Sunday Drives: Laura Kukuk

18/04/2021 In the latest of Newsroom's Sunday Drives series, classic and supercar surveyor Laura Kukuk revisits a two-way loop through the picturesque Dolomites.

Where

Sella Ronda, Dolomites, Italy

Length

49 kilometres, each way

Type

an alpine epic, with dramatic elevation changes, breath-taking views and the perfect overnight pit-stop at the midway point.

At just 28 years of age, Laura Kukuk is already establishing herself as a leading expert in the highly specialised sphere of classic and supercar surveys. Working alongside her father Klaus, Kukuk travels the world performing forensic pre-purchase inspections on rare and sought-after vintage and modern collectible cars, exploring their provenance, condition and originality down to the most exacting details.

Roadtrips in the southern alps

Her preferred escape from the intensities of work is, perhaps unsurprisingly, a road trip, and the German engineer can often be found heading out into the southern alps with a small group of friends. But in 2019, Kukuk decided to go one step further. "There are so many great driving events," she says, "but most of them are unaffordable for me. I always go out driving with friends in the summertime, so I thought why not arrange something yourself? I'm someone who thinks if you have an idea, just have a go. So I suggested it on social media and people were crazy about it."

Part of the route Kukuk proposed is the Sella Ronda – a high-altitude rollercoaster through the Dolomites in an area now recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It's a bucket list destination for serious skiers in winter, while the summer months also attract hordes of committed mountain bikers. But pick your moment wisely, and the surrounding roads can offer some truly unforgettable alpine driving.

“My dad used to drive it when I was five- or six-years-old,” Kukuk recalls. “He had an F-Model 911 from 1966 that he drove daily, and we used to go skiing in it. We’d simply put all the skis on it and just go driving; me, my brother and my dad. And we'd always take cool routes like this.”

Great view of the Piz Boè

The Sella Ronda loops around the Piz Boè, one of the highest peaks in the region, meaning that wherever you are on the road you are always treated to a stunning and ever-changing vista. Kukuk advises that, time allowing, it’s best driven both clockwise and anticlockwise, to make the best of not only the views but all the possible ascents. One way should take about three hours with a coffee stop at one of the many cafés and restaurants, so both directions are easily achievable in a day. But Kukuk's preferred option is to stay overnight at the Chalet Gerrard, a remote mountain lodge on the northern half of the loop just outside Plan De Gralba.

The road itself is made up of the four 'Sella Towers', over which run the passes of the Gardena, the Sella itself, the Pordoi and the Campolongo, with challenging climbs and long sections of tight twists and turns wending their way to each 2,000 metre summit. High stone walls fringe the narrow roads with steep, stunning drops and unbroken outlooks over the lush green valleys below.

The Sellaronda is very famous in the high season

Kukuk recommends picking your moment, however, as the obvious draw of this part of the Southern Tyrol means roads can become very congested in high season. “You can’t drive that route during the day in summer because it’s one of the most famous parts of the Dolomites and it’s full! So you need to get up really early or during the week, preferably at the beginning or end of the summer. And even consider picking a day when the weather isn't that nice.”

One thing that works in the Sella Ronda’s favour, however, is its relative remoteness, lying three hours northwest of Venice by car. It's a destination that you have to set out for, rather than simply dial into a day on the road. As for Kukuk, her hectic work schedule means that it is not always possible to justify the detour on her regular trips to Italy, but such is its draw that she still managed it twice in 2020 and an impressive six times the year before.

The favourite car for the trip

When it comes to picking a favourite car for the trip, an enviable breadth of experience of Porsche old

and new has narrowed it down to what sounds pretty much like perfection. “I’ve driven a lot of different Porsches on the route but enjoyed it most in a 1977 911 Turbo 3.3. The sound was incredible, and you have proper speed available so quickly! I also really enjoyed driving a 992 Cabriolet because it was open and still so quick, but I would always choose a classic first. Partly because they are so light, but I just really like driving an old 911 in the Alps. There is a lot going on and I like a good challenge!”

Sunday Drives

With travel restrictions limiting the opportunities for road-trips, Porsche Newsroom’s new Sunday Drives series sets out to quench readers’ thirst for adventure by discovering the world’s most beautiful driving roads through the eyes of Porsche people around the globe.

Consumption data

911 Carrera Cabriolet Models
Fuel consumption / Emissions

WLTP*

911 Carrera S Cabriolet (Predecessor model)

*Further information on the official fuel consumption and the official specific CO_2 emissions of new passenger cars can be found in the "Leitfaden über den Kraftstoffverbrauch, die CO_2-Emissionen und den Stromverbrauch neuer Personenkraftwagen" (Fuel Consumption, CO_2Emissions and Electricity Consumption Guide for New Passenger Cars), which is available free of charge at all sales outlets and from DAT (Deutsche Automobil Treuhand GmbH, Helmuth-Hirth-Str. 1, 73760 Ostfildern-Scharnhausen, www.dat.de).

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