

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## Panda love was in the air at the first Classic Driver Panda 4x4 Meeting

**Lead**

The Fiat Panda 4x4 is something of a landmark in St. Moritz, adored by housewives and billionaires alike. At the first Classic Driver Panda 4x4 Meeting last weekend, the winter-proof, all-wheel-drive hero was celebrated accordingly...



This all started with an idea for a story on Classic Driver. We wanted to photograph Panda owners from St. Moritz with their cars and quiz them about how the modest four-wheel-drive Fiat became such a cult car in the otherwise glamorous resort. The initial response was overwhelming and virtually everybody we spoke to between Zurich and Milan seemed to have their own Panda 4x4-related project in the pipeline. Panda love was definitely in the air, so we teamed up with our friends at Larusmiani, Suvretta House and the municipality of St. Moritz to stage a low-key Panda gathering to kick off the winter season.



On Friday afternoon, the Panda density in the Upper Engadine already felt higher than usual, those cars wearing customary Graubündenlicense plates mingling with counterparts from neighbouring France and Italy. On Saturday afternoon, their owners all gathered in front of the Kulm Country Club in the centre of St. Moritz, which was recently redesigned by Lord Norman Foster, to toast Giorgetto Giugiaro's miniature masterpiece.

We admired lovingly maintained special editions such as the Fiat Panda 4x4 Val-d'Isère that was driven from Milan by Duccio Lopresto or a Sisley edition carrying a Christmas tree on the roof belonging to the car-mad physician Dr. Christian Knetsch from Ascona, who also brought the quirky 'Camo Panda'.



Our friends from [Larusmiani](#) had also devised their own special model. The Milanese collector Edoardo Locatelli had his personal limited-edition Panda upholstered with

Larusmiani fabrics and affixed a pair of contemporary Rossignol skis on the roof. Panda collector Paolo Ronconi brought a wonderful Panda 4x4 Limited Edition 5000 to the Engadine via the Maloja Pass. Entirely unrestored and in miraculously well-preserved condition, the car even has its original red Pirelli seats and Corfu wheels shod with 160 winter tyres. Ronconi explained how he acquired the car from its first owner a few years ago and has driven it virtually every day since.



A real pearl was the beautifully restored first-generation Fiat Panda 4x4 Edizione Limitata, which was brought from Bologna by Enrico Rondinelli of [Gulfblue](#). Following its appearance in St. Moritz, the car was poised to travel to its new owner in the USA, where a limited-edition Panda in original condition is probably even rarer than a Ferrari 250 GTO. Meanwhile, Ottavio Missoni reminded us how incredibly robust and reliable the little all-wheel-drive Pandas are. He travelled an unbelievable 10,000 miles through the desert with his car on the gruelling Mongol Rally.



The prize for the longest distance travelled to join us went to Hadrien Berghmans, who drove from Paris and whose faithful Panda we'd already met at [this year's Journées d'Automne](#). Meanwhile, the shortest journey home was enjoyed by Fabian Bartlomé, who was practically able to roll his Panda back to Samedan, and the [local tailor Silvano Vitalini](#), who was present with the 'Basket Panda' belonging to the community president Christian 'Jott' Jenny. Bryan Mainente from the Pavarotti Wine Bar in St. Moritz also made an appearance with his trademark turquoise Panda, complete with a doll on the bonnet and a boot full of fine wines.

Only the personal car of the former Fiat patriarch Gianni Agnelli, who is considered to be the Panda trendsetter in St. Moritz, was not represented in front of the Kulm Country Club. It was recently [auctioned by Aste Bolaffi](#) and has found a new home in Scandinavia. We hope to welcome the car and its new owner to The ICE on the snow-covered lake of St. Moritz in February 2020.



At twilight, the guests cavalcaded through the festively lit St. Moritz village in the direction of the Suvretta House. There, against the imposing backdrop of the legendary Grand Hotel and in the immediate vicinity of the global industrial nobility that maintains its estates on Via Suvretta, the Pandas rested for the night. Chasellas restaurant hosted the evening's jovial celebrations and served a superb Swiss-Italian fusion menu in honour of the Italian-Swiss automotive alliance.

On Sunday, we all headed to the snow-covered Bernina Pass, where at 2,328 metres above sea level, the Pandas could really show what they're made of and let their owners



end the weekend with a big plate of homemade Pizzoccheri before making their way back to Milan, Zurich and Paris.



Much like the classic Fiat 500 from the 1950s and '60s, the Spiaggia and Jolly versions of which are now standard fare for the international hautevolée between Cap d'Antibes and Portofino and inspire the creativity of their owners, the Fiat Panda 4x4 has become the ultimate winter icon for the European Jet Set. What makes the 'little bamboo bears' so likeable on the streets of St. Moritz compared to the mighty Urus', Bentaygas and Cullinans is that they're driven by farmers, housewives and ski-lift attendants as well as billionaires and pop stars. When you see a Panda, you never really know who's passing by. In the end, it's probably this exciting mix of down-to-earth unpretentiousness and international glamour that makes St. Moritz so unique and manifests itself so charmingly in the Fiat Panda.



Finally, we'd like to take this chance to thank all our participants and friends who made the first Classic Driver Panda 4x4 Meeting possible – first and foremost our local photographer and organiser Andrea Klainguti; Fabrizio d'Aloisio and Marijana Jakic from the St. Moritz tourist board; Peter Egli, Johannes Hohl and Florian Thöni from Suvretta House; and Guglielmo Miani and Alexander von Woellwarth of Larusmiani. We'd be delighted to kick off the winter season in St. Moritz together again next year. Until then, save the Pandas!

Photos: Andrea Klainguti for Classic Driver © 2019

Gallery





















































































































**Source URL:** <https://www.classicdriver.com/en/article/cars/panda-love-was-air-first-classic-driver-panda-4x4-meeting>  
© Classic Driver. All rights reserved.