

Sunday Drives: Canada

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30/05/2021 In the latest instalment of the Sunday Drives series, the CEO of Porsche Cars Canada, Marc Ouayoun, takes us on a whimsical tour of the European haunts on his doorstep.

Where

Southern Ontario, Canada

Length

325 kilometres

Type

Long, empty straights and fast bends through open farmland with far reaching views beneath vast, open skies

Marc Ouayoun took over as President & CEO of Porsche Cars Canada in January 2018. Born in Dunkirk, France, in 1971, he has worked in the automotive industry for 20 years and has owned an impressive number of Porsche models during that time, ranging from a 944 and 928 to classic examples of the 911 and 930 Turbo. His current car, driven with regularity, is an immaculate 964-generation Carrera 4 Cabriolet.

Ouayoun's career with Porsche began in 2006 and he rose rapidly through the ranks to become Managing Director of Porsche France in just five years. Following an 89 per cent sales increase in his home market and the completion of a fourth Porsche Experience Centre, at Le Mans, Ouayoun's talent and dynamism saw him seconded overseas. Now, from his new base in Toronto, he continues to thrive, expanding the Porsche network and increasing sales with his infectious enthusiasm and evident passion for the brand.

Ouayoun's Sunday Drive was inspired by an idea for a media trip to promote the launch of the new Panamera GTS in Canada. Celebrating his own roots, alongside those of Canada's pioneering European settlers, he devised a route that would link up five landmark towns and cities from the old world, including London and Paris, all of which reappear by name in the sprawling countryside of his newfound home.

Relaxed driving on a scenic route

"This drive affords me the perfect opportunity to leave the city and head for the great outdoors," explains Ouayoun. "It's very relaxed driving, mostly on two-lane country roads with a speed limit of 90 km/h and no traffic to speak of. I've deliberately tried to avoid using the highways, simply because the scenic route is much more fun."

The journey begins at the Langdon Hall hotel in Cambridge, a small town to the west of Lake Ontario that borrows its name from the English city made famous by one of the world's oldest and most prestigious universities. From here it is a 90 km drive north west to the tiny town of Brussels. A far cry from the sprawling Belgian city that houses the European parliament, this old milling settlement in Huron East was established in the mid-19th century. Brussels is now part of a conservation area with restored mills, a working dam and reservoir that fills each summer via the Maitland River.

From Brussels, Ouayoun's 'European' road trip heads south west to Zurich, six kilometres inland from Lake Huron. Its old-world namesake is the largest city in Switzerland and one of the world's major financial hubs. Ontario's more modest equivalent has strong Swiss roots, evidenced by some of the

older buildings on its wide and leafy streets, but the overwhelming feeling is of calm and quiet amid the typical architecture of rural Ontario.

After Zurich it's a 70 km wiggle south east to London, the largest stop on the tour with a population approaching 400,000. Nestled just north of Lake Erie and the US border, London is by far the busiest and most urbanised part of Ouayoun's route, and even features a River Thames, so named by British army general John Graves Simcoe who established the settlement in 1793.

From here Ouayoun heads due east on a long, straight 85 km drive to the day's final destination – a town with extra meaning for the ex-pat Frenchman. Curiously, the pretty and popular tourist destination of Paris did not borrow from Ouayoun's native capital, but actually derives its name from the local gypsum deposits that were mined to make plaster of Paris. Imposing mid-19th century churches still tower over timber-clad colonial houses and wide avenues of brick-built store fronts.

Ouayoun recommends making the trip in the spring, after Canada's notoriously deep winter has given way to the first new growth. "You can drive these roads at any time of year, but springtime means the snow has all melted, revealing this incredible landscape of typical Ontario farmland. The buds are coming out on the trees and everything is starting to look green again. On the drive from Cambridge to Brussels, evidence of spring can be found in the lines set up amid various groupings of maple trees, revealing freshly tapped syrup has just been harvested. It is very common to see wooden signs at the end of the farm laneways selling this typically Canadian "liquid gold".

With its perfect combination of comfort and clout, Ouayoun's chosen car for the trip is the Panamera GTS. Recently launched in Canada, the Cherry Red Metallic example he purloined for the day cuts a suitably understated figure against the historic backdrops and uncluttered natural landscape beyond, while offering enough performance and refinement to leave him invigorated after driving from Cambridge to Paris.

"I found a place for coffee there called the Silverstone Café," Ouayoun says, "which seemed like too good an opportunity to miss. Paris has plenty of little independent shops to wander around, and then you can take your coffee and drive up to a look out over the town and take in the quaint little valley. It's the perfect way to end the day."

Sunday Drives

With travel restrictions limiting the opportunities for road-trips, Porsche Newsroom's new Sunday Drives series sets out to quench readers' thirst for adventure by discovering the world's most beautiful driving roads through the eyes of Porsche people around the globe.

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