

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Driving this Alpine A110 on icy roads is as close to heaven as it gets](#)

Lead
While the long-awaited arrival of spring has most enthusiasts chomping at the bit to get back behind the wheel, there are certain classics, such as this ex-Works Alpine A110 1300S, that revel in the cold and icy weather, and whose owners would be quite happy for winter to tighten one final time...

Driving for the sake of driving — it's a pleasure that, owing to the demands of modern life, we don't get to enjoy anywhere near enough. Waking up at 3:00am simply isn't a chore when there's an ex-Works Alpine A110 1300S sat on the driveway, blissfully quiet (not to mention staggeringly pretty) rural roads just a stone's throw away, and all the time in the world in which to soak up the experience. Thinking about it, we'd be so excited that we'd struggle to sleep in the first place.

Seize the freeze



Not even the biting cold nor the snow-lined, slush-filled roads can spoil the occasion. You're driving an Alpine A110, you see, a car that was fundamentally designed by visionary Jean Réd  l   to conquer the treacherously icy Alpine passes of the Monte-Carlo Rally, just as much as the stiflingly dusty stages of the Acropolis in Greece. Besides, a spot of ice here and there was of no concern to Jean Vinatier and Marcel Callewaert, who piloted this very car to victory on the 1968 Rallye Vltava in then-Czechoslovakia, the fledgling company's maiden victory in that year's European Rally Championship.

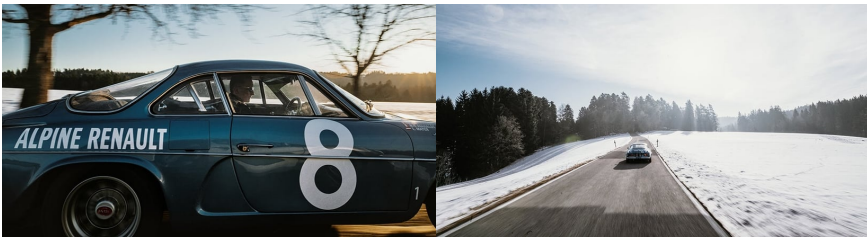
Like a glove





It's true what they say about the A110 — you don't so much drive the car as wear it, due to its tiny dimensions. Giants need not apply. Once you've contorted yourself into the snug cabin and filled your nostrils with the heady aroma of felt and glass-fibre laced with the faintest hint of fuel, though, the fun can begin. The rorty Gordini engine fires with an urgent hum, shredding the morning silence and, later, once you're on the move, bouncing off the engulfing forest and echoing into your very soul. All the while, the dawn sunshine slowly creeps above the horizon, thawing the asphalt and warming the cabin.

A born-and-bred racer



Collectors might go wild for the more potent A110 1600s, but the owner of this car, Jürgen Clauss — the founder of [alpineLAB](#) and a man who counts six of these glorious Gallic pocket-rockets as his own — believes the Gordini-powered 1300S is the most pleasurable to drive. “It's not as powerful”, he comments, “but it's so agile, and the engine loves to rev.” A proper Works machine, it's got the tell-tale signs of being a born-and-bred racer: ultra-thin (and worryingly fragile) glass-fibre panels, SEV Marchal spotlights out front, and two fuel tanks, for example. You'll certainly be making use of the latter on your dawn raid, as you press on relentlessly, marvelling at the 720kg coupé's ability to dance.

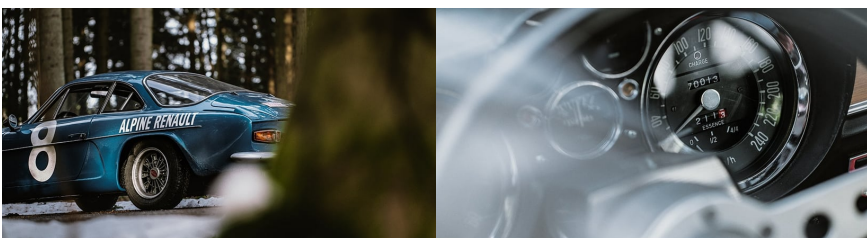
Puzzle pieces



To think, just 10 years ago this A110 was a wreck with little hope of being saved...until Claus located it, that is. Since retiring from its successful competition career, the car was registered for regular road use in Vienna and subsequently crashed. It later passed through a number of Austrian owners, none of whom were brave enough to undertake the restoration, but most of whom were happy to keep certain parts — something that made Claus's job very difficult when it came to comprehensively restoring it to Rallye Vltava specification.

"I tried to collect all the pieces and bring the car back to its original state", explains Claus. "It was difficult, but that's part of my passion — I love the research and getting in touch with previous owners. It's not always successful, but more often than not they're willing to help." Needless to say, the effort was worth it. The car is nothing short of exquisite.

Country roads



The A110 really would make for the perfect companion on road rallies, such as the Tour Auto. A true rally icon, there's a sense of great significance that accompanies this car, contrasting wonderfully with its tiny dimensions. While you can never have too much of a good thing, it's time to exercise some self-restraint, wind back the pace, and head home. But the fun doesn't have to end there — while it's tucked up and quietly ticking itself cool, you can just admire the slinky beast from the warmth of your garage instead. We say seize the freeze while you can — spring is a welcome sight, but for some, the cold warms the heart even more.

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Gallery

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