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FERRARI 250 GTO

The ultimate 'Gentleman's Racer', which can be driven from one's home to the track, raced, won and then driven back home again



Edition 28 of a special series by

APOLLO TYRES



The Ferrari California is the latest addition to the Grand Tourer segment of Ferraris. One of the oldest, rarer and most desirable models from this range is the Ferrari 250 GTO (Gran Turismo Omologato, Italian for Grand Touring Homologated).

Designed to compete in the GT racing, the 250 GTO was based on the 250 GT SWB. The chief engineer Giotto Bizzarrini installed the three-litre V12 engine from the 250 Testa Rossa into the chassis from the 250 GT SWB and worked with designer Sergio Scaglietti to develop the body. Bizzarrini and most other Ferrari engineers working on the 250 GTO got into some disputes with Enzo Ferrari which led to them being fired. After that the development was handed over to the new engineer, Mauro Forghieri who worked with Scaglietti to continue development of the body including wind tunnel and track testing. This makes the 250 GTO even more special since it was not designed by a specific individual or design house.

It is said that as the car was rushed into production, the interior was extremely basic. Most of its switches came from the Fiat 500. The original cloth seats were actually made from workers' overalls. When the 250 GTO debuted, the FIA rules for sports car racing required at least one hundred units of the car to be built in order for it to be homologated in the GT class. However, Ferrari built only thirty-six 250 GTOs. An additional three cars with four-litre engine were also built which were recognized as the 330 GTO. The reason why the GTO was allowed to race is unclear.

Enzo Ferrari and his dealer in North America, Luigi Chinetti, were selective about the customers to whom they would sell the thirty-six GTOs produced. To buyers that met Ferrari's or Chinetti's approval, the car's cost was \$18,000. The 250 GTO was one of the last front engine cars to compete at the top level of sports car racing. In the age before vintage racing, the 250 GTO faced the

same fate as any other racing car of its time. As it passed into obsolescence, some were kept as regional race machines while others were used as normal passenger cars.

Ferrari made the car outdated with its new 330 racecars. An obsolete racecar was useless as it couldn't be used to win on the track and was often too loud to drive on the road. The Ferrari 250 GTOs fell in value and were sold for as low as \$5000 in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This was when Pink Floyd drummer, Nick Mason purchased his 250 GTO that he still owns today. The car's cost rose rapidly with the Ferrari market bubble of the 1980s, however, by 1987 rumours ran rampant about Ferrari GTOs selling for up to \$15 million in private transactions.

Today, prices have settled a bit, but market valuation for the car still stands between \$6 and \$12 million, but no 250 GTOs have traded publicly in some time. Still, this makes it the most valuable post-WWII car in the world.



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