

CLASSIC DRIVER

This Ferrari 550 Barchetta is a slice of early noughties heaven

Lead

Built to commemorate 70 years of Ferrari's renowned partnership with fellow Italian design house Pininfarina, the 550 Barchetta brought the sunshine and glamour like few other cars during the early 2000s. Now, thanks to Kessel Autos SA you could relive those glory days with this example!



Barchetta. 'Little boat' when translated from Italian into English, and often refers to small, recreational boats found in coastal villages. It's an innocuous word, but it took one man and one relentlessly passionate car brand to change the meaning of Barchetta entirely, making it a staple in automotive design. That man was Giovanni Canestrini, editor of the Italian sporting newspaper La Gazzetta dello Sport. He applied the term to describe the Ferrari's latest offering at the 1948 Turin Auto Show, the 166 MM, and it has stuck to that vehicle and in fact, the automotive industry ever since.



Applying the name Barchetta to a car is one thing, but it must follow some key nuances in order to prove that it is worthy of such a name. Much like the original translation, Barchetta refers to a small car that is open-topped, with minimal rain protection and has a low-rise windscreen for peak aerodynamic capability. Emphasis was very much on

the driving experience rather than gadgets and technology. This leads us perfectly to another Ferrari that carries this iconic name: The 550 Barchetta Pininfarina.



Built in celebration of Pininfarina's loyalty to the Ferrari name, just 448 examples were produced in Maranello from 2001, with a huge amount of emphasis being placed on design elements taken from previous models such as the 166 MM, the 250 GT California and 365 GTS4 Daytona. Each of the 448 examples showcases its own build number which is signed by Sergio Pininfarina himself. The name wasn't just a nod back to those iconic models though, with the windscreen sitting a whole 100mm lower than the regular 550 Maranello, with a manual soft-top roof encouraging drivers to experience the car just the way it was intended: in the sunshine.

It's important to consider the time period in which the 550 Barchetta was released. On the race track, the seemingly unbeatable combination of Michael Schumacher and the Jean Todt-led Ferrari outfit certainly helped the brand gain popularity around the world. Whilst in the showrooms, models such as the 360 Modena and 456 GT showcases the new direction the prancing horse was taking. The 550 Barchetta was an ideal new-millennium interpretation of the classics that inspired it. This example is finished in the stunning Blu Nart over the ever-glorious Beige leather, making a sumptuous colour combination that has allowed the 550 to age gracefully to say the very least.



Another noticeable difference between the Barchetta and its coupé sibling is the wheels. As part of Pininfarina's distinctive design, the drop-top gained unique two-piece alloy wheels, giving the elegant bodywork a more pronounced stance on the road. Unchanged was the engine, a high-revving naturally-aspirated V12 that produced 485 bhp at 7,000rpm - creating a true orchestral exhaust note along the way.



This stunning example is now available to be enjoyed from Kessel Auto SA, home to some of the finest modern, historic and future classic Ferraris such as this 550 Barchetta. Of all the special cars currently in their inventory, this might just be our favourite.

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