

LIFE IN THE *FAST* LANE



Some of the world's flashiest automobiles can be found right here in Marin.

BY DANIEL JEWETT • PHOTOS BY TIM PORTER



Members of the Ferrari Owners Group meet on Mount Tamalpais before heading out for a drive.



You see them whizzing by on the freeway or confidently navigating the twisting roads in West Marin. Often they inspire a second look or even a bit of envy as your vehicle becomes just another rapidly diminishing object in a rearview mirror. The high-performance luxury cars of Marin are beautiful, fast, expensive, full of cutting-edge technology and much more common than you might expect. But maybe you already knew that. Along the drive down Highway 101, a Ferrari dealership is followed by Maserati, Porsche, BMW, Mercedes, Mini, Audi and Jaguar dealerships. There are few places in the world where luxury car options are so plentiful. It doesn't hurt that Marin County has one of the highest per-capita income levels in the country, along with continuously mild weather and some pretty amazing roads (see almost any car commercial: they almost always feature a sequence in Marin). The following is a road map, organized by country of origin, featuring some of the most impressive wheels you can expect to encounter on the highways and byways of Marin.



FRENCH PASSION

THE FIRST CAR on our list isn't available in Marin; you have to go to Los Gatos to pick one up. Just be sure to bring at least \$2 million. The line, founded by an Italian, is now made in France and owned by Volkswagen; there are only 10 dealerships in the U.S. But if it's an exclusive ride you're looking for, nothing comes close to Bugatti — you don't have to worry about your neighbor pulling up in one (although one caused quite a sensation at this year's Marin Sonoma Concours d'Elegance). "The general profile of an owner is someone who is a car enthusiast with a feel for engineering," says Bugatti's official driver, Butch Leitzinger. "He is not just looking for a car as jewelry; he understands what he is paying for. This car is the pinnacle of his collection. He understands how special it is." Indeed, the team behind Bugatti spent years developing a car that would be capable of reaching 254 mph — they had to find a way to handle the forces involved with an unbelievable 1,200-horsepower engine and to stop the car once it got moving. "The engineering challenge was how to put this much power to the ground in a civilized manner," Leitzinger says. **WHAT TO WATCH FOR** The series is one-of-a-kind; only 450 will ever be made. About 70 are still available.



STATS

CAR Veyron 16.4 Grand Sport Vitesse
PRICE \$2.5 million
ENGINE 8 liter, four turbochargers, 16-cylinder
HORSEPOWER 1,200

ITALIAN STYLE



STATS

CAR Ferrari 458 Italia • **PRICE** \$233,509 base
ENGINE 4.5 liter, eight-cylinder • **HORSEPOWER** 570

When you say “high-performance from Italy” one name instantly comes to mind: Ferrari. The company got its start in 1947 when race car driver Enzo Ferrari started manufacturing cars using what he learned on the track. “It all comes from Formula One racing; that was the first purpose,” says Emmanuel Turin, marketing coordinator and sales consultant for Ferrari of San Francisco, which opened in the city in 1993 and moved to its present Mill Valley location in 1994. The cars are still made to order in just one Italian factory, he adds: “There is no match for Ferrari, but there is unmatched pleasure when you drive one.” Joe Keon of Greenbrae agrees — he started the Ferrari Owners Group five years ago and watched it grow from four to 270 members and take up charitable causes. “When I first drove one I couldn’t believe I didn’t roll over and get crushed. I couldn’t believe a car had this capability; it changed me dramatically,” he says. “It felt like I was cheating the forces.” **WHAT TO WATCH FOR** The Ferrari FF, launched in 2011, is the company’s first production four-passenger, four-wheel-drive car. Also, from Ferrari’s sister company, a reinvention of the Maserati Ghibli — a more affordable compact sport sedan version, priced between \$65,000 and \$75,000 and available with a 345- or 404-horsepower engine.



Maybe it wasn’t the best thing for Jaguar’s image when, in an episode of AMC’s *Mad Men*, an exhaust-inhalation suicide attempt was foiled by the fact that the car, a vintage Jaguar E-Type, would not start. “Twenty years ago, the quality wasn’t there,” admits Belvedere resident Tom Price, owner of Jaguar Marin and a collector of classic Jaguars. “There was a negative perception about quality with Jaguar, but now the quality is fabulous.” What changed? Jaguar was owned by Ford, but in 2008 it and Land Rover were purchased by India’s biggest vehicle maker, Tata Motors. “They are the best company to be involved with the brand,” Price says. “They are giving Jaguar the strength to do it right.” And just out of the gate it appears they have taken the checkered flag, bringing an affordable, fast (with a decidedly gutsy exhaust note), all-aluminum-body F-Type to the market to rave reviews. “Customers are ecstatic,” Price says. “When they finish test drives, they have big smiles on their faces.” The car has also been celebrated in the *Jagazette*, the newsletter of the world’s oldest Jaguar club, which is Bay Area-based with many Marin members. **WHAT TO WATCH FOR** A smaller Jaguar sports car, a Jaguar crossover and, from Jaguar’s sister company, an all-aluminum 500-horsepower Land Rover Sport.



STATS

CAR Jaguar F-Type V8 S • **PRICE** \$92,000 base
ENGINE 5.0 liter, eight-cylinder • **HORSEPOWER** 495

BRITISH DETERMINATION





GERMAN PRECISION

There are some pretty amazing German cars out there — certainly BMW, Mercedes and Audi (all available in Marin) make exceptional vehicles — but when it comes to a brand that screams performance, fans say nothing comes close to a Porsche. “Quality, durability, exclusivity and style — people are interested in and passionate about the brand,” says Bill Lamphere, general manager of Sonnen Porsche in Marin, open since the 1970s. “For many it’s a dream car, the vehicle they’ve wanted since childhood.” And for many, it’s likely that dream started with the iconic 911, a car celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. “Everyone loves the 911; that’s why that car is still with us,” Lamphere says. **WHAT TO WATCH FOR** The Macan, a smaller version of the extremely popular Cayenne crossover, and the \$845,000 918 Spyder plug-in hybrid.



STATS

CAR Porsche 911 Cabriolet Carrera S • **PRICE** \$110,800 base
ENGINE 3.8 liter, six-cylinder • **HORSEPOWER** 400

ANISE GEMELL
(THIS SPREAD)





It would be wrong to write a story about the cars of Marin and leave out the hot new car that seems to be taking over the streets: the Tesla Model S. With service and an appointment-only sales representative now located in San Rafael (sales are primarily online, although a San Rafael showroom is planned), this high-performance all-electric vehicle seems to be the answer for the Marin car owner who likes luxury and performance but wants to stay green. “I wanted to be able to get completely off fossil fuels, and I’m on solar power, so it’s great,” says Kiki Goshay of Kentfield, who traded in her Prius for the 60-kWh Tesla model. “I’ve never had a high-performance car or a luxury car, and the Prius was really un-sexy. This car raised my eyebrows; it’s really fun to drive.” She says the car is smooth-riding, quiet and doesn’t put out fumes; there are now seven on her block alone. “It costs nothing to drive,” she adds.

“And I love not going to gas pumps; I don’t have to stop.”

WHAT TO WATCH FOR The Tesla X crossover in 2014 and a cheaper compact sedan; also a network of new charging stations.

STATS

CAR Tesla Model S, P 85
PRICE \$83,570 base
BATTERY 85 kWh
RANGE 265 miles;
0–60 in 4.2 seconds



FOR THE REST OF US

Okay, okay, we understand that these cars are not within everybody’s reach. And we agree, why should those with an extra \$2.5 million lying around have all the fun? For drivers who just want to experience the thrill for a day or two, a new company in Sonoma, started by race car driver and parts supplier Richard Martin, offers classic cars for rent. “Nobody to my knowledge is doing this the way we are doing this,” he says of DB Autosportif. “The level and quality of our cars is excellent.” The 12 cars, mostly from the 1960s, include a ’60 Corvette (pictured), a ’64 Jaguar E-Type S.I. and a ’63 Porsche 356B Cabriolet. They rent for between \$325 and \$1,600; visit dbautosportif.com. If you get behind the wheel, be ready to turn a lot of heads.



AMERICAN INGENUITY