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## Queen for a Day

by Theresa W. Carey



**Our writer found the Ferrari to be just super. Below, a taste of the rides you can drive at specialists in luxury and exotica.**

**W**OW, WHAT A RUSH!" I HOLLERED as we exited Highway 280 in Menlo Park, Calif., punctuating the experience with a loud, "Yee haw!" Muttered my 17-year-old daughter, Kate: "That was terrifying."

I had just tested how quickly the 1997 Ferrari F355 Spider I'd borrowed from Club Sportiva in San Francisco could get to 100 mph. Answer: very, very quickly.

Teenage boys obviously had a different view of the six-speed Ferrari than Kate. "Whoo-hoo! A Ferrari! Cool car!" three of them whooped as we drove, with the roadster's top down, in San Francisco. "Nice ride!" called out another in Palo Alto. "Oh my God, where did you get that car?"—with a deflating emphasis on the "you"—squealed another at the local high school.

For the shock value alone, driving a Ferrari is great fun, especially for someone like me, with two children, who's been driving a "mom car" for a couple of decades. Although Kate accused me of having turned into a man with a midlife crisis, I had a huge smile on my face the entire time I had the keys in my pocket and, especially, when I had my foot on the gas pedal.

Club Sportiva ([www.clubsportiva.com](http://www.clubsportiva.com)) isn't a typical car-rental place. As its name implies, it's literally a club, and membership entitles you to borrow vehicles for up to 21 days at a time. A Diamond membership costs \$12,495 a year, and provides 80,000 points that can be swapped for a certain amount of drive time, depending on what you select. The lowest membership level, Gold, is \$3,195 for 17,000 points. Each car in Club Sportiva's fleet is assigned a daily point value—25 for a Ferrari, 19 for a Maserati, down to 10 for a non-luxury Mini Cooper convertible.

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That value is multiplied by two factors—the month in which you drive the car, and whether you've got it for a weekend or a weekday. Taking out the Ferrari on a weekday in September costs 3,000 points, while a much more commonplace Mercedes CLK 500 costs a mere 1,440. The weekend tab would be 4,200 points for the Ferrari, and 2,016 for the Benz. The dollar value of a weekend day in the Ferrari for a Diamond member is \$656. Not cheap, but still almost \$100 less than the same car for a day from Dream Car Rentals in Las Vegas ([www.dreamcarrentals.com](http://www.dreamcarrentals.com)).

If you're contemplating buying an exotic or luxury vehicle, a short-term drive can be a smart way to really get to know a car for a few days. It certainly makes sense to carefully evaluate a \$200,000 Ferrari or \$100,000 Porsche on your schedule, rather than the sales staff's.

And how much fun would it be to cruise up to your 25th class reunion in a Lamborghini? A supercar would be a fun treat for a special birthday or a surprise anniversary trip, too.

For a relatively comprehensive nationwide list of suppliers of fancy cars, check out the Exotic Car Rental Directory (<http://www.exoticcarrentaldirectory.com>). Be warned: The ease and cost of renting an exotic or luxury car depends, to a large degree, on your location. The closer you are to Las Vegas, Los Angeles, the New York City area, Chicago and Miami, the easier it is to find a company that will let you take a spin in a Ferrari, Lambo, Maserati or Porsche.

Once you've been behind the wheel of a Ferrari, spending that much or more to get in the driver's seat again doesn't seem irrational at all.



1995 LAMBORGHINI DIABLO



2001 PORSCHE BOXSTER



2004 MERCEDES SLK 350