



The two super enthusiasts, Frank Mandarano and Colin Craig, getting ready to depart for the six-day road trip into the outback.

Photo by Antonio G. "Tony" Mandarano

**SIX**  
**DAYS**

**1,150**  
**MILES**

## *A Vignale Spyder Road Trip*

Together with my good friend of forty years, Colin Craig of Vancouver B.C., as my trusty co-pilot and navigator — two Maserati super enthusiasts — we signed up for the Alfa Wannabe Road Tour.

Article and photos by Francis G. Mandarano

**The Car:** 1960 Maserati Vignale Spyder  
# AM101.1121

**When:** June 16-21, 2018

**Mileage:** Starting at 46,286 km  
Ending at 48,202 km

**Total:** 1,916 km x .6 = 1,150 miles



The Tour is organized by Tom and Mark McGirr out of Portland Oregon. Seventy percent of the guys on the Tour own one or several Alfas, but only three or four of them actually drove their Alfas in the Tour. There were a lot of Porsches, an Aston Martin and other collectable type cars. We were the only Maserati. It was a fun, enthusiastic group of car guys.

**Day 1.** Starting from Mercer Island, Washington, on Saturday, June 16, Colin and I headed East on Highway 2, winding through the majestic Cascade Mountains along the Wenatchee River to the quaint Bavarian village of Leavenworth (Google it).

It was a beautiful day in the low-to-mid-70s, and of course the top was down all the way – we only drove one day with the top up.

We stopped for lunch in Leavenworth then headed out in the direction of Wenatchee and on to Walla Walla on the Oregon border, arriving just in time for happy hour.

The car ran very smooth and felt solid. It was a great first day. We put 491 km on the speedo on day 1.

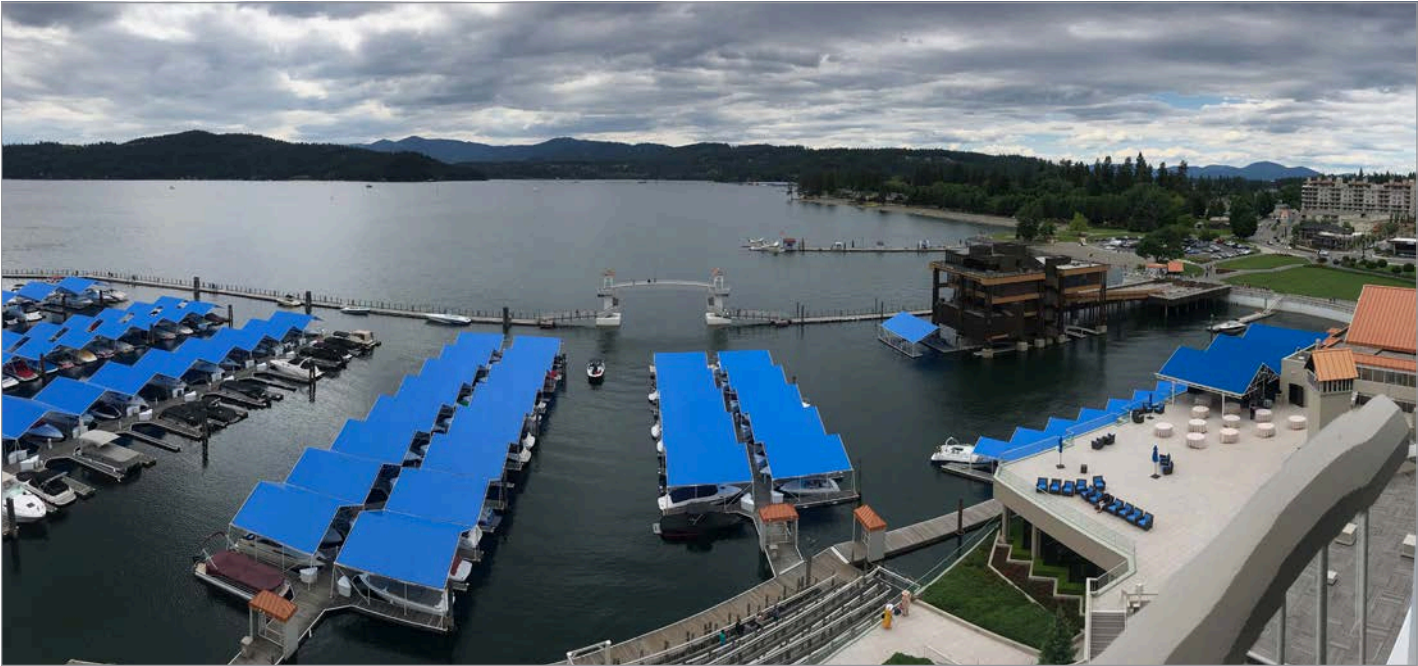
After checking into our room, we headed to the bar to meet up with other people on the Tour.



Stopping in the Bavarian village of Leavenworth, Washington, for lunch.



On route to Walla Walla from Leavenworth out in the middle of nowhere. It was so quiet... that is just before we almost got wiped out by an on-coming semi-truck. Stopping on a two-lane highway was a bad idea.



The view and comfort from our suite at the Coeur d' Alene Resort Hotel was so fantastic we stayed an extra night.

**Day 2.** We departed Walla Walla early in the morning with the group, heading north on Highway 95 toward Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. This was a great drive on an old back road highway, winding through the little villages and hamlets of the southeast Washington countryside. Again it was sunny and in the low 70s, top down – just perfect!

Colin and I both enjoy those cool sunny, mornings loping along at 45 to 50 miles an hour. We shared driving, switching off every couple hours or so.

It was on the way to Coeur d'Alene that we experienced a fuel pump issue. Colin was driving and **all of a sudden the car ran out of gas.** I got out, tapped on the OEM Monoflux

fuel pumps and bingo they started “clucking” again, so off we went.

About fifty miles later, the same thing happened and again I tapped on the fuel pumps and again they started working. We arrived in Coeur d'Alene and checked into the beautiful Coeur d'Alene Resort Hotel on the lake.

**Day 3.** We decided to stay on another night in the beautiful 4-star hotel suite we had been assigned, rather than depart with the group to Wallace, Idaho and the Motel 6.

We found a shop very near the hotel where the owner allowed us to put the car on the lift and with the help of one of his



Driving along with all clocks reading in the green, and just a little sprinkle on the windshield. The Vignale Spyder cruised along doing everything right!



With the car on the lift we removed the OEM Monoflux fuel pumps and lines and installed a new Bendix fuel pump..



mechanics, troubleshoot the fuel pump issue. We decided that rather than take any chances of having the fuel pumps quit again, it would be prudent just install an over-the-counter Bendix style electric fuel pump.

I called Stuart at MIE, who gave me the part number of a replacement fuel pump and lo-and-behold the local Napa dealer had it in my hand in less than twenty minutes.

We removed the two Monoflux fuel pumps and the special copper lines and installed the new fuel pump together with new rubber fuel lines and clamps.

Altogether the completed job took about two hours, including a hand wash next door. We drove back to the hotel parking garage and spent the afternoon leisurely enjoying Coeur d’Alene.



The old pumps and copper lines after removal.



After the fuel pump set-back, the car received a great hand wash. Clean again and ready to roll.

**Day 4.** With the car running great, it was off to Wallace, Idaho where we met up with the group. Wallace is one of those interesting silver mining towns that sprung up in and around Kellogg, Idaho.

At about 2:00 PM all fifteen cars headed out for the drive to Priest Lake in the northern Idaho panhandle.

The back road we took was extremely winding and rough, climbing to a higher and higher elevation. Then at a certain moment the wipers began working on their own! A very odd condition.

OK, I thought, just pull the fuse. Not so easy. The wipers kept working even after pulling the fuse. WHAT THE HELL!!! So I got out my trusty test light and found the hot wire going to the wiper motor. Using my Swiss Army knife, I unscrewed the terminal and pulled out the wire from the terminal block. Bingo! Wipers off!!

End of crisis. Side note: After returning home my tech found the Lucas motor had a bad ground. It took twenty minutes to troubleshoot and repair.

**Now what came next was depressing and hilarious all at once.**

Driving along all fat, dumb and happy, we unknowingly took a wrong turn only to drive about 25 miles along a beautiful winding country road following the Coeur d’Alene River.



With the red wire removed, the wipers stopped – putting an end to what ended up being a bad ground.

**OPPOSITE:** The beautiful drive along the Coeur d’Alene River was about to turn ugly.





The first sign something was not right was when the road began to narrow to a one and a half lane road... ***Then to our surprise, we came upon the worst sign any car guy could imagine...*** “Caution: Pavement Ends.” Yes, we actually begin driving on a one and a half lane gravel road, which became narrower and narrower, to the point where we stopped and asked a fly fisherman wadding in the river, “Does this road eventually go to Highway 200?” He didn’t laugh, but politely informed us that it did not.

At this point a white pickup truck coming in the opposite direction stopped and the driver’s wife got out – hip waders and all – and informed us that we needed to go back about 25 miles and take a left-hand turn at the giant FOOD sign.

“That road goes to Highway 200 and on to Sandpoint and Priest Lake, Idaho.”

You can imagine how deflated we were to hear this news, but we took it in good humor, laughing about it all the way as we headed back.

Because we had lost so much time, we decided to keep going the additional sixteen miles directly to Interstate 90 where we could have a straight shot and the fastest route back to Coeur d’Alene and then on to Sandpoint and Priest Lake – our final destination that day.

We put another 488 km on the car driving to Priest Lake, arriving at 7:00 PM.

We checked into cabin 15 and then headed over to the bar, for a much needed cold beer and a great appetizer buffet, set up by the organizers.



Checking in to cabin 15 at the Priest Lake Resort after a very long drive, we headed straight for the bar and a cold one.



The beautiful drive on route to the cowboy town of Winthrop Washington. The Vignale Spyder is purring like a kitten, loving the two-lane highways that stretch on forever in the countryside.



Arriving in the original cowboy town of Winthrop, Washington, we headed to our hotel.

As we drove into Elkins Resort, one of the guests flagged us down and informed us that he had seen a bear or two around the cabin area.

***I had this vision of a black bear climbing into the Vignale*** or worse yet, clawing into the convertible top, so we made sure to get all snacks and sweets out of the car for the overnight stay, which turned out to be just fine. We put the top up, rolled up the windows and parked the Maserati outside our cabin all night with no problems.

It had been a very long day. Being a two-bedroom cabin, we both got a great night sleep – snoring.

***Day 5.*** That morning we loaded up the Vignale and headed in the direction of Spokane, Washington where we picked up Interstate 90 for about five miles and exited onto Highway 2, in the direction of the great Grand Coulee Dam and on to Winthrop, Washington.

On this leg of the drive we had the top up all the way. This was the only day we drove the car with the top up.

***Winthrop, an original old-fashioned cowboy town*** with wooden sidewalks and saloons, has become quite the tourist destination, so it was buzzing with people.

We checked into our hotel to discover that we had a great room right on the Methow River. The sound of the rushing water all night provided for another great night sleep. After a long, hot drive, the first thing we wanted to do was hit Jack’s Saloon for a cold beer. This day we added 733 km to the speedo.



We checked into the Hotel Rio Vista and found a nice room facing the Methow River. The first stop was to the local saloon for a cold beer. Would you leave your Maserati parked overnight and unlocked in this door-ding parking lot?



Departing Winthrop, we head for the Northern Cascade Mountains on route to Mount Vernon, Washington. This was the most beautiful drive of the six days, hands down.





*Pulling over for a pit stop just past the Diablo Dam, I snapped this photo showing a lot of green and a little dirt behind the front wheel. A happy car.*

**Day 6.** We loaded up the car, put the top down and head to the local espresso bar for a couple Doppio Macchiatos and a croissant. It was then off to the other side of the Cascade Mountains.

We both agreed this was perhaps the most beautiful leg of our six-day adventure. It started off very flat, winding through the countryside, then slowly began climbing up the North Cascade Mountains and then down into Mount Vernon, Washington.

The two-hour drive was spectacular, passing Ross Dam and then on to the Diablo Dam with the car purring and handling like it just left Viale Ciro Menotti – it was all very special.

We stopped in Mount Vernon where we enjoyed the best breakfast ever at the Calico Café, then drove on the back

roads to Mercer Island, on what would be our last leg of the journey.

Colin and I both agreed it was a fun and memorable six days in a great open car.

Would we do it again? YOU BET!

**As to the car,** it always started instantly and ran very smooth, never popping or spitting. During warm up, I would pull the choke out 20% until the engine came up to temperature.

It used a half quart of 50w Valvoline Racing oil and got 15.5 MPG on average. The temp gauge never moved and stayed rock solid at 85°C or 185°F. It always shifted smooth with a precise click, click as you would expect of a German ZF box.

**I encourage all of you to sign up for one of your local road tours and get out there and DRIVE your Maseratis!**



*The engine compartment of Vignale 1121 after 1,150 miles shows everything very tidy, with no visible leaks of any kind. Is it a show car? No! It's a DRIVER.*