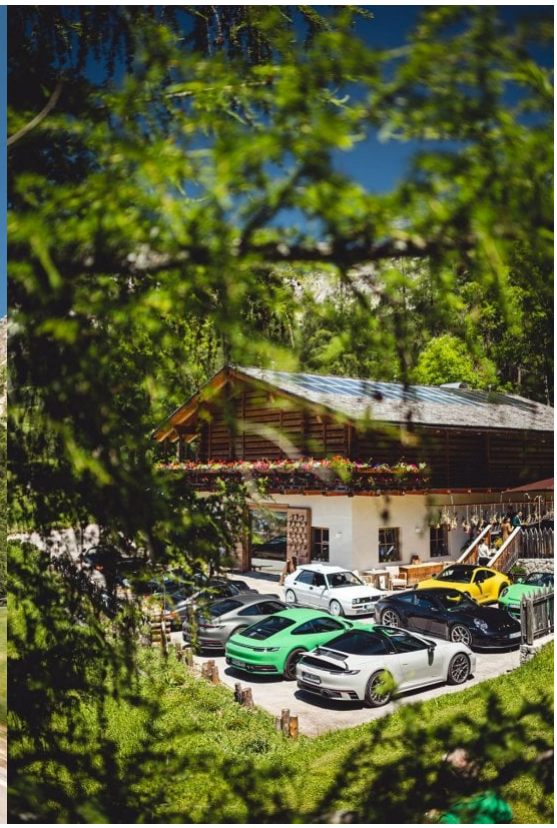
A few miles further on, the drivers arrived at the Gault Millau restaurant Flurin. Under a Romanesque vault, it exudes a special nobility. An impression that continues seamlessly when entering the restaurant, and finally on the palate. Located in Glurns, the historical heart of the Vinschgau, the restaurant offers regional cuisine that received its first Michelin star in 2022 thanks to the originality of its Maître de Cuisine, Thomas Ortler. More than impressed, the crew left the medieval tower, while the next adventure was already approaching.

Gradually, the course of the road prepared the drivers for what was to come immediately after the apple tart with rosewater and thyme: the 48 hairpin bends of the Stelvio Pass. Excitedly, the drivers in their sports cars made their way towards the summit. Some riders were nervous, others ecstatic, ready to hit the Apex. Speaking of coolness: At Stelvio, the thermometer drops by half a degree Celsius with every turn. With a height of 2,758 m, the winding Passo dello Stelvio is the highest street in Italy – and probably the most breathtaking. 48 hairpin bends alone on the South Tyrolean side make it an impressive but also demanding mountain road. The characteristic hairpin bends cut into the steep slope in front of the breathtaking backdrop of the national park make the Stelvio Pass known as the "queen's stage" of the Giro d'Italia for good reason. The 49 km long prestige project was built between 1820 and 1825 and has hardly changed ever since.



The Porsches and the Lancia compensated well for the thinning air towards the summit and reached it without difficulty. Only the drivers needed a breather. "It's amazing, I wouldn't have imagined it would be so impressive," said Carlos Rivas, three-time champion of the Carrera Cup, who traded in his company car, the 992-generation Porsche 911 GT3 Cup, for a G-model for this tour. "It was a great exercise. In front of this backdrop, you are automatically transported back to the time of earlier mountain races," says the native Portuguese.



Finally, the descent on the other side of the mountain is no less challenging, so the crew relaxes when Bozen finally comes up with a few apple tree plantations and they stop off at the Hotel Hanswirth for a two-day break . The 4-star hotel is just a stone's throw from Reinhold Messner's Juval Castle Museum, an architectural example worth seeing. The glass dome above the medieval castle alone amazes the guest.

After conquering the Stelvio together, a UNSECO World Heritage Site, the Dolomites, awaited the Porsche Passion Drive. The drivers passed Cortina d'Ampezzo, a quaint mountain town of white half-timbered houses set against a backdrop of rushing streams, lush forests and the sweeping peaks of the Dolomites. In winter, the ski area has more than 115 kilometers of white slopes and numerous cable cars and chairlifts. Now, only cyclists and sports cars can be seen on the streets below the rugged giants. The Passo di Gardena, the Gardena Pass, is another pass that was laid out in the landscape in 1915, resembling a well-cooked linguine. It leads from Selva to Colfosco, which belongs to the municipality of Corvara, and is the highest resort in the region at 1,645 meters above sea level. The mountain world at Passo Gardena is overwhelming in all four directions: be it the mighty Sella group in the south, the Cir peaks of the Puez group in the north, the Sassolungo group in the west or the peaks of the Val Badia with the Fanes group in the east. Other unforgettable milestones of impressive culinary art and street architecture followed from Lago di Garda to Bologna.

In the end, the Passion Drive crew was reluctant to say goodbye after this fantastic journey. And yet, they were looking forward towards the approaching Porsche Carrera Cup Deutschland in Imola with motivation.

On the last evening in Bologna, the first-ranking driver finally revealed what awaited everyone at the Autodrome Enzo e Dino Ferrari: a tough competition. He was the first to arrive and was already enjoying his cold drink when the other drivers rolled in. Was he going to make it in Imola as well?

*Text: Bastian Fuhrmann / Photos: Mathieu Bonnevie © 2022*

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