



*Mercedes-Maybach S 580 Night Series and Maybach SW 38 at the Great St Bernard pass in the Swiss Alps.*

# Love and Adventure

## A transalpine honeymoon, Maybach style

By Julia Pasarón

**T**here is no question that a trip from the pre-Alpine lakes in the south of Germany, crossing the mountains through Switzerland to arrive in Lake Como as your final destination, sounds ideal under any circumstances. But if on top of that, you are invited to do it with Maybach, then the adventure becomes a honeymoon for any motoring enthusiast worth their spark plugs.

The idea, though, is not new. Exactly 100 years ago, Karl Schmid, an engineer and director at Maybach, did a similar tour for his honeymoon, in a Maybach Type 22/70 hp W 3. He and his wife overcame all the challenges presented by the weather, the topography of the terrain, the roads and the limitations of motorcars in those days. Schmid's Maybach didn't have a single

breakdown throughout the entire journey, not even on transalpine passes such as the Great St Bernard. It may sound like a miracle but, in fact, this was all thanks to Maybach's engineering prowess. Since its foundation in 1909, the company had been manufacturing engines for Zeppelin, so when its team applied all they knew to private road transportation in 1921, it was as easy as pie.

For this centennial honeymoon, Maybach put at our service the best of its modern range, plus a few of its classic jewels, which are normally stored in private garages or at the Maybach Museum in southern Germany. An S-680 saloon, two SUVs – the EQS 680 electric and the GLS 600 – and two of the new sport convertibles, the SL 680 Monogram Series. Accompanied by Ulrich Schmid-Maybach (the great-grandson of co-founder

Wilhelm Maybach and president of the Maybach Foundation) and Anna Hofmann (she and her husband are the power and will behind the Maybach Museum), we started our adventure – as Schmid did – in Friedrichshafen on the shores of the stunning Lake Constance, where Maybach had a factory in the early 20th century.

I threw myself into the red SL 680 Monogram Series with gusto. The crystal white nappa leather interior, white carpet, 18-carat gold details in the headlights, chrome on most of the finishings and 21-inch forged wheels made me feel like a goddess in her celestial carriage.

As if all of the above wasn't enough opulence, the Maybach signet appears in the rear lights, and the Maybach pattern is subtly incorporated onto the black fabric soft top for ultimate refinement.

To drive this beautiful beast is the epitome of luxury. From the lake we moved to landscapes dominated by vineyards, and from there, to the legendary Black Forest, enjoying its rolling hills covered with dense evergreen trees, its sparkling lakes and postcard-pretty villages, roof down with Kraftwerk's music blasting through the Burmester speakers.

The 585 hp and four-litre V8 twin turbo engine might make you wonder if you could hear anything else. The answer is a firm "yes", thanks to Maybach's engineering magic. The SL 680 Monogram Series has a sound insulating system that makes the tiger under the bonnet and the ogre in the exhaust almost inaudible from the cabin.

At the wheel, the goddess feeling becomes a bit more warrior princess.



An advertisement for the Maybach Zeppelin with V12 engine from the 1930s promoted the model as a "mountain conqueror".

Speed, power and driving exhilaration are accompanied by strong confidence in the abilities of this beauty. Between the 4MATIC+ all-wheel-drive system that optimises traction and stability, the hugging seats that activate the moment you push a bit on a turn and the automatic seatbelts, you feel safe at all times.

In moments of laziness, I sought refuge in the 9G-TRONIC automatic gearbox. I could then relax a bit and enjoy the view. The moment I wanted to put the car through its paces again, the adaptive accelerator made sure it responded with the promptness of a racehorse bursting from the gate.

To drive on the motorway for the last couple of hours to Lausanne, I swapped my red steed for the S-680 saloon, which ate miles as if they were Smarties, thanks to its six-litre V12 twin-turbo engine, 612 hp, 9G-TRONIC automatic gearbox and 4MATIC+ all-wheel-drive system.

I must admit that I wasn't at the wheel for this bit. And who can blame me? This Maybach is almost as large as my first flat. It is nearly 5.5m long and 2m wide, the back seats are reclinable, have multi-massage functions and come equipped with two screens, in case you get bored of the landscape. My favourite detail: the Champagne suite. This is

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the executive car for those who truly know – and can. It is not bad to arrive at Lausanne's grand Beau-Rivage Palace in such a carriage, either. Glances follow you and the bellboys fight to open your door.

On the terrace of the hotel, overlooking Lake Geneva, glass of Ruinart Blanc de Blancs in hand, the participants in this unique honeymoon compared notes and discussed the virtues of the mechanical jewels we had driven that day.

The following morning it was time to acquaint myself with a friend I had made in Morocco in 2024: the mighty GLS 600 SUV. This is an extraordinarily tough car, despite its luxurious appearance. Basically, its pneumatic suspension Airmatic allows it to adjust its height and soften the irregularities of the terrain. The E-Active Body Control is another active suspension system that individually manipulates each wheel, minimising the movement of the chassis and offering a much smoother and more stable drive. Lastly, the 4MATIC+ all-wheel-drive system – as in the other models – distributes the power between the front and rear axles to optimise traction and stability on different surfaces.

In extreme cases, for example, one just has to activate the Recovery mode and the car uses all of the above systems to make the chassis bounce (yes, this is that Maybach). The motion changes the ground pressure of the tyres, allowing the vehicle to "rock" itself free from sticky



The fleet for the Maybach centennial honeymoon in Friedrichshafen on the shores of Lake Constance.



Mercedes-Maybach GLS 600 and Maybach SW 38 driving through the Black Forest.

“Maybach invites its clients to glide through the world in discreet opulence.”



*Above: Maybach SW 42 from 1940, owned by private collectors Dr Helmut and Anna Hofmann; and Maybach SW 38 – which was manufactured from 1936 – owned by the Wilhelm Maybach Technical School in Heilbronn, in front of the Beau-Rivage Palace, Lausanne.*

*Right: Mercedes-Maybach SL 680 Monogram Series White Ambience at Villa d'Este, Lake Como – the perfect marriage of German automotive excellence and Italy's most romantic lakeside setting.*

*Opposite page: Mercedes-Maybach SL 680 Monogram Series Red Ambience at the Great St Bernard. This is one of the most ancient routes through the Western Alps – between Aosta (Italy) and Martigny (Switzerland) – having been used since the Bronze Age.*



terrain. It does truly work. I've seen it myself, buried a foot deep in sand and coming out of it in under a minute.

A detail I love in the GLS 600 is that, taking into consideration its height (just under 1.9m), the car has side steps running from the front to the back doors. These come out automatically, so one can gracefully climb in and out without looking like a struggling sloth.

The reason to choose this specific Maybach for my second day is simple. Sure, any Maybach can cross the Great St Bernard with total ease, but if, like me, you've done this before in your life, you'll know that driving through this pass can be a bit of a pain in bad weather; and the weather almost always turns sour.

Which is exactly what happened on this trip. Ten minutes after arriving, while some of us were having coffee and others petting the famous local rescue dogs (the ones with the little brandy barrels hanging from their collars), the sky turned the colour of steel and the temperature dropped at least 10 degrees.

Maybach had prepared picnic baskets for us that day and our GLS 600 was also equipped with a Champagne suite. So thanks to its height and width, the four of us had the most delightful lunch while others in the group had to suffer a little bit. Furthermore, once filming requirements were fulfilled and we could leave the convoy, despite the wind and the biblical amounts of water on the road, the GLS felt totally at ease and responded as if we were in perfect driving conditions.

So much so that we were the first to arrive at Lake Como. By the time the next car made it, we had been sipping Champagne on the majestic terrace of Villa D'Este (only the very best for Maybach) for an hour, freshly showered and dressed up for the occasion, overlooking the lake and the surrounding mountains.

To spend the last night of our Maybach honeymoon at Villa d'Este was a magical experience. The villa was built in the 16th century as the residence of Cardinal Tolomeo Gallio, before becoming a hotel in 1873. With its privileged location on



the lakefront, its palatial gardens and rooms suited for a king, it is no wonder Maybach chose it as the last destination for this extraordinary trip of love and adventure.

Both Maybach and Villa d'Este embody opulence, sophistication and, more importantly, class. Both have an enviable heritage, which comes from their rich history. Maybach represents the zenith of luxury automotive engineering, technology and comfort; Villa d'Este bewitches

with its timeless elegance, its Renaissance grandeur and the romanticism of Lake Como. Maybach invites its clients to glide through the world in discreet opulence, Villa d'Este invites them to pause and relish the moment. ■

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