

CLASSIC DRIVER

Celebrating cars on the beach at Fuoriconcorso and Poltu Quatu Classic in Sardinia

Lead

Since Porto Cervo was founded by the Aga Khan in the 1960s, Costa Smeralda has been a place of longing for the international hautevolée. Last weekend, the heritage and jetset spirit of Sardinia's most famous region was celebrated at two of this year's most exceptional classic car events.



How does the old Instagram saying go? Italians do it better. And while they still need to prove their dominance on the football pitch, the organizers of Poltu Quatu Classic and Fuoriconcorso on the Beach last weekend demonstrated that in terms of cool and casual car events, all of us Britons, Germans and Swiss don't stand a chance. Mixing beach car culture with a dose of Italian '*Sprezzatura*', last weekend's double feature turned the North-Eastern coast of Sardinia into an eclectic car fest that will make us dream of white sands, blue ocean waves and Jollys, Manx', Mokes and Méharis for the rest of the summer.

Having a blast at Fuoriconcorso on the Beach



We haven't missed an edition of Fuoriconcorso - from Lake Como to Milan, the Piedmont, California, and Sardinia - and we certainly had no plans to miss this one. Organized by Guglielmo Miani, the flamboyant Milanese car collector and creative mind behind the fashion brand Larusmiani, the summer edition of our favourite start-up event series promised loads of fun on the world-class beaches and country roads of the Costa Smeralda. Once again, the line-up of cars had been carefully curated to match the theme, skipping the 1990s Bentleys, Ferraris and Porsches in favour of a more modest, but certainly equally cool and contemporary fleet of automobiles.



Joining the patron's trademark all-white Mini Moke was a dark green Moke with white interior and green piping that could have made the most distinguished 1990s Aston Martin pale in comparison, while the bright green Citroën Méhari reminded us once again that we have definitely missed the time when the oh-so-popular French desert ships could be bought for only a fistful of dollars. A car that can still be bought cheap, but might soon become the next hot thing to drive after the much-hyped Fiat Panda, is the Lada Niva 4x4. Looking at the silhouette of a pale green example casually parked in the macchia of the Costa Smeralda, we couldn't help thinking that the simple lines and utilitarian set-up qualify it as an affordable alternative to the Land Rover Defender. We know what we will be driving next summer!



While Fuoricorso on the Beach was not a concours, there was still room for competition: After a water gun battle on the beach for warm-up, the participants invaded a go-kart track with their Mokes and Méharis for an ultimate super soaker shootout that even Pablo Escobar would have approved of. Plata o plomo? Luckily, wet T-shirts were the only casualties during the season finale of Fuoricorso.

Poltu Quatu Classic left us extremely Jolly



If a glimpse of an original Fiat 500 delivers a shot of endorphins to your brain (as it should), then the sight of a flock of Fiat Jollies, wicker seats and all, is practically a class A drug. Beach cars, or *'spiaggine'* as they're known in Italy, belong to perhaps the most delightful automotive niche ever. While usually they're somewhat of a rarity, here at Poltu Quatu you'd think they're breeding the things. Designed by illustrious coachbuilders like Ghia or Michelotti as land tenders for the stars of the 1950s and 1960s as they explored the Med, it's easy to see why these charming vehicles caught on. Small enough to fit on the back of a yacht, the meagre 12-ish horsepower engines powering these vehicles become irrelevant when you see the smiles of both those inside and outside the little Italian chariots. After all, why would you want to rush by scenery this breathtaking?



Grand Hotel Poltu Quatu on the shimmering Sardinian coastline was the setting last weekend for perhaps the most vibrant Concours d'Elegance of year, the Poltu Quatu Classic. Once again, the organizers lead by Italian car collector Simone Bertoleromanaged to draw some of the most iconic and obscure beach cars to the Costa Smeralda. The line-up of the 'Sex on the Beach' class included coachbuilt open-top Fiats from the 1960s and 1970 carrying auspicious names like Ischia and Spiaggina, while our insatiable appetite for custom Fiat Pandas was satisfied by two remarkable cars – a turquoise 1991 Panda Destriero designed by Stola and a Panda Mondiali that was launched as a limited edition celebrating the 1990 Football World Cup in Italy. While many of the beach cars had been brought to Sardinia by the American collector extraordinaire Stuart Parr, his most eye-catching beach cruiser might have been the Fiat Ducato "West Coast", a rather jolly people carrier designed by Introzzi in 1986.



Even so, some still prefer a healthier power to weight ratio, which the slightly unhinged Porsche-engined Meyers Manx on show definitely had. Wrapped in a star sprangled metal flake suit that could have been borrowed from one of Evil Knievel’s all-american stunt machines, the Manx from Salzburg, Austria took home a deserved best in class trophy – on the 4th of July.



Elsewhere, legendary designer Fabrizio Giugiaro celebrates 30 years of his career by bringing the iconic BMW NAZCA M12 concept to Sardinia. Even more impressive than the timeless design of the early 1990s V12 wedge was the fact that Giugiaro drove the prototype around the twisted country roads of the Costa Smeralda in anger, even doing donuts on the Vena Fiorita Airport’s runway just for the fun of it. That’s the way!



But the Poltu Quatu Classic wasn’t just fun and games: On Saturday night, the cars enjoyed their final parade in front of the judges (including Classic Driver CEO J. Philip Rathgen), and shortly after midnight, the jury announced the winners of this year’s concours. While a 1958 Lancia Aurelia B24 Convertible won the “Dolce Vita” class and Duccio Lopresto took over the “Una Questione di Stile” class trophy for his family’s flamboyant 1934 Lancia Astura Cabriolet, the “Best of Show” trophy deservedly went to a stunning 1948 Fiat 1100 Sport MM – a race car so modest, puristic, and yet so elegant that it made even the most flamboyant contemporary supercars pale in comparison.



Looking back at a weekend of jolly good fun, we are convinced that Poltu Quatu Classic and Fuoriconcorso on the Beach will become a new fixture for the European and global collector car scene. After all, could there be a better excuse for spending a weekend at the Costa Smeralda? We don't think so.

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