



Drive me crazy: California's sun shines down on the new Boxster Spyder even on the many forested stretches



Premiere

By
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STILL NUMBER ONE

North America's West is wild—and wildly romantic. It's territory on which the Boxster and the Spyder have always felt very much at home. On California's famous Highway 1, the new Boxster Spyder feels like a veritable Sun King. With less weight and even more passion, it has the roadster gene in spades. As the Americans say: Still number one.

The silver Boxster Spyder handles every twist and turn on California's State Route 1 with composure. The sun gleams brightly in the clear blue sky. To the right, the Pacific Ocean sparkles in the distance and roars as its waves crash against the coastline a hundred feet below the highway; to the left of the road, trees march up the Santa Lucia Mountains. But it's not postcards we're talking about here—it's the Boxster Spyder. Porsche chose this piece of American paradise for its world premiere of the new Boxster Spyder, the first time the company has introduced a model in America since the debut of the original Boxster in Arizona in 1997. Go west, go Boxster!

It's a home-field advantage for this lightning-quick lightweight. The Boxster Spyder, resolutely designed to be open-air, was inspired, according to the Porsche experts at the press launch, with California in mind. It is the California described by a visitor to the state named Harrison Gray Otis, who traveled from San Francisco to Los Angeles and wrote, "A flood of glorious sun-

shine pours down all day long, making life a positive luxury." That was in 1875, before Otis moved to California and took over the *Los Angeles Times*, but his description of the weather is as true today as it was 135 years ago. The Boxster becomes a king under the Californian sun.

The Boxster Spyder is so vibrant that a single road would not have sufficed for its premiere. Journalists from all over the world reveled in a choice of four driving routes. The longest, the "Carmel Valley Loop," is a two-and-a-half-hour drive through what is rapidly becoming another of California's premier wine-growing areas. Winding through vineyards, the road demands constant curve dynamics. And the uneven road surface throws in a trial for the wheel suspension, free of charge.

The most scenic route takes drivers to the Pacific Ocean and down Route 1, past Big Sur (home to bohemian writer Henry Miller) to Nepenthe, where Orson Welles and his wife Rita ▶

The sound of the Boxster Spyder rises against the crashing surf of the Pacific. Neither comes out ahead.

It's a powerful duet, not a duel.



On the Lightness of Being

By
Larry Dietz

Photo by
Marc Urbano

One of the admirers of the new Boxster Spyder is comedian Jerry Seinfeld, whose RSK Spyder—part of his collection of Porsches, housed in southern California—sparkles alongside its latest descendant. On entering the Bernardus Lodge, the TV star goes straight to the Spyder, subjecting it to scrutiny that even the famed German Technical Inspection could not surpass. He pauses at the rear attachment points for the sunshield. How does it work, he wants to know. A Porsche expert opens the rear trunk and begins fastening the sunshield in place. Standing a few feet away, Seinfeld turns to his friends with a big smile and says, very quietly, “This is genius.”

Then he wants to test his enthusiasm all the more. Questioning is one of his passions. He goes to the Porsche tent, where design engineers are talking about how their team has reduced weight in the Spyder. One of them invites Seinfeld to pick up the one-piece rear luggage compartment lip. A fleeting moment of doubt on Seinfeld’s face is supplanted by a wide grin and a laugh as he easily hoists the lightweight component. He looks closely at the piece of metal and asks for confirmation that the silver-metal lid has not been painted. He is assured that it hasn’t been. That inspires him. He wants to know if he can get one that’s completely unpainted. The Porsche officials hesitate for an instant. “How many pounds would we save by not having paint?” Seinfeld asks with a grin. Ah, everyone thinks, he’s kidding.

Finally, as Seinfeld sits in the Boxster Spyder in the driveway and the car is about to pull away, an event worker rushes up and offers him some new driving gloves. “Too much weight,” he smiles, and releases the clutch. He returns two hours later. What does he think? “My RSK Spyder is here,” he says, “and the basic idea, from 1958 to now, is similar. It feels like the same idea, pursued with the perspective gained from all these years.”

The comedian slips quickly into the role of an automotive tester, and every word is serious. What about the Boxster Spyder’s driving characteristics? “You can’t make that car mess up. It will not stumble. And it’s got a comfortable suspension,” he replies. “You know,” he muses, “you really can drive it around the neighborhood to run an errand”—although that would be something like hiring a Michelin three-star chef to whip up a turkey burger.

Porsche-purist Seinfeld will order his Spyder without the air-conditioning and the optional navigation system. But he might give in on the radio and order it as an option. “There’s something about cars and music,” he explains. “Now, if the law allowed a louder exhaust, that would work. So you need a radio to stimulate the other senses.”

Okay, what color? He pauses and thinks for a moment. “Can I get a paintless Boxster Spyder?” he wonders out loud. “That rear deck lid was really great...”



The Boxster Spyder, a veritable Sun King, is in its element on Highway 1, enjoying the lightness of being.



Hayworth bought a log cabin, but never actually lived in it. While Route 1’s two lanes have curves, they are not abrupt enough to endanger the seemingly endless line of motor homes that make their way up and down the coast during the summer. In winter, though, the road can be taken at the speed limit, showing off the Spyder’s handling.

There is a relatively short, tight, very twisty road around Tularcitos Ridge. For the hedonists, the route involves a loop along the famed 17-Mile Drive in Pebble Beach, past world-class golf courses, where the design of the Spyder complements the views of the Pacific and of the Pebble Beach Company’s famed trademarked signature, the Lone Cypress Tree—a photo opportunity if ever there was one. Harmony need not always mean kitsch.

Automotive journalists do not live only to drive. Much of their time when they’re not in cars they’re testing is spent talking about them, and what better place to do this than Carmel Valley’s Bernardus Lodge, the starting point for the test-drives. The idyllic green lawn behind the main building sets the stage for three Porsches: a 356, a Boxster Spyder, and one of only six Porsche RSK Spyder race cars ever built, loaned by Porsche aficionado Jerry Seinfeld. On the front driveway, under a large porte-cochere, a silver Porsche 550 race car is parked, and not simply to turn heads, as it turns out.

If that were all one could say about the Bernardus Lodge, it would be well and good, though not much different than many ▶



The development engineers asked themselves where they should next take the Boxster. The Spyder is their resounding answer.

The Spyder embodies the Porsche commitment to updating tradition.

other fine hotels and inns the world over where Porsche has held media events. But the Bernardus Lodge has a deep and long-lasting connection with Porsche: it was founded by Bernardus Pon, Jr., whose father, Bernardus Pon, Sr., was a Dutch auto dealer who helped introduce the Volkswagen Beetle to America in the early 1950s. On the wall of the lodge's Wickets Bistro is a pencil sketch by Ben Pon, Sr., on simple lined paper turned lengthwise. It shows a long box on wheels, which VW designers and engineers translated into the original VW van. Under the sketch Pon wrote in Dutch: "If you can dream this, you can do this."

The Boxster Spyder—a dream become reality—accomplishes exactly what the Porsche engineers and designers set out to do: take a superb car, the Boxster S, and make it a true inheritor of Porsche's racing tradition, yet still a vehicle that can be driven on streets and highways. Hans-Jürgen Wöhler, the Director Product Line Management Boxster, attributes the Spyder's virtues above all to its technical diet, which helped it lose a fabulous 80 kilos (176 lbs.) in weight. This feat gives the Boxster Spyder a power-to-weight ratio of 3.98 to 1, which is nine percent better than the Boxster S. Cup holders? Forget about it. Air-conditioning? An option. The same goes for the radio. Everything is down to the essentials.

Yet the Boxster Spyder is no slouch when it comes to power. Its 3.4-liter flat-six engine was tweaked to increase horsepower by 10, to 320 hp, compared with the Boxster S, and maximum torque has been increased to 370 newton-meters (273 lb.-ft.) at 4,750 rpm. More powerful, but also thriftier: the Boxster Spyder is more frugal in terms of consumption than the Boxster S, down 0.1 liter/100 km, which translates to 9.8 liters/100 km (24.1 mpg US) for the six-speed manual, and 9.4 liters/100 km (25.2 mpg US) for the seven-speed PDK.

Wöhler's presentation, delivered in a tent on the lodge's grounds, is overshadowed by parts of the Spyder on display in the tent. The rear deck, a single piece of unpainted aluminum, rests vertically on a platform. Everybody is invited, encouraged, to lift it up. Easily said; easily done. The reactions are uniform: surprise

and admiration for how little it weighs. Even more surprising is the light weight of one of the Spyder's 19-inch, ten-spoke wheels, lying on a table. Metallurgists—and Porsche engineers—can explain how the wheels have been rolled as thin as they have and still provide maximum strength and durability.

The Boxster Spyder is largely self-explanatory; only its sun shield and rain gear might require an extra word or two. In the rear trunk space there's a rolled-up canvas, a sun shield top that's put in place manually. It is, in a single word, ingenious. There's a second, smaller sheet that fits across the shield's back to keep out rain. The Porsche experts put both in place, not rushing as they explain the procedure in less than two minutes.

And that 550 Spyder parked in front is not for show. Porsche had arranged for Jörg Bergmeister, a Porsche Factory team driver, to be at the lodge. He drives passengers in the vintage 550, switching constantly between it and the new Boxster Spyder—or from one chapter of Porsche history to another. "It's a lot of fun to drive," says Bergmeister of the Spyder. "The suspension is taut but comfortable, a very good compromise for everyday driving. I assume that it would be very good around a track. There are cars with more power, but the Spyder corners wonderfully and handles well. When I drove it the first time, I said, 'I'll take one.'"

While Bergmeister continues his excursions with guests, Hans-Jürgen Wöhler sits on a sofa in the lodge and talks about the genesis of the Boxster Spyder. In a world in which driving for pleasure is often criticized, and the act of driving is often less than pleasurable because of traffic, Porsche stubbornly keeps to its principles to create cars that are wonderful to drive. In this case, "We all know what Porsche stands for. We have it in our heads," he says. Yet developers are also charged with critically examining absolutely everything. "The core idea behind the Boxster Spyder was to find the next place to take the Boxster. We wanted to concentrate on the essentials, and go back to our roots, in terms of both power-to-weight ratios and absolute weight. And I think we have succeeded." It's about driving. And driving on. ◀