

CLASSIC DRIVER

Out of the Blue: Ferrari 612 Scaglietti HGTC



The average Ferrari owner is likely to cover around 3000 miles a year. I think we can do better than that, with a two-day trip covering 1000 miles in a 612 Scaglietti. It's just got to be done.

I've driven more miles in the big four-seater than in any other Ferrari. Introduced at the Detroit Motor Show in 2004, it's probably more in the mould of Ferraris past than any other car in the range. Don't get me wrong, it's packed with high-tech features totally alien to a 1960s 330 GT 2+2, and would dominate any pre-599 GTB production 12-cylinder on a track.

Yet its mien and market positioning are definitely from another age: 1960s super-cool, super-rich - always understated, forever fast. The car's colour aided the comparison, too: *Celeste Metallizzato*, a sublime metallic aquamarine from the historic colours range, introduced last year at Geneva.



The latest production cars carry photochromatic glass roofs as standard, together with the lightning-fast (as opposed to just-about-as-fast-as-you-could-imagine, fast) F1A gearbox electronics from the 599. Our car was a 2007 model from the Ferrari GB fleet, so it was all Bordeaux Alcantara overhead, and no *Manettino* on the steering wheel. We did, however, have the latest Bose in-car entertainment system with its built-in sat-nav plus a host of musical options. And, like all 612 Scagliettis, the company's personalisation programme means that you're unlikely to meet something similarly specified.

It is a fabulous-looking car. The scalloped sides (inspired by the 1950s 'Ingrid Bergman' Ferrari 375 MM, there we go again...) are a stroke of genius, and the long flat bonnet leading to a sloping screen and typical Ferrari, slightly egg-shaped, rear cabin profile is muscular elegance personified. For those yet to be convinced, do take some time to study the intricacies of the 612's lines, its side-profile and scallop in particular. What other company would produce a design like that?

It's also pretty big: 4902mm long and 1957mm wide, to be precise. That's a bit longer than a 599 GTB (but not quite so wide) and offers a very generous, airy cabin for two, as well as genuine four-seater capabilities. You can fit a couple of hard-sided overhead locker bags, plus some more soft luggage, in the boot. And if it's just the two of you, a fair bit more on the rear seats.



The dimensions thing is a little bit of a worry to start with, but with a few miles (and toll booths) under your belt, it soon melts into more manageable proportions. Part of this is due to the excellent visibility and the rest is down to its driving dynamics.

With 540bhp, a top speed of 199mph and 0-62mph in just 4.2 seconds, it's *dynamic* all right. Ferrari has done such a good job of the chassis-tuning, steering and 46% front/54% rear weight distribution that, as well as tearing up mile upon mile of motorway, it will handle city centres and winding A-roads too. A-roads - we like those, because our car had the HGTC package of Carbon Composite Material ('CCM', now standard on all new Ferraris) brakes, a revised rear anti-roll bar, split-rim wheels, chrome rear grilles and an exhaust note more Cannes than Kyoto, courtesy of a sports exhaust.

The latter has - and I quote the sales brochure - 'specific tuning for a clearer sound'. That's louder, then. To be fair, the growl on start-up is the main benefit of this particular pipework - and very nice it is too.





Okay, time to go: first stop the Channel Tunnel. I'm not *altogether* happy with threading the £200,000 car through the barriers and onto the train, but if you go 'over height', with the campers and vans, the width is not too alloy rim-threatening. You meet a nicer class of person, too, ones that like a Ferrari next to their Sprinter or Hymer Mobil. Next stop Europe (as we say in the UK...).

The journey from Calais to Burgundy goes in a blink. A lazy, droopy drop of the eyelid perhaps, but still a demolition of some 770km, one-up in effortless ease. Off the autoroute, touring one of the finest wine regions in France, the sportier side of the car makes itself felt. Drop down a couple of gears via the steering wheel paddles, press the Sport button and the car - if a touch away from the 599 and F430 - is unbelievably fast, and very, very satisfying to drive.



Passenger collected (Olivier Pénat, Classic Driver's French representative), and after an overnight stop we set course for the Italian lakes, before the final run to Maranello. The Swiss can wait for their *vignette*. This time we're taking the 'low road' and travelling via Chambery, through the Frejus tunnel and on to Turin/Milan/Bergamo. The scenery in this part of France is fabulous and, despite some dirty weather, the virtually deserted roads are perfect for the big blue car.

Boy, is it a straight road from Turin to Milan. It's also busy, broken from never-ending roadworks, and packed with the sort of drivers who just **know** you should be driving this car faster. I'm okay about it; I've nothing to

prove and eager to arrive in one piece.

And I'm driving a Ferrari 612 Scaglietti - why should I care?

The weather has now really turned: it's very wet and surely could never have been like this in the 60s. Overnighing at Lake Iseo, we set off early the next day to rendezvous at Via Gilles Villeneuve in Fiorano, for the visit of the Mille Miglia and the RM Auctions all-Ferrari Sale.



The final fill-up at Maranello - with Agip Blu Super, and we worried about the consequences of getting that wrong, I can tell you: Blu? For petrol? Come on! - showed some 1100 miles on the trip-meter.

A touch more than a *Mille Miglia*, but a nice roundish number all the same - all done in a very well-rounded car.

Editor's Note: *I tried to treat this journey as An Everyday Story of Ferrari Folk. That is to say, using the car as it's intended: a continent-crosser sans pareil, without the usual road tester's lead foot. It achieved that and more and, for those interested in such things, averaged 17.20mpg, or 16.42 litres/100km.*

Prius drivers need not worry too much but, of course, aquamarine is blue - with a touch of green...

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