

Cool cars

Driving a different car is like wearing a new outfit – there are a lot of choices of style, it takes some time to get used to, and a change can make you feel good. Cool Cars offers a selection of fun cars for hire so you can try them on for size. Giselle Whiteaker is in the driving seat.

Cars make a personal statement. When buying a new car, we usually take in a lot of information before deciding what will suit. We peruse magazines, seek recommendations from friends and tune in to car advertising.

Whether we recognise it or not, we are looking for something that fits with both our personality and our lifestyle. We know intuitively that a car says something about us - and we want it to say the right thing. We are what we drive.

Researchers have even found that people subconsciously attach human personality traits to cars. For instance cars with wide radiator grilles and narrow headlights are dominant and aggressive, while rounded cars with large windscreens give a happy impression. When we think of cars, we think of attitudes.

The size, shape and relative power of your car says a lot about the image you want to portray. Even the colour comes into play. A red Mini Cooper suggests hip,



Porsche Boxster

young and cool while a silver Aston Martin hints at suave sophistication and style.

If our cars are talking about us, they are only mentioning one aspect of our personality, but we are multi-dimensional beings. We may need to be classically professional in our business lives, but on the weekends we want to let loose and have some fun.

Cool Cars is a company that steps away from the standard rental car model, leaving the bland, mid-range hire cars in the dust. Vehicles at most car rental companies are chosen for their reliability, economy, value and availability. Rental cars at Cool Cars are chosen for their style, personality, performance and attitude.

While Cool Cars are not your stock standard car rental company, they also chose not to focus entirely on luxury and prestige. "Luxury and prestige is done. We fill a gap in the market that no-one else touches; the fun, cool experience stuff. It's about trying something different" says Paul Rodin, Co-owner and Business Manager. "Whatever car it is, whether it is a Cooper S, a Range Rover or an Abarth, we try and buy it because we like it and we want to drive it."

"We started the business because our passion is cars," explains Paul. "We love our cars and we love driving them. We treat them as if they are our own. We have a brand which allows people the opportunity to drive really nice, fun cars at affordable rates so we want people to appreciate the car, enjoy them. Most of our customers are enthusiasts. It's about car enthusiasts enjoying the cars we provide."

What rates as a cool car? The fleet changes and expands, but currently includes Porsches, Minis, the Abarth, BMW, Range Rovers, Audis and the VW Golf. The following is a closer look at some of those on offer.

Porsche

The Porsche Cayman, Cayman S, and Boxter S are all represented in the Cool Cars fleet. Porsche's commandingly stylish design has always set it apart. A single glance is all it takes to recognise the brand. These muscular models give off the air of a tiger, poised ready to pounce. The Cayman and Cayman S are angular, yet sleek, offering a dynamic interplay of concave and convex surfaces, while the Boxter S is more compact, with softer lines and styling. With a Porsche though, the pleasure lies in the power. These are cars to relish, ideal for long winding secondary roads which utilise the superb handling Porsche is known for.

Abarth

The Abarth 595 is the newest addition to the Cool Cars range. This is an exceptional car, yet the least likely to be recognised. Abarth started as an Italian racing car maker and is now owned by Fiat. The new Abarth 595 Competizione is a beauty. It resembles the sporty offspring of a VW Beetle and a Mini, with compact smooth lines over the convex exterior, yet a surprising amount of space. Performance-wise, the five-speed manual transmission allows precise control and the hip interior includes Alcantara seats. This is a car that says I'm quirky, I'm fun, and I am fast. Watch me go.'

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Porsche Cayman



Porsche Cayenne



Abarth 595



Mini Cooper Convertible

Audi

Audi has long held a reputation for style across their entire range, be it the A5 Sportback, which is a cross between a saloon and a hatchback, the iconic TT Coupe, or the Audi Q7, a premium class SUV. The classic choice is the S4 Cabriolet. Whichever model you select, Audi offers timeless panache combined with superb handling and power. Audi may not have deliberately played on the Olympic rings with their logo design but it is not misleading. All of the models on offer exude classic flair without flashiness, just simple smooth elegance.

Mini

The Mini is nippy, stylish, economical and simple to drive. It is such a popular number that Cool Cars keeps a range of models, from the Mini Cooper S Countryman to the Mini Cooper Cabrio. The Mini is somewhat akin to the Doctor Who tardis – from the outside it looks like it will be an impossible squeeze to fold someone into the driver's seat, but on the inside the car is spacious and comfortable. This is even more evident with the Countryman, which is the first five-door Mini. Not only is a Mini zippy and packed with personality, but it also gives you the opportunity to feel like an extra in *The Italian Job*. Now that is the epitome of cool.

It is rare to see Porsche and Mini in the same league but Paul believes that the link between all of the vehicles in the Cool Car range is the appeal of distinctiveness. "People want to enjoy themselves and try something on for size. For a small period of time you can have exactly what you want, outside of your ordinary life." This philosophy goes some way to explaining why Cool Cars customers come from all directions. Around half are UK customers looking for a change, while the other half are international visitors seeking an adventure.

Across the range, all of the cars have proved popular, although in summer the convertibles come into their own. Even Paul himself does not have a favourite car. "It depends on your mood," he points out. "It's a bit like what kind of music you want to listen to. It varies according to how you feel."

Ultimately, whether you want the calm of a classical symphony, or a rough and ready rock tune, Cool Cars has the motoring equivalent. ■

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