

Colour coding phase 1 cars was popular just after the phase 2 cars were announced. (Photo: Chris Cousins.)



GTVs came in a range of colours but Nuvola Blue is rare. (Photo: Chris Cousins.)

Accommodation in the rear seats of the GTV was much more cramped than it had been on the Alfetta and 105 series GTV models and in fact the rear seats were initially a delete option. Most buyers seemed to prefer the luggage area behind the seats to be trimmed in cloth or leather than plastic. The Spider is of course a strict two seater. Boot space was roundly criticised on the GTV (3.8 cubic feet) because it does not extend underneath the parcel shelf. If you remove the boot lining you will see that this is because this area houses the fuel tank and battery, although the car was initially designed with MacPherson Strut rear suspension that would also have used some of this space. The decision was taken to provide a multi link rear suspension arrangement to make it feel more like a rear wheel drive machine and there is in fact some passive rear steering effect built into the rear bushes in order to achieve this.

Problems

The bodywork on both cars is similar but only the bonnet, front bumper and doors are interchangeable. The bonnet is a large clamshell design that forms the bodywork above the sharp strake at the front of the car and both the bonnet and door hinges are part of the same casting. If the bonnet flies open at motorway speed it can easily write the car off as the door alignment and bulkhead will be damaged.

Paint/bodywork

The oldest models have been around for over ten years however there should be no sign of corrosion

anywhere. If there is, it means a poorly repaired accident. The GTV and Spider used a version of Alfa's now infamous "quick rack" steering, giving 2.2 turns between the lock stops, which also provides an embarrassingly large turning circle – U-turns are impossible! This can lead to damaged bumper corners from drivers who mistake the line the car is taking. Check that the bumpers are correctly hung with even panel gaps. Door edges are prone to damage because they are so long and the sides of the cars can suffer in car parks due to the



The Editor took this 2.0 JTS Spider to Derbyshire in the Spring of 2004. (Photo: Chris Savill)

lack of side rubbing strips to protect them. As with any car, kerbed alloys detract from the appearance and point to an unloved example.

On the subject of paint, the bodies are protected by a clear lacquer (even the solid colours) which is great in theory, but in practice it allows the paint underneath to fade at different rates, meaning plastic and metal panels can appear to be slightly different colours. The most popular colour, as you would expect, is Alfa Red (AR130) although silver,

blue and black are also common. Almost all cars were supplied with as Lusso specification, which became a model rather than a pack option when the Phase 2 models were introduced. The basic specification was renamed Turismo at the same time. All V6 cars are Lussos.

Whilst looking at the outside of the car, check that the door mirrors fold correctly. There is a tab to stop the mirror housing from making contact with the door glass and if this is missing it means that the mirror has received a sharp impact previously but not been replaced. If the mirror is hit in the future there is a risk it might impact with and break the door glass.

Since the boot on the GTV is so small, the buyer was presented with the choice between a space saver spare tyre and a minuscule boot or an aerosol tyre repair kit and slightly less minuscule boot. Buyers with a preference should ensure their car is equipped appropriately, as the space saver wheels are expensive and can only be used once.

Reliability

German cars are generally seen as reliable but Alfa Romeo has a reputation for unreliability, although ironically it is the German electrics which cause many of the problems. Warning lights on the dash are normally a straightforward cure. The ABS light problem is usually down to a faulty wheel sensor, the airbag light problem is slightly more complex. The seat belt pre-tensioners are fired from the same circuit and the wire attaching them to the airbag ECU can be stretched if the seat is moved with the ignition on. Changing the spark plugs can cure a permanently lit

Sports exhausts are a common upgrade. Some are more subtle than others. (Photo: Chris Cousins.)



These two GTVs were registered more than a few hours apart...! (Photo: Chris Cousins.)