



Tom Yang's 330 America

250 GTE & 330 America Buyer's Guide



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Contents

- 2 Introduction
- 5 Driving Impressions
- 9 Maintenance & Reliability
- 10 General Buying Tips
- 11 Ownership Expectations
- 11 Purchasing Options



Above: A 250 GTE in front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris. Right: Another 250 GTE enjoying an open road.

Introduction

Ferrari's first standard production 2+2 made its debut as the course Marshall's track car at the Le Mans 24 Hour Race in June 1960. The intended message was very clear, although the 250 GTE was clearly not intended for racing, like all cars carrying the Ferrari badge; its roots were clearly derived from the track. The 250 GTE was, strictly speaking, not the first Ferrari 2+2. Ferrari had built several 2+2's in the 1950's as special orders. The model Ferrari showed the world at Le Mans had a very different role to fulfill; it would significantly broaden Ferrari's potential market and bring industrial scale production to the company for the first time. This

was Ferrari's first true pure road car and a little over a thousand units would be produced during its model run.

The 250 GTE was built of the same chassis used for the 250 series Coupes. The short wheelbase of 102.3 inches was maintained but the engine was moved forward 8 inches to provide room for the rear seats. Moving a significant amount of weight forward did impact the handling, and with the engine now hanging over the front axle, the tendency to understeer was increased. Additional cabin room was provided by widening the front and rear wheel track. The net result was a comfortable cabin, capable of carrying 2 adults and 2 children in comfort for extended periods of

time. The roof line was kept almost horizontal which provided for adequate rear headroom. To provide luggage room for 4 potential passengers, the tail was extended several inches. With the 250 GTE, Ferrari now had a model that could compete head to head with the Aston Martin DB4 and Maserati.

Styled by Pininfarina, the 250 GTE had a steel body with aluminum doors, front hood, and trunk. It was the first Ferrari developed in a wind tunnel and four prototypes were produced during the year and half development process. Power was provided by a 60 degree 12 cylinder engine producing 240 bhp at 7000 rpm. The Type 128 E engine delivered a top speed of 143 mph with a 0-60 time of

7 seconds. Performance was top of class for a true 2+2 GT when the 250 GTE was launched and remains impressive even today. Production started in October of 1960 and ran for 950 units through late 1963. Early in the production run, Laycock Overdrive was fitted to the transmission. Over the 4 years, two sets of changes were made. These cars are commonly referred to as Series II and Series III models. Series II cars entered production in mid 1962 and the main changes were purely cosmetic to the interior and dashboard. Series III cars entered production in early 1963 and included a more substantial number of changes. Coils were added to the rear leaf springs to improve handling, the 3 separate rear lights were combined into one housing, and the

driving lights were moved from the front grill to directly under the headlights.

In late 1963, Ferrari produced a small run of fifty units based on the 250 GTE chassis and body but fitted with a new 4 liter Type 209 engine. The Type 209 engine had been developed for the 250 GTE's successor model, the 330 GT. The new engine produced 300 bhp at 7600 rpm. The extra power allowed for the air conditioning to be offered as an option for the first time on the successor model, the 330 GT. These last fifty units were badged both as "330 America" and "America". Other than the badging, externally these cars were identical to the 250 GTE Series III. No factory literature was ever produced for this small series of cars. Rumors

as to the reason why they were produced range from a special request from the American Ferrari importer, Luigi Chinetti, to Pininfarina was late with the new 330 GT 2+2 body, to Ferrari originally committed to 1,000 250 GTE bodies and Pininfarina insisted that Ferrari take the full order. Of the original fifty 330 Americas, only an estimated twenty five are still in existence, making it one of the rarest production Ferraris.

Even without counting the fifty 330 Americas, the nine hundred and fifty three 250 GTE's produced were almost three times the number of any prior model to come out of the Maranello gates and with it, Ferrari had become an industrial scale producer for the first time. Of the original nine hundred and



Specifications

General:

Number Made:	250 GTE: 953 330 America: 50
Brakes:	
Chassis:	Elliptical section steel tubes
Transmission:	Single plate clutch, 4-speed all synchromesh gearbox and overdrive + reverse
Steering:	Worm and peg

Engine:

Type:	Front longitudinal 60° V12, light alloy cylinder block and head
Power:	250 GTE: 240 bhp @ 7,000 rpm 330 America: 300 bhp @ 7,000 rpm
Displacement:	250 GTE: 2,953.21 cc 330 America: 3967.44 cc
Bore & Stroke:	250 GTE: 73 x 58.8 mm 330 America: 77 x 71 mm
Compression Ratio:	9.2:1

Suspension:

Front:	Independent, double wishbones, coil springs, anti roll bar
Rear:	Live axle, semi-elliptic leaf springs

Dimensions:

Wheelbase:	2,600 mm
Front/Rear Track:	1,354 mm / 1,394 mm
Weight:	1,500 kg
Tires:	
Fuel Tank:	100 liters

Performance:

Acceleration:	250 GTE: 0 - 60 in 6.6 seconds 330 America: 0 - 60 in 7.1 seconds
Top Speed:	250 GTE: 143 mph 330 America: 150 mph

Rating: 250 GTE 3 Stars; 330 America 3.5 Stars

fifty three 250 GTEs, perhaps five hundred have survived until today. Many fell victim to the blow torch in the late 1980's as they were used as the basis for making 250 GTO and other high value replicas.

Throughout its production run, the 250 GTE was the top selling Ferrari of its day. It served as the bridge between Ferrari's small, "boutique" handmade past and industrial future. This was the first Ferrari that had no pretense of being a race car. It was also the first Ferrari to become a large scale commercial success, and the first Ferrari designed for the sporting family man.

The 250 GTE has a luxurious leather bathed interior when compared to its stable mates. The front seats are well padded and comfortable, with the rear buckets providing a generous amount of seating room. The 3 liter V12 provides plenty of power for highway cruising, with good acceleration across the rev range. The chrome rimmed Veglia instruments are easily readable and all controls are within reach of the driver. The wood rimmed Nardi steering wheel coupled with the Borrani wire wheels represents classic early 60's styling. Overall it is a comfortable car for medium to long trips and one built with the driving experience in mind.

Driving Impressions

250 GTE by Luke Kowalski

Anyone who drives the 250 GTE for the first time is consistently surprised at how modern it feels. They are used to hearing the armchair quarterbacks dwell on the truckish ride, heavy handling, and ancient controls. In

reality, when equipped with vintage tires and properly sorted, the car feels easy to maneuver at speed, the ride is compliant, and the controls are more visceral than those of a more modern car.

The impression at first glance usually implicates James Bond. The image comes from the early films. The resemblance of the profile to the Aston Martin DB makes the public think it IS his old car. The elegance of the lines, the metal dash interior, and the proportion of chrome to metal clearly reinforce that 1960s aesthetic. It is not clear to me whether the Italians cribbed from the Brits, or the other way around when it comes to the detail work. It does not really matter. Arguably this is the prettiest 2+2. The sporty angle of the rear glass and the pronounced fenders make for a nice proportion and do not announce the presence of the rear seats. But they are there and quite functional. Retrofitted with belts, they can even fit large modern car seats, and the kids can pivot the rear quarter glass for ventilation, without the discomfort of a direct air stream: "Look, dear, I bought a family car!!!"

Ingress is super easy compared to Gallardos, Diablos, and 360s of today. No contortions are necessary. One sits on a fairly flat seat, but the controls are well spaced and ergonomically positioned. The gearshift, while its pattern is mapped a little close to the center console face, has short throws and does not feel as notchy as some of the early 80s metal gated systems. It cannot be hurried, but no Italian car can be stirred as rapidly as a Miata.

Starting the car involves turning the key, running the



The gorgeous wheel of a 330 America & spectacularly restored interior

electric pump until it stops clicking, pumping the pedal once or twice, and then pressing the ignition key in, an excellent anti-theft measure. It is so effective that upon delivery of the car from European ship container I thought I had a non-runner. The initial warm-up is about 5 minutes, and then the revs are kept under 3500 rpm until the oil and water are at happy operating temperatures. Everyone talks about the metallic wail of the V12 above 5K RPM, but the most characteristic noise to me is the drivetrain and the gear noise. Everything is meshing, whirring, and whining while the car is working hard. The vintage Blaupunkt mono radio with a speaker under the dash can barely be heard. The 3.0 liter V12 with 3 downdraft Webers has no trouble keeping with modern traffic from a stop light, and first gear is longer than the one in my 2002 Maserati Coupe. Induction noise is wonderful at full throttle. Once on the highway, the overdrive is engaged by

pressing in the clutch and pushing the steering column mounted lever. The extra gear really helps on the American freeway, effectively making for a relaxed 5th gear ratio. On the way to the 2005 Concorso I travelled in a pack with 3 Modenas and 2 Stradales. I needed 4th when they decided a quick blast was in order, but when cruising, the electric overdrive reduced the noise, revs, and increased overall comfort level. One still watches the gauges more than in a modern car, and there is a full complement of them, with virtually no idiot lights present save for the alternator and the low fuel light. The Colombo engine runs cool, unless one forgets to turn on the electric pump in traffic, or the clutch actuated fan does not kick in for some reason. The carbs do an amazing job when it comes to flexibility of the car, and the brakes, while not fun in panic stops, do a pretty good job, since the Borrani's conceal disks on all four wheels. Handling is not anywhere close to



Restored to perfection. You will not find many cars of this quality on the market.

today's hot hatches. The GTE's lack of an independent rear suspension can be felt at the limit, but it does well in transitions at medium speeds. The beautiful but large wooden wheel helps at parking lot speeds, but going to the gym three times a week is recommended.

I drive my 250 GTE in modern traffic, often to work, as well as on the twisty back roads, and plenty of miles are covered on the freeway. It works well in any of those settings. While it obviously has no luxury and convenience features of a modern automobile, I find the car surprisingly liveable for a 40 year old. Its 1960s elegance, decent performance, and yes, that

multi-octave, "multi-everything in abundance" sound creates an instant blast from the past, and a very satisfying drive. In my biased opinion, there is no better value when one wants to experience a time when men and machine actually communicated, and were not afraid to raise their voices.

330 America by Tom Yang

The 330 America is exactly the same in layout to a Series III GTE, and if you don't see the engine compartment or the 330 America badge on the trunk lid, you would never know you were about to drive something special. Whenever I explain what a 330 America is, I describe it as the

Big-block Chevelle of the Ferrari world. The 4 liter V-12 engine is dimensionally larger than the 3 liter engine it succeeded, and was proverbially shoehorned into the small GTE engine compartment. Starting this engine is the same as any Vintage Ferrari where the ignition is turned on, and the electric fuel pump is started to fill the three Weber carburetors. As the clicking from the pump slows to a stop, three or four pumps of the accelerator pedal primes the intake, and the ignition switch is pressed in to engage the starter. The slow growl from the starter is interrupted when the engine catches and all 12 cylinders start firing.

Keeping the carbs fed

with a little extra fuel, I keep the revs around 2000-2500 rpm until the engine can settle into a smooth idle. Many vintage owners rarely use the chokes on their webers because the pull cables usually go out of adjustment and cause warm running issues when you open them. It doesn't take long to get a V-12 warmed up enough without them, so I never use my choke.

V-12 engines are noisy. I don't mean this in a negative way, but there are a whole host of sounds to hear once the engine starts. 24 sets of roller followers and valves in the valve train make a loud swishing noise that comes from the engine compartment. Accompanying that noise is the chain that drives these valves, and the suction of air from the six throats of the three carbs. Even in good tune, these carburetors will occasionally pop or spit at different throttle positions, and it all adds to the noises of a Vintage Ferrari. The exhaust out of the four tail pipes is the most memorable sound, and it drums away that V-12 beat at idle. Bring the revs of the engine up, and the exhaust begins to howl. Anything north of 5000 rpm will give you chills if you like cars.

As you wait a minute or two for the engine to warm, you'll notice the layout of the interior. The gauges are all in plain sight, and the three most important ones directly in front, seen through the steering wheel are the tachometer, speedometer, and oil pressure gauges. The painted dash that these gauges are mounted is usually the same color as the body with the dash pad trimmed in black leather. The rest of the interior is generously covered in leather and wool carpets. The front seats

offer the best luxury of the era with reclining seats and comfortable padding. The rear seats, although small, have much more room than modern cars offering 2+2 seating.

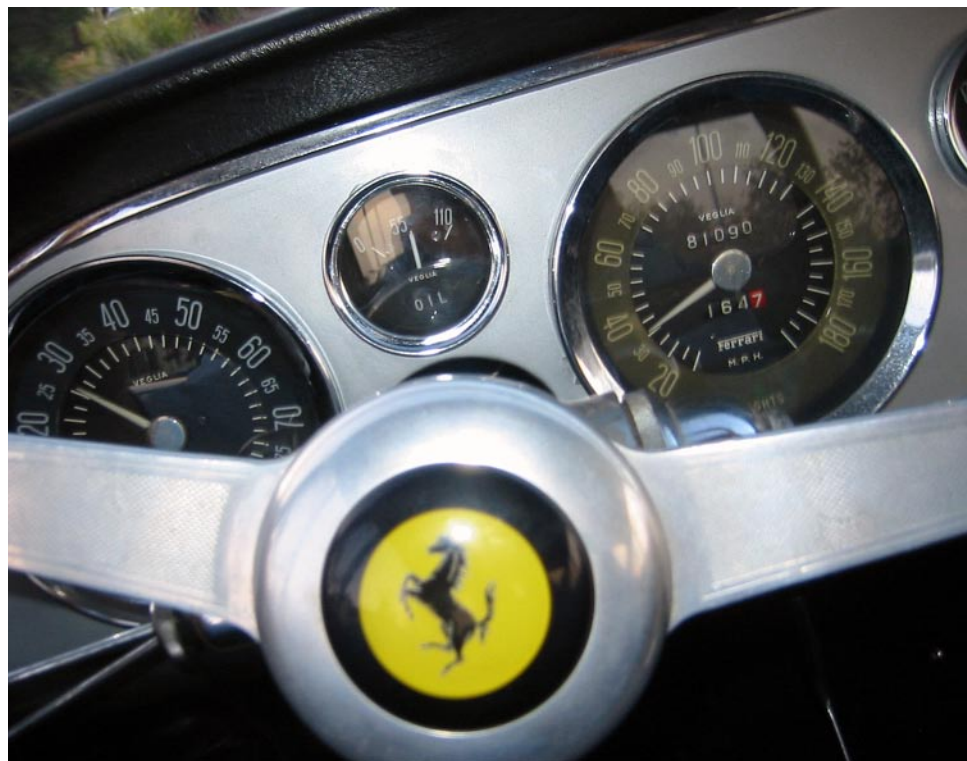
Many Vintage Ferraris have been accused of having a strange seating position for the driver. The classic Italian driving physique requires short legs and long arms, and although I thought I fit that description, I guess not according to Mr. Ferrari! Sitting in my 330 America, I still find my knees splayed so that I have a good reach for the steering wheel. The windshield seems too close to my knuckles when my hand is in the 12 o'clock position, but the rest of the controls are within easy reach. This driving position may seem strange at first, but with time one conforms their body to this position. It has now become second nature to drive in this position whenever I drive an old Ferrari!

Getting under way, the

gear change is very accurate and clicks easily into place. Any looseness here is usually from worn bushings inside the linkage. The mechanical linkage to the clutch works well, and operates the three-fingered clutch with a little force. The synchromesh takes some warming up before gear changes are smooth, but you'll never find the transmission very fast between gears. Like drivers of most Vintage cars, you'll learn to take a slight beat between gears.

You'll immediately notice how much low-end torque there is for easy movement from standstill. The larger engine makes around town driving easier, but unfortunately does not make up for the heavy steering. The large Nardi steering wheel helps with the application of pressure to the steering gear, but the thin wooden rim takes getting used to after driving modern cars with thick padded wheels. As the speed increases, the steering gets lighter, so the

The dash of a 250 GTE



grip on the wheel relaxes, and becomes more comfortable.

Even with all the low-end torque, the engine never stops reminding you that it wants to run. Puttering around town can make the carbs spit and pop, and the feeling that this horse is pulling on her reins becomes apparent. An occasional blast up the rev range seems to clear her throat, and makes both the driver and the car want more, so we go looking for open roads.

A 330 America is not a lightning fast car compared to modern sports cars, but is very capable of fast speeds. It is not light and nimble like an early 911, but quick gear changes will easily get you faster than local speed limits. As the engine reaches its redline, and another gear is selected, you'll notice yourself going a lot faster than

Luke's 250 GTE

you would expect. These engines have a lot useable power in their rev range, and the smoothness in its power delivery can be misleading. I always say that these cars are not quick 0-60 cars, but pulls like a freight train to very high highway speeds.

The GTE/330 America has always been accused of under steering compared to her two-seat sisters, and although this may be true, the control of the car and application of throttle to overcome this under steer makes for confident handling. The 330 America, with more power, really comes into her own in this department. For the brave, driving a 2+2 quickly into a 2nd or 3rd gear turn can be exhilarating when over steer is induced by flicking the rear end out with an abrupt steering change right before the apex of

the turn. I value my car too much at the expense of the outcome of that maneuver to try it, but I've been told it works. I'll stick to a more conservative approach for oversteer.

This brings us to another realization about driving a Ferrari. It is more car than I will ever be able to drive it. I know we can all say this as long as we're able to put our egos aside. Whenever I am daring enough to push my 330 America a little harder, she responds with more ability. The brakes seem weak at first, but when I manage to really put some pressure on them, she stops with authority, or the engine begins to come alive just as I begin to travel too fast for my own good. These are just a few examples of how this car surprises me almost every time I drive her.



Pros

- Classic early 60's design
- A real usable Vintage Ferrari
- Reliable, race proven engine
- Excellent trunk space
- Useable back seats, can even carry 4 adults for short trips
- Few electrical items, less to go wrong
- Both affordable and rare
- Most maintenance can be done by the owner
- Good potential for long term appreciation
- Classic V12 Ferrari soundtrack

Cons

- High service and running costs
- Costs as much as any other 250 Series Ferrari to restore
- Heavy steering at low speed
- Repairing or replacing major components can be amazingly expensive
- No air conditioning
- Some components are now hard to find



Maintenance & Known Issues

There are several common issues found on many 250 GTE's. Build quality varied from car to car and rust is an almost universal problem. Given the severity of the rust problem, checking the body for filler is highly recommended. Many 250 GTEs suffered from inadequate maintenance at some stage in their lives so reviewing service history is important. Several other areas that should be checked are:

- Check the tension on the timing chains. It can stretch

to the point where it will jump a tooth leading to dire consequences for the valves.

- Weak 2nd gear synchros
- Paint work is fragile
- Camshaft wear
- Valve clearances

Other potential issues:

- Poor oil circulation, blown oil filters (A trick by less reputable salesmen and mechanics is to set the oil pressure regulators higher to overcome low oil pressure in worn engines. This can lead to blown oil filters.)
- All gauges have a tendency to be both unreliable and inaccurate

- Worn throttle shafts on Webers or warped base plates lead to inaccurate tuning.
- Exhaust systems rust out
- Poor Engine compression
- All hoses corrode and leak with age
- Accident damage and improper repair
- Cracked brake discs

In general, if you adhere to the factory recommended maintenance schedule and keep the car dry, 250 GTEs are reliable for a car their age. These cars need to be run regularly, serviced properly, and treated with respect. If you do, it is a reliable weekend car.

General Buying Rules

Demand to see the Service book and Maintenance History file. Make sure you have solid answers to at least any major holes in the recent history (last 10-15 years). If the car has been restored, ask to see the pictures documenting the work. If this information is not forthcoming, move on.

Get the car inspected by a Ferrari trained mechanic. He will find things you miss. Given the age of all 250 GTE's/330 Americas this is absolutely critical and will help you negotiate the purchase price with the seller. When looking at the PPI report, make sure engine compression is normal. Engine rebuilds are hugely expensive. Additionally

look for a smoky exhaust. This can be caused by worn valve guides. Original engines did not have valve stem seals and many had poor quality valve guide materials. Original engines with these issues usually last about 50K miles before needing an engine rebuild. Installation of modern valve stem seals and silicon-bronze valve guides will fix these issues, but this usually involves a complete engine rebuild costing over \$20K.

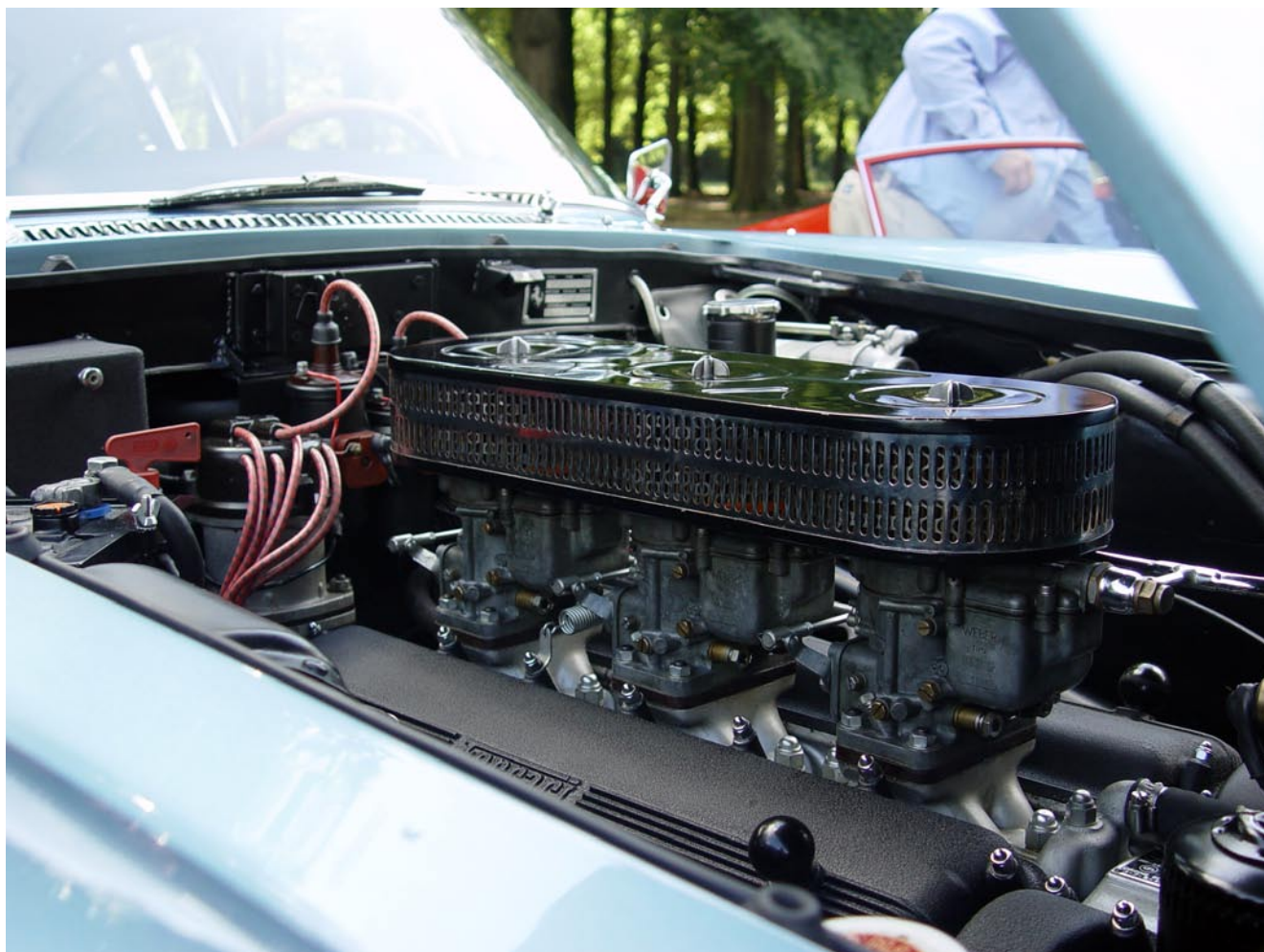
If the asking price is very low, there is a reason for it. Major restoration work on a 250 GTE will easily exceed the purchase price of the car. If you are buying a project car, get a good idea of restoration costs before proceeding with the purchase.

Never buy the first car you see, look and test drive several. If possible drive both a early 250 GTE and a 330 America.

Make sure the car has all the original Books, Tools, and Records. These are very expensive and difficult to replace later. Also check the condition of the Borraris and exhaust. Replacing or repairing either will cost several thousand dollars.

Talk to other owners, join the Ferrari Forum and TomYang.net. There is a 250GTE registry available in newsletter form. A complete published registry is available at: newsletter250GTE@aol.com

Talk to the Mechanics that have historically serviced the car.



A note about Pre Purchase Inspections (PPI)

Not meaning to offend anyone in the business of selling exotic cars, but to protect people who are ready to buy, always remember whether it is a Ferrari or a Honda we're still in the realm of used car sales. Everyone has a right to make a living, but there are also plenty of people in this business that practice less than honest means to separate you from your money.

A buyer can be especially vulnerable when the emotions of realizing the dream of owning a Ferrari are involved. A pre-purchase inspection, by a third party mechanic is one step that I highly recommend you have done on a car you are about to purchase.

Many dealers and shops will offer mechanical inspections or compression numbers, but these numbers can be easily doctored to favor the sale of the car. Hiring a third party mechanic that you know or trust gives you an objective eye towards buying the car. In some cases, dealers have commissions arrangements split between their salesmen and mechanics which can result in more favorable opinions, so having someone who is not involved with the sale is your defense in not having later unpleasant surprises. The cost of a few hundred dollars or pounds can well be the best money you spend on your new Ferrari.

Ownership: Experience & Expectations

When you purchase a Ferrari, you are not buying a car but rather a work of engineering art and a piece of history. A Ferrari has a soul and character

unique in the automotive world. A Ferrari comes filled with Italian passion, for both better and occasionally worse. Driving a Ferrari is never boring. It is engaging. You are always involved and interacting with the car across a multitude of senses. While driving, this includes the constantly changing sound track as the engine moves through the rpm range, the heavy but exact clutch, and the metallic click with every gear change. There really is nothing else on the road that sounds like a Ferrari. Until you have driven one, it is impossible to appreciate the totality of the experience. It is this emotional link between car and owner that sets Ferrari's apart from other sports cars

Two other cars that many first time Ferrari owners consider are Lamborghini and Porsche. Lamborghini has similar roots in the Modena area. It however does not have the racing heritage or, for the majority of its life, the single minded guidance of a brilliant owner. Lamborghini's ownership history has included everyone from Chrysler, an Indonesian Conglomerate, to Audi. This is reflected in the history of the models. Lamborghinis tend to be overly flamboyant, difficult to drive, and highly temperamental. Porsche, on the other hand, is efficient, reliable, and an engineering masterpiece. It is also highly predictable and after a time, can be construed as boring. A Porsche does everything with extreme competence, to the extent that you begin to wonder if you, the driver, is really needed.

The fact is Ferrari's are expensive to maintain and less reliable than many other cars. This is simply a small part of the deal that comes with be-

ing a member of the small and special club of Ferrari owners. The Porsche is a cold rationale machine, a Lamborghini is pure emotion, and a Ferrari gives you both.

Purchasing Options

In general most Ferrari Buyers purchase their cars through one of four channels:

- Official Ferrari Dealers
- Independent Specialist Dealers
- Private Sellers
- Auctions

each has its own strengths and weaknesses. In summary:

Official Ferrari Dealers

Purchasing through an official dealer will provide the most piece of mind when making the rather considerable investment in a Prancing Horse badged automobile. In almost all cases the car will come with some sort of warrantee, a comprehensive service history, and a clean bill of health. All of this comes with a cost and you will likely pay a 10-20% premium vs. other options. One other limitation is that dealers normally only stock the current, plus 1-2 generations of prior models. As a result, dealers are really only an option for the modern (1990's -) model enthusiast.

Independent Specialist

Independent Specialist Dealers can provide both outstanding service and a wide range of models to choose from, covering all price ranges. Reputation is critical and so is doing your research on an Independent Specialist Dealer before writing out

a check.

Information and insights on different Specialists can be obtained both through your local Ferrari Owners Club members and via posts on the Ferrari Forum. Like official dealers, many specialists can provide warranties (via 3rd parties) and on-going maintenance facilities.

The quality of the maintenance for modern models can be on par with the official dealers as many independents employ Ferrari trained mechanics. For modern models though it is critical to confirm that the service center has the necessary diagnostic equipment and software (SD1 or SD2) for your model. For Classic and Vintage Ferrari's, independents may be your only, or best (for more recent models) option. Prices at Independent's should be 5-20% less than Official Dealers.

In most countries, purchasing from either an Official Ferrari Dealer or an Independent Specialist will provide you with the strongest legal rights should anything go wrong.

Private Sellers

Caveat Emptor. Buying from a private seller is both the lowest cost and highest risk option. In all Ferrari purchases, a Pre Purchase Inspection (PPI) by a specialist is recommended, in the case of a private purchase, it is critical. Purchasing well privately is both a matter of form and substance. First the form which is mostly related to general appearance and presentation:

- Check the condition of the interior, is the leather conditioned and cleaned
- Pull up the mats, check the condition of the under carpet
- Spray water on the car, make

sure it beads up immediately

- Look in the engine bay
- Is the owner a member of the local Ferrari Owner's Club

Positives on the above are an initial indication of a careful owner, but could also be the result of a pre-sale clean up. Then move onto the substance:

- Review the service records, a comprehensive file is always a good sign
- Check the history of the car, make sure it has always been well cared for
- Always check that the mileage on the odometer matches the other records
- Confirm that the seller is the car's owner and that the title is clear
- Spend time both test driving the car and talking to the owner. No car is perfect, does the owner point out both the good points of the car and the issues needing attention ?

Buying from a private seller will provide both the lowest cost of acquisition and the highest risk should any major undisclosed issue emerge post purchase. Doing your homework properly is critical and in many cases it is a rewarding and enjoyable experience for both parties. Private classified ads are available on both www.ferrariforum.com and www.tomyang.net.

Auctions

As a very broad guideline, cars that appear at auction are either very high value recent models (example – Enzo) or models no longer carried in the Official Dealer network. As per purchasing from a private seller, it is critical to do your homework

ahead of time. All auction houses provide for pre-sale viewing but it is very unlikely that a PPI or test drive will be permitted.

Both need to be included in the buyers purchase risk consideration. Auction Houses act as agents on behalf of the sellers so your legal protection in many countries is not much greater than in the case of a private sale. On the positive side, auctions provide both the opportunity to acquire very rare, unique cars with important histories and other models at a potentially outstanding value. As many Independent Specialist Dealers attend auctions, it is critical that a private buyer understand the environment that he is competing in. Fee schedules differ significantly between the different auction houses, so it is strongly advised that these be reviewed ahead of time. Currently the most famous Ferrari Auction is Bonhams December Auction in Gstaad, Switzerland. Other well know auction houses include: Christies, R&M (North America), Barlett Jackson (North America), Barons (UK), H&H (UK), Coys (UK), and Artcurial (France).

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