

# DRIVING WITH THE COOL CLUB

THE SOUTHERN EQUATORIAL FERRARI AUTOMOBILI CLUB OF SOUTH AFRICA (SEFAC) GARDEN ROUTE BOASTS MORE THAN 25 ACTIVE MEMBERS FROM MOSSEL BAY TO PORT ELIZABETH. SOUTH WENT ALONG ON ONE OF THEIR MONTHLY DRIVES THROUGH THE REGION AND DISCOVERED IT'S EVEN BETTER FROM THE INSIDE.

“Do you take the red pill or the blue pill?” These famous words from The Matrix movie morph into an entirely new meaning as I stroll towards the two Ferraris as nonchalantly as my eager legs allow.

It's not every day I purposefully walk up to and converse with Ferrari owners, let alone ride in one. I am about to spend the day with the Garden Route chapter of Sefac.

I'm not a petrol-head, but I do love beautiful things and although a drive beside the Knysna lagoon is exceptional on any day, when seen from within the black leather, red-trimmed interior of one of the most exquisite machines ever made, it takes on an entirely new seductive personality.

There's a sense of power that comes from being inside these beautiful cars and it's got nothing to do with the luscious hum of the engine. I don't think it even comes from the fact that while you are in or near a Ferrari, people

turn and stare or fumble for their cell phones to snap a selfie. These cars exude an aura of luxury, speed, potency and exhilarated freedom.

Retired mechanical engineer and businessman Alistair Gibb has been a member of the Johannesburg chapter of Sefac since he bought his first Ferrari in 1997 and started the local sub-chapter in 2014. “When I arrived here in 2009, I had the only Ferrari in Knysna. As more Ferraris appeared in the region, I approached the Sefac committee in Johannesburg to form a local chapter. They were initially skeptical that there could be so many Ferraris outside major centres but agreed that if I could find ten members we could have a chapter.” Word got around, and soon Alistair had his ten. The Garden Route chapter officially launched in January 2014 and has hosted monthly events ever since. It is not uncommon to see 20-odd mostly red Ferraris out on a Sunday drive in the region.

Alistair's wife Libby, who offers up her seat in their sleek Ferrari F430 for the day, passionately

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PHOTOGRAPHS VANESSA VAN VREDEN AND SUPPLIED



supports her husband's love of the iconic brand. Having always been a lover of cars, Alistair is a man who exudes Ferrari fervour, with a garage bedecked in memorabilia.

"Listen to this..." says Alistair with a grin as he drops a gear with the lightest touch of the steering wheel gear paddle and touches his foot to the accelerator. The engine decides humming is for lesser vehicles and without a moment's hesitation changes its tune to a mechanised sabre-tooth growl. Feeling its teeth caress my spine I can't resist emitting a yelp of joy. The way the car hugs the corners and grips the road leaves me grinning in amazement. These are not cars to hop into when you need to pop down to the shops to pick up a litre of milk and some toothpaste... they're made to go fast!

There's something timeless and otherworldly about Ferrari. So it seems somewhat surprising that the brand is only celebrating its 70th birthday (and, coincidentally, Sefac turns 50) in 2017. Countrywide, Sefac membership is currently about 455 with a small but active group of Garden Route members.

"Everyone in the club gets along. Nobody cares what model you drive. We all have the same thing in common, which is simply a passion for Ferrari."

Fancourt-based Neels and Ronell van Aswegen are self-proclaimed petrol-heads and have been members of Sefac for two years. With a longtime love affair for cabriolet sports cars of all types, they take special delight in taking their Ferrari California out on drives around the Garden Route.

"Neels owns it, but I love it," says Ronell. "We have a deal: he brings the car to wherever we go and I take us home."

"I have to fight her for it!" says Neels with a chuckle.

Charles Bongers, current owner of a F458 Italia, has had a Ferrari on and off for about 10 years. "There's something about a Ferrari that just generates a sense of passion. It has a 'wow' factor that you don't get from any other vehicle, while the actual driving experience and vehicle dynamics are absolutely fantastic. The benefit of being part of a club like Sefac is that you are part of a group of people who are like minded, passionate about their cars, and it's always a good get together. It's a great community."

As our fleet of six red and one blue magnificent machines wind their way down towards the coast like a chain of jewels glinting in the gorgeous morning sunshine, Alistair tells stories of his and other Sefac members' visits to the home of Ferrari in Maranello, Italy. As he tells of an opportunity to drive a Formula 1 car around a privately owned track at Le Luc in France, I sense the adrenaline and child-like joy of the experience.

**JOIN THE CLUB**

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Enzo Ferrari, the creator of this superb sports car, once said the Ferrari is a dream. “People dream of owning this special vehicle and for most people it will remain a dream, apart from those lucky few.” As the cars line up for a spectacular and crowd-pulling photo shoot in Herold’s Bay, a boy runs up and grins the widest brace-filled grin. He rattles off the names and specifications of every model and takes countless pictures on his smartphone. I wonder, “Is that the kind of passion and dreaming it takes?” I’m not sure. But what I can say for certain is the world looks fantastic from within a Ferrari!

**What’s new in the Ferrari stable?** Richard Webb finds the ‘Prancing Horse’ still pretty agile for a 70-year old.

Since 1947, Ferrari has had at its core a passion for detail. And like any good ‘knees-up at a birthday party’, there are plenty of goodies on offer from these red-blooded icons.

For starters, there’s the limited edition special series LaFerrari Aperta. For a brand unafraid of extremes, this open-top tour de force just shouts performance, style and exclusivity.

Available with both a carbon-fibre hard-top and soft-top, the Aperta combines extraordinary performance with the joy of open-top driving. The hybrid 6 262cc V12 engine couples with a 120kW electric motor.

It delivers over 350km/h, and 0 to 100km/h arrives in less than three seconds. A HY-KERS system helps it become the most high-performance and efficient Ferrari ever built. The batteries consist of 120 cells assembled into eight modules, with a power output that’s the equivalent of 40 traditional batteries but weighing in at just 60kg.

Fancy more room with your blistering performance? The GTC4Lusso T is the first Ferrari V8-engine four-seater, and it ushers in a whole new Ferrari Grand Touring concept – an innovative take on the shooting brake coupé. It’ll do over 320km/h and scorch from 0 to 100km/h 3.5 seconds.

**INSTANT LEGENDS** To help keep existing model ranges fresh, the Ferrari Taylor-Made ateliers have created 70 different and individually iconic interior and exterior liveries that are all inspired by models from Ferrari’s massive back-catalogue. Customers can choose from 70 configurations across five model ranges to create 350 completely unique cars. Examples include these gems:

#### 488 Spider

The Green Jewel in the signature green livery of the 365 P2 honours the cars fielded by the British David Piper racing team. In the sixties South African motorsport fans were treated to stunning driving displays and multiple victories in the Nine Hours of Kyalami.



#### F12 Berlinetta

The Stirling livery was inspired by the 250 GT Berlinetta SWB, winner of the 1961 Tourist Trophy that was driven by Stirling Moss, complete with Blu Scuro racing livery.



#### California T

The Steve McQueen livery is inspired by one of the most elegant Ferraris ever built, the 1963 250 GT Berlinetta lusso. It features brown body paintwork & a cabin in camel leather with elegant stitching.

#### 488 GTB

The Schumacher livery pays homage to the F2003-GA (the F1 Drivers’ and Constructors’ World Championships in 2003 championship car) in which the legendary German driver took six grand prix victories.



Next year kicks off a world tour, taking in 60 countries in a year-long series of events in which classic Ferraris and modern cars will share in the celebrations, concluding with an exclusive event in Maranello.