

DAY TRIPPER

A NEW DAWN

Cruising the California Coast in Rolls-Royce's new convertible



IT'S A BRIGHT, shimmering morning in San Francisco, but the air is bracingly cold, chilled by an almost invisible mist wafting off the Pacific. For now, the roof can stay up. There will be plenty of time for alfresco motoring in sun-blessed Carmel Valley, some three hours south.

Propelled by the liquid force of a twin-turbocharged V12, we whisper along the coast in the Rolls-Royce Dawn, a sleek ingot in a shade called darkest tungsten. Despite our brisk pace and an insistent wind swaying the cypresses, the cabin is all but silent, a nearly three-ton cocoon whose ingeniously engineered cloth canopy makes it the quietest convertible in the world.

The sensation telegraphed through the steering wheel is superb, even as the Dawn's electronically controlled air suspension relegates the road's imperfections to the realm of abstraction. The satellite-aided transmission, which knows the path ahead as intimately as any native, seamlessly selects the optimal gears for powering through State Route 1's countless curves. In an age when so many cars are bristling with shift paddles and levers and a bewildering array of power modes, the Dawn's singularly capable drive setting is a refreshing respite.

The day warms as we turn inland from the coast. Tooling along Carmel Valley Road, I pull the switch that operates the

canopy. As we swiftly become one with the outdoors, I explain to my startled companion that the car was engineered to perform the operation at speeds in excess of 30 miles an hour. In the beating sun, the Dawn's book-matched Tudor oak dash reveals new depths of color and grain; its seats, wrapped in Mandarin leather, call to mind nothing so much as the pastel orange petals of the California poppies waving from the roadside, wishing us well as an entirely new journey begins. —**NICK CZAP**

→ BOARDING PASS

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THE ESSENTIALS

THE CAR

Rolls-Royce Dawn, \$400,000

THE HOTEL

Tucked away on 28 acres in Carmel Valley, Bernardus Lodge & Spa offers a rejuvenating retreat for body and soul. After a full-body chardonnay sugar scrub, repair to a poolside cabana with a glass of crisp sauvignon blanc. bernarduslodge.com

THE RESTAURANT

There's no better vantage from which to savor a California sunset than a window seat at Valley Kitchen, over a dish of Chef Tim Wood's wild mushroom risotto and a bottle of resident vintner Peter Figge's exquisitely good pinot noir. carmelvalleyranch.com/dining/valley-kitchen

THE SPECS

Temper the California rays with sunglasses from Cutler and Gross, a luxury eyewear brand founded in 1969 and based in London. Every pair—like the 1166 style (\$500), pictured here in smokey quartz acetate—is handcrafted by artisans at the company's factory in Cadore, Italy. cutlerandgross.com

