



Maranello Magic

by Neel Jaiswal

Recently, I was lucky enough to be invited to visit the Ferrari headquarters in Maranello, Italy, near Bologna.

I left on a misty May morning and arrived in sunny Bologna two hours later. Journeys like this always remind me how lucky we are to be so close to the plethora of culture on our doorstep.

Bologna is the lively, historic capital of the Emilia-Romagna region in northern Italy. Its Piazza Maggiore is a sprawling

plaza lined with colonnades, cafés and medieval and Renaissance structures such as City Hall, the Fountain of Neptune and the Basilica.

We stayed in a beautiful converted convent in the heart of the city, and around me were all my favourite things: food, culture and cars. There is much to sample there; balsamic vinegars, Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, prosciutto di Parma and, of course, a plate of ragu alla Bolognese! Nearby also





lies Lamborghini at Sant Agata, Ferrari and Pagani. I wonder what does this land have that gave rise to such gastronomy and engineering passion. ...

Maranello was a swooping 40-minute drive and we were spirited there in comfort, in the rear of a lovely Audi A8. Any car with window curtains always makes one feel special! Maranello is a large collection of buildings that incorporate the factory, the F1 team, bespoke FXX programme, and Ferrari museum and merchandise shop.

History abounds in Enzo Ferrari's office, looking out on to the entrance gates where he cast his steely eye. There is also homage to the legendary Michael Schumacher, and you get a sense of a genuine pride and passion permeating the buildings.

Being such a behemoth of production, innovation and development, it's a challenge for them to retain the personal touch. They do manage it and there's a definite feeling of being a part of history and the *famiglia*. The factory is a collective of temples of light, space and greenery. The V8 programme runs downstairs and it also makes the Maserati V8 and V6 engines.

Upstairs is the V12 line, which yearly makes only 7,000 cars, which is why waiting time can be up to four years! This also helps their resale value, as does the five-year free servicing. It's a good idea to plan ahead and get an early delivery of a new

model. These don't depreciate much, which is a pleasant surprise.

In the Atelier section, customers are invited to spec their purchases and choose colours, wheels, seats, interiors and stitching, to name but a few of the multitude of choices. Here the knowledgeable and delightful Francesca helps you spec your car. With myriad options, a guide with immense product knowledge is a valued thing and it's even more special doing it in the heart of Ferrari! The restoration department was attached to this and we could see the rebuilding of neglected cars. Once restored, they would be worth millions of pounds and thus no expense was being spared.

We also saw the customers track program and the special FXX and FXXK. The F1 cars had just returned from Barcelona and were being stripped, assessed and reassembled. A trip to the museum, which is currently being expanded, housed some beauties such as the 250GT and one of my favourite cars, the evocative F40.

On the production line we saw the new GTC and 812, which is a big leap forward. We also saw the new California, which is coming out at the end of the year, along with the revamped Maserati Gran Turismo.

A huge thank-you to HR Owen Ferrari. If anyone would like to know anything more, don't hesitate to contact me! ■

