

## Bologna the perfect destination for sports-car enthusiasts

**First-class side trip from quiet Italian city takes visitors to see fast, shiny and expensive rides, including Ferraris and Lamborghinis**

BY TRACY SHERLOCK, VANCOUVER SUN JUNE 21, 2013



The Lamborghini factory showroom includes old and new models.

An area of Italy near Bologna is the birthplace of both Ferrari and Lamborghini sports cars, as well as the home of other high-end car and motorcycle makers like Pagani, Ducati and Maserati. The region Emilia-Romagna is also the home of tortellini, Bolognese sauce and Parmesan cheese, but that wasn't the purpose of this visit, which was all about cars — fast, shiny and expensive cars.

On a recent trip to Italy, my son and I decided to take a tour of some of these facilities as a way to take

a break from the churches and art, which I loved, but he only tolerated. I tried to research the logistics of visiting a couple of these factories and museums from home before we left, but found the idea of driving the unfamiliar Italian roads somewhat overwhelming. Thankfully, I came across the Motorstars Tours' website ([motorstars.org](http://motorstars.org)), which offers day trips to a variety of these sites, with pickup in Bologna. We were planning five days in Florence, and I was happy to discover that the train from Florence to Bologna is just 35 minutes, and easily arranged.

While I hesitated at the price — 200 euros or about \$260 Canadian per person — in the end the full-day tour was well worth the cost, which I paid in full. Our guide, Francesco Bini, who had no idea I was a journalist, picked the two of us up right in front of the Bologna train station five minutes ahead of our 9 a.m. start time. We waited a few minutes for another gentleman to join us, and then we set off into the Italian countryside.

I have to admit the drive alone made for a nice change off the beaten path of touristy Italy. I love Italy, but the main cities — Rome, Florence, Venice — are so popular that it's hard to escape the tourist hordes. On our car tour day, we saw very few other tourists, probably because in order to make this journey, you have to be quite dedicated. Let's put it this way: popular travel writer Rick Steves does not even include a chapter on Bologna in his Italian tour book.

Our first stop was the Ferrari museum in Maranello, which is close to Modena, and about an hour's drive from Bologna. Once inside, Francesco gave us a guided tour through the museum, which included anecdotes about Enzo Ferrari, information about the company's racing success and lots of information about the history of the Ferrari. The museum includes early Ferraris, the very latest Ferrari and many models in between; most are racing red.

The Ferrari museum includes a coffee shop and a gift shop; like the cars, the merchandise is expensive, but also unique. Nearby is the Ferrari factory; we didn't go in, but 40-minute shuttle bus tours are available on some of the day trips. Also nearby is the restaurant where we stopped for our lunch, which was included in the price of the tour. Lunch was a selection of sandwiches or a pizza, and included drinks and coffee.

After lunch, we set off for the Pagani factory, a company that was founded in 1992 by Horatio Pagani. This museum and factory are in San Cesario sul Panaro, also near Modena. These incredibly rare cars sell for very large sums of money and are handmade, using Mercedes engines.

After a brief look through the small museum, Bini took us for a guided tour of the factory in the back. It is tiny, with only one car made at a time. Bini showed us a piece of carbon fibre, which is what these sports cars are made of. Layers of carbon fibre, a strong and light composite material, are compressed

and heated until they form the solid body of the vehicle.

After Pagani, we set off for the Lamborghini museum and factory in Sant'Agata Bolognese, a rural area between Modena and Bologna. The museum has two floors filled with Lamborghini cars built from the 1960s to the present day, including some concept cars. After touring the museum on our own, we went on a guided tour of the factory with a Lamborghini representative. This tour is an additional charge, but well worth it.

We saw the production lines for both the Gallardo and the Aventador Lamborghinis, including everything from the leather being cut to fit the cars' interiors to the mounting of the engines within the cars' bodies. Each Lamborghini is customized to order, and every car is pre-ordered.

We saw one car being assembled that was destined for Brunei, another for Montreal, but the tour guide said most of their orders these days come from Asia.

Bini drove us back to the train station in Bologna, where we hopped on another train back to Florence. All in all, it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience that was interesting, entertaining and first-class throughout. People considering this tour should book ahead, because it does sell out, particularly during the high season. There is a menu of selections on the website, usually including three destinations. We booked two months ahead, using a credit card to guarantee the reservation, and then paid, also by credit card, when the tour was complete. It pays to reserve your train tickets ahead of time as well; by train, Bologna is 35 minutes from Florence, one hour and 20 minutes from Venice and two hours and 20 minutes from Rome. Of course, it is also possible to stay in Bologna.

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