

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Lamborghini Diablo VT Roadster: The Devil goes Strada](#)



All eyes might now be on the [Aventador Roadster](#), but it was its grandfather that perfected the art of prowling sun-drenched boulevards. Almost two decades on from its launch, we take another look at the merits of the Diablo VT Roadster.

Development of the Diablo began in the mid-eighties, during a well-documented period of slow recovery from the financial troubles which almost eradicated the marque. Following on from the successful designs of the Miura and Countach, Marcello Gandini was again contracted to pen the shape, while engineers were briefed to make sure a maximum velocity of 196mph was attainable.

Chrysler's 1987 takeover had significant implications for the Diablo project. Top brass at the American giant disliked the sharp lines and had their own design studio significantly rework them - annoying Gandini to the point of taking his design to another company, resulting in the Cizeta V16T. Meanwhile, the restyled Diablo made it to market in 1990, proving instantly popular and capable of over 200mph.





It was another five years before a convertible version was released: the 492bhp VT Roadster (VT standing for the *viscous traction* that was provided by the 4wd configuration) became the first open-top Lamborghini in more than 15 years. More of a targa than a full convertible, it had a one-piece carbonfibre panel that was stored on top of the engine when not in use, necessitating cooling ducts different from those of the be-roofed sibling. Power steering, air-conditioning and four-piston brakes were standard equipment.





Volkswagen's 1998 takeover prompted a restructuring of the Diablo family, in order to uphold sales until the Murciélago was ready for market. Revisions to the 1999 VT Roadster included fixed composite headlight lenses (borrowed from the Nissan 300ZX) to supplant the previous pop-up units, as well as a revised interior, new 18-inch wheels, an ABS system, and a power boost to 529bhp. As a result, the 1999 VT Roadster is generally considered to be one of the most desirable and capable members of the Diablo family.





Today's Lamborghinis are commended and lambasted in equal measure for being 'tamed' beasts; while tenths performance is never doubted, their everyday usability is galaxies away from the eccentric Countach era. It was the Diablo which bridged this gap, with the 1999 amendments completing an already much-improved package. The ergonomic and practicality improvements over the Countach meant the Diablo was now as capable at creeping along boulevards as it was at driving in full attack mode - and almost two decades on, few cars skulk along Ocean Drive better than a VT Roadster.

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The Lamborghini Diablo VT Roadster in the pictures is a 1999 model currently being sold by Classic Driver dealer Beverly Hills Car Club - you can view the original advert [here](#)

You can find the dealer's full inventory in the [Classic Driver Marketplace](#)

Plenty of coupé and convertible Diablos can be found in the [Classic Driver Marketplace](#)

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