

# LIVING THE ITALIAN DREAM

## A ride in Ferrari's stunning and ultra-swift 488 GTB is an offer you can't refuse

by **Cindy-Lou Dale** – a writer and editor specialising in motoring and travel



I'M DRIVING the 488 GTB through the rolling vastness of Kent's achingly beautiful countryside, heading to Folkestone and the promise of a remote temple to great Italian coffee and continental ambiance. Along the way I make regular stops in areas of quiet prosperity, dreamy Romney Marsh villages with their clapboard houses, designer sheep farms and stone churches, all rooted to an ancient past. I stop outside a café where people sit motionless with their newspapers and little espressos; above them colourful banners of washing hang between apartment balconies. Inside, a patron watches me park the Ferrari. He stands ramrod straight at a large bay window, one hand folded behind his back, the other clasping a porcelain espresso cup.

While ordering my coffee, I hear him speak to the old-timers sitting at his table; they too are staring through the window. He points at the Ferrari with his cup and announces to the room in a booming Italian accent: 'She makes me dream of home, of Italy. Home to the opera, the Vatican, the Renaissance, da Vinci, Armani and supercars.' All at his table nod in agreement. He pauses, considering his audience. 'Or perhaps it's the dream of owning a Ferrari.'

I busy myself with my iPad, making notes of the driving experience, and later return to the car to find a large group gathered around it. I click the remote to unlock the doors and the

crowd make way, like the Red Sea before Moses. While threading my way through the old and young at heart, someone enquires if they could ask a few questions about the Ferrari. I know how to feel a crowd and manipulate it, massage it with my voice, which rises and falls, grows harsh then soft, shoots forward in a rapid spate of words and then slows down. The first question is about performance.

'Ferrari have taken a brawny, finely tuned and highly pedigreed supercar and made it comfortable. The ride is extremely forgiving – especially so on the Bumpy Road setting – and delivers massive grip on specifically developed 20in Michelin tyres.' The crowd leans forward, drawn impulsively toward me. A voice at the back asks what it's like to drive.

'Easy! The steering, connected to a superb chassis, is light, responsive and super-fast; even the seven-speed gearbox delivers instant F1 style gear-changes. Whatever gear I'm in, and no matter how fast I'm travelling, the performance and drivability are out of this world, with hypercar responses and not a second of turbo-lag. And, dare I say, the engine gets better the harder it's driven.' There's a collective intake of breath.

An elderly gentleman, visibly moved by the dramatics of it all, asked if he can touch the car. His voice is tight with emotion: 'She has such a beautiful body. She is the car of my

dreams. Perhaps a dream shared by all of us here.' Everyone agrees.

He is of course correct: the 488's body, sculpted in a wind tunnel, is a thing of aggressive beauty, with clean lines and clever aerodynamic tech. It looks like a car whose form follows function. 'Ferrari,' I say, 'has removed volumes from the car's aluminium body to reduce drag and create 50 per cent more downforce. So much is gained that it more than equals what has been taken away.' My audience begs for me to continue. A young man asks what makes this engine different.

'To start with, the 488 GTB is hugely efficient – it's downsized, with a direct-injected 3902cc twin-turbocharged V8. It's Ferrari's automotive masterpiece and the finest turbo-charged petrol engine in production. And to meet the turbo-lag challenge, Maranello's engineering gurus' response is a smart electronic system that restricts the amount of torque released in each gear, as releasing it all at once would give you



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From the steering wheel to the 3.9-litre V8 engine, Ferrari's 488 GTB blends power with pleasure



nothing more than wheelspin. Maximum torque is delivered in the higher gears and at high speed. What this tech delivers is 0-62mph in three seconds flat.'

I open the door and invite the old bloke to get into the driver's seat. He likes the proper sports car driving position – very low, with great forward visibility. 'She is comfortable too,' he says. 'And look at all this space in the cabin.' He spends time examining the function-festooned steering wheel, which is undeniably a thing to behold, as this is where all the controls are – wipers, indicators, lights. I point out the oversized paddles mounted on the steering column, the wraparound infotainment pods, and explain that red LED rev lights appear at the top of the steering wheel.

He asks for a demonstration and that I drop him off at his home. Pensioner strapped in, I fire her up. Two youngsters, standing nearby, point their phones in our direction. Without a doubt, the spine-tingling Ferrari baritone is the best-sounding turbo road car out there, a little industrial, something like a modern F1 racing car that's going to take a bite out of whatever's in front of it. Judging by the huge grins, it's a sound appreciated by all.

'So, *signorita*, tell me please, how much she cost?' he asks. I explain that it's only for the fabulously wealthy. 'It's painfully expensive – and the £184,864 asking price is merely the starting point. By adding just a few options you'll push it nearer the £260,000 mark.'

After dropping off the old chap, who thanked me for making an old man's dream come true, I reflect on his parting words. 'The appeal of Ferrari is as compelling today as she was when the 355 was first presented to the world, 20-plus years ago. Building this crazy fast car is one thing, making her work with two turbochargers is *bello*.' He kisses the tips of his fingers. 'But doing it all together – *mamma mia*, this makes her greatest supercar in the world.' 📍

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