



signature sidetrip

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my OTHER CAR is a PORSCHE

Leave the sedan in the driveway and experience
North Carolina's High Country in a whole new way:
from behind the wheel of a luxury sports car.

Written by *Rosie Molinary*

I In theory, I could be Jay Leno. Sure, I lack the stony-faced sense of humor (as my tendency to say, "That was funny, wasn't it?" after every zippy one-liner I deliver indicates), the prominent chin, and the requisite deep pocket of Benjamins that keeps his garage full of automotive beauties, but I am my father's daughter. I won't rubberneck at a car accident or if the cops have someone pulled over, but all bets are off if a classic car comes my way. Give me a day to indiscriminately spend somebody else's millions, and you'll find the keys to a crazy cross-section of cars — a 1974 Volkswagen Thing, a mid-60s convertible Volkswagen Karmann Ghia, a 1963 BMC Mini, a 1966 Ford Bronco, a 1972 Toyota Land Cruiser, a mid-90s Land Rover Defender, and a 50s-era Porsche Spyder — in my pocket later.



Club Ferdinand's prized fleet includes Carreras, Caymens, and Cayennes.

But let's be honest. I lack deep pockets and am terribly practical. I worry about things like depreciation, the cost of insurance, gas mileage, leg room, and upkeep on these beauties. So I drove my first car, a 1993 Ford Escort, for 11 years before the men in my life — my father, father-in-law, and husband — staged an intervention. Then I chose an unsexy sedan for its successor because that's the responsible thing to do. And so I rubberneck, ask my friend with the Cobra to pop his hood so I can see the engine, and flip through automotive magazines with my dad to sate my car

thirst. But sometimes the itch becomes too much, and, when that happens, I have found the perfect remedy. I drive my unsexy sedan to Mast Farm Inn in Valle Crucis, park it, and climb into a Porsche of my choice at Club Ferdinand.

ELITE FLEET

Henri Deschamps is quite the businessman. He has launched and operated 15 businesses and has lived around the world. He's driven nice cars. He's had a place in the mountains of North Carolina for years, and he understands the rush of driving a car meant for the curves of those roads.

And so just as the family decided to purchase and run the Mast Farm Inn in 2006, Deschamps began to think about another project. What if he shared his love of Porsches, a driver's ride after all, with other car aficionados who, like me, crave the thrill but have that practical side to them, too?

After a lot of research, planning, and shopping, Deschamps created Club

Ferdinand of Valle Crucis in November 2006, a fleet-sharing club named after the engineer who created the vehicle, Ferdinand Porsche, that allows club members and day renters to enjoy the million-dollar, 10-Porsche inventory that Deschamps methodically obtained.

Club members pay an annual membership that ranges from \$390 to \$4780 a year and thus earn up to



For our picks on the most Porsche-friendly back roads in North Carolina, visit www.ncsignature.com and click "Signature Side Trip."

PIT STOPS ON THE PARKWAY

- SHOP:** Opened in 1883, the Mast General Store still offers shoppers rugged clothing and shoes, outdoor gear, mercantile charm, and charming gifts. Cold out? Belly up to the potbellied stove or give the resident beagle a rub. www.mastgeneralstore.com
- SEE:** Check out the Lodges at Eagles Nest for a great view and an inspired vision of how to live in a community with modern amenities and old-time charm. Inspired ranches, cabins, and lodges dot the stunning terrain. www.eaglesnestbe.com
- LUNCH:** Park your Porsche (or have it parked for you by the valet) at the Grove Park Inn in Asheville and enjoy lunch at the Sunset Terrace. You'll enjoy breathtaking views of the Blue Ridge Mountains while dining on succulent crab cakes, walnut and almond encrusted trout filets, or mushroom risotto with pistachio-pesto pasta salad or warm artichoke and red bliss potato salad as sides. www.groveparkinn.com
- DINE:** Visit the Pisgah Inn, which bills itself as the Peak of the Parkway, in Waynesville for dinner. You can't go wrong with the homemade meatloaf or the fresh mountain trout, which is filleted at your table upon request. www.pisgahinn.com
- STAY:** Bed down at the historic Mast Farm Inn. Accommodations range from rustic to more posh, and breakfast is homemade delights made by Marie-Henriette Deschamps that will have you asking for more. www.mastfarminn.com



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BRIDAL & GIFT REGISTRY

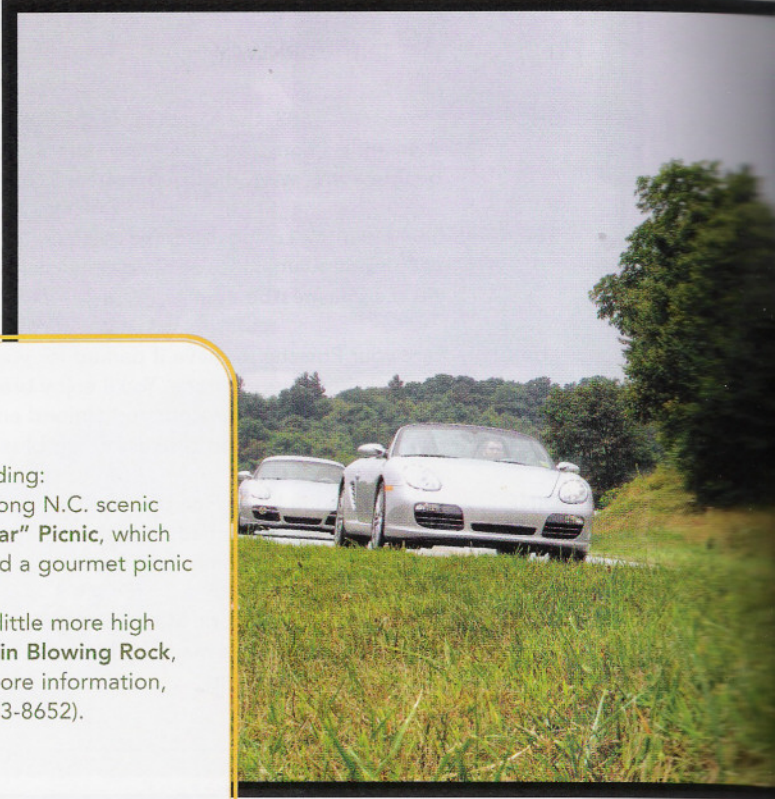


PORSCHE PACKAGES:

The Mast Farm Inn offers several Porsche packages, including:

A Personal Porsche Tour — includes a tour-driven ride along N.C. scenic highways 221 and 194; and the **"Baby You Can Drive My Car" Picnic**, which includes rental of a classic Porsche Speedster for the day and a gourmet picnic basket for a roadside lunch.

And in nearby Blowing Rock, the High Country just got a little more high speed. Club Ferdinand has teamed up with **Chetola Resort in Blowing Rock**, offering the fleet-sharing experience to resort guests. For more information, contact Chetola Resort at Blowing Rock, 800-CHETOLA (243-8652).



60 possible days of Porsche driving opportunities without any set on or off days. Have a membership and want to drive the 1957 Carrera Speedster replica that Alice Cooper commissioned to be built and that Deschamps later bought at an auction in Arizona for the Club? A quick call to Club Ferdinand reserves the car for you on the days that you want.

It's an affordable idea for the woman or man who wants a sweet ride some of the time, but just doesn't want to stomach the depreciation, especially when industry statistics show that sport cars as second cars are generally only used between 20-60

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"I arrive at the Mast Farm Inn
 and can't help but stare across the street at the
 fleet of Porsches lined up like beacons."

days a year. Other luxury fleet-sharing options are popping up around the country, but none feature Porsches and most boast significantly higher joining fees. Deschamps instinctively formed a unique niche with his program.

LIKE IT'S ON RAILS

I arrive at the Mast Farm Inn and can't help but stare across the street at the fleet

of Porsches lined up like beacons. I try to figure out which one I will drive in the morning, instantly favoring the convertibles. The next morning, a couple climbs into the convertible Carrera of Alice Cooper fame. It is their 40th anniversary and their daughter has rented them the car for the day. The staff of the Mast Farm Inn kitchen has packed

them a picnic lunch, complete with their favorite drink, root beer. Ken Stabler, who the Deschamps met through the Porsche racing program and then hired to help with Club Ferdinand, shines the car and then takes the husband out to learn the basics of driving the classic. The wife shows me the card Deschamps has prepared for them. It features the lyrics to their favorite song with a flower attached.

"My daughter always thinks of the most creative gifts," she exclaims, just as her husband and Stabler return. They drive off, a map of the parkway guiding their day. And then it is my



Handle the hills with ease in a smooth ride.

turn to hop into the Porsche of my choosing. My options include a Cayman S, Carrera 4, Cayenne, and Speedster, but it takes no time for me to gravitate over to the shiny silver convertible Boxster.

I climb in and laugh at my good fortune. The mountain air is mild and the mountains lush. It's a perfect day for a drive. The open road out of Valle Crucis gives way to the curvy parkway that snakes through the Appalachian Mountains. I ease the Boxster up and down mountains, through small towns, and to Asheville with ease. It's a car that is easy on its driver, that accelerates

before you even notice, that hugs you in the seat. It is during those serpentine mountain climbs and descents that I recognize what Vivian, Julia Roberts' character in *Pretty Woman*, meant when she exclaimed that the Silver Lotus Esprit that Edward, Richard Gere, drove took curves like it was on rails. So does the Porsche, and I can't get enough of it.

Even the rain that falls after lunch at The Grove Park Inn can't dampen my spirits. The road back to the Mast Farm Inn shimmers with the beauty of an iridescent parkway, and wild turkeys hunt for food on the side of the road. Drivers

slow as they approach the Porsche, rubbernecking, much like I am apt to do. I smile, though what I really want to do is tell them about my good fortune. If they were driving slow enough (heck, if I were driving slow enough), I would have rolled down my window and told them just how they could land in a car like "mine" without the

headache of maintenance. But I can't so, instead, I settle for calling my dad as soon as I park to give him the play by play of my day as a Porsche driver. Even as we're talking, I am scheming. The holidays are just around the corner, and I think dad just might be getting a little piece of Porsche in his stocking. □

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www.clubferdinand.us

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