

Topless driving

Classic convertibles can be fun, glamorous – and affordable, if you know what to look for

When the weather's like this, who wouldn't enjoy going for a spin in a convertible? Although your typical modern model costs a small fortune, a classic car can be well within reach – and a good buy, if you know what you're doing.

They're glamorous, and you're guaranteed to turn heads wherever you drive, but they needn't be expensive to purchase. And if you follow our buyer's guide (pg xx), they needn't be expensive to maintain either...

And the financial wisdom behind buying a classic convertible doesn't end there. Buyers of modern cars take a huge hit to the wallet the moment they drive off the forecourt, with the average new car dropping 20 per cent in value before the showroom's out of sight. That helps the case for a classic convertible: they're often built to a higher level of quality than a modern car of the same price, and they've long since bottomed out of their depreciation curve.

Some will always be worth what you paid for them, while others will rise in value as their increasing rarity makes them more desirable. Having said that, it's important not to take too hard a line on values and running costs with classic cars of any type. Too many people almost expect to make money out of what is, after all, supposed to be a source of pleasure. And, at its best, classic convertible ownership is a pleasure. With the top down you'll feel like you are really driving, in touch with the car, closer to the elements, no longer dependent on electronics to insulate you from the vagaries of the road. Those same electronics – anti-lock brakes, stability control and anything else designed to take away an element of driver judgement – will consign many of the modern generation of cars to an early grave long before they have rusted away. ▶



JULIAN PALME AND HIS 1967 TRIUMPH SPITFIRE

"It was ordered new by my mum, and she owned it until her death last year. I learned to drive in it, but it was always Mum's little car – I'm 6ft 2 and look fairly ridiculous in it. I've kept it for sentimental reasons, but it is really enjoyable to drive."



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