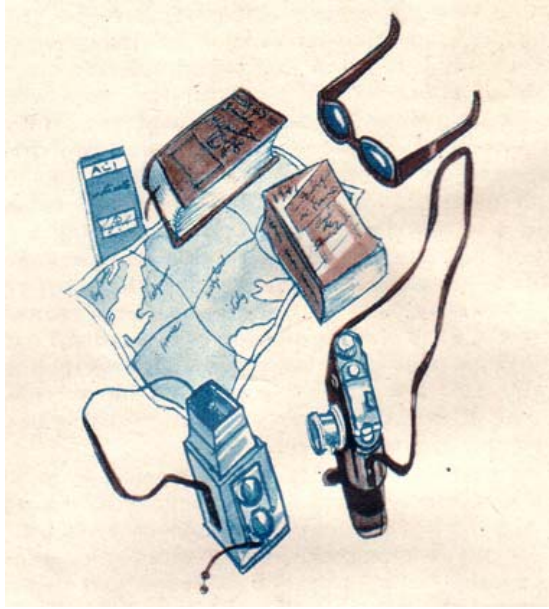


John Dugdale writes on



# FOREIGN TOURING

IN spite of pleasant memories of thousands of miles covered abroad in such a variety of vehicles as a Standard Twelve, a Midget, a Ford V8 coupé and the streamlined Bentley, among others, it can safely be said that no run could have been more enjoyable to the writer than that completed last month in the new independently sprung 1 ¼-litre M.G. saloon.

If you are to enjoy a long trip across Europe it is sound advice to take both a reliable car and, if possible, a fast one. This M.G. proved to be both. Four days were taken to cruise the 800 miles out to Turin, for the car had done only 1500 miles. On the return three days were taken, in which 133, 411, and 197 miles were covered respectively. As a result of that one good day's run of more than 400 miles from the Italian border to Paris, I learned what should have been remembered from before the war—that the only way to travel a real distance is to start early in the cool of a summer's morning and to make short stops for meals.

The M.G. could hurry, although it has not a very high maximum. With luggage, two full jerricans as spare, filled up with Continental guaranteed-to-pink fuel, I did not reach a speedometer reading of 75 m.p.h., but I could cruise easily at a speedometer 50-55, or equally at 60-65 m.p.h., for as long as I liked.

It was not necessary on the outward journey to lift the bonnet; however, this was done to check the oil, to which was added during the 2,250 miles an



IN FRANCE AND ITALY  
WITH THE LATEST M.G.

unnecessary pint of Duckham's. It is not easy to find spare tins for oil these days, but it is advisable to take one, in order to keep the engine lubricated with a known brand. As to petrol, in spite of the distributors' strike at the time, it was comparatively easy to buy in any town (about half the roadside pumps are full and working) and the issue of coupons is almost fool-proof.

In Italy petrol was more difficult at that time. But a tourist allowance is now in operation, by which books of 50 litres can be bought for £2 sterling, up to a total of 300 litres. Petrol in Italy to the tourist costs thus 3s. 7d. a gallon and in France it averages not more than 3s. 6d. a gallon. However, it is not altogether clear how one is supposed to have £10 in sterling notes to pay for petrol in Italy.

There was a good chance to put the M.G. through its paces on returning from Brescia by autostrada with the tank topped up with 80-octane fuel, as used by the entrants racing in the Mille Miglia. The 1 ¼-litre took one and a half hours to get to Milan, averaging 54 m.p.h. and covering 57 miles in the hour without fuss or without trying to set any records. Petrol consumption over the whole journey averaged nearly 30 m.p.g.

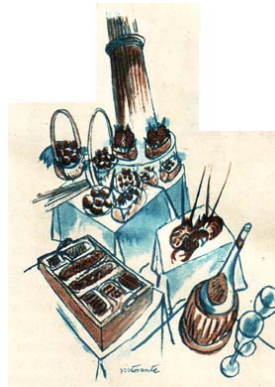
After cruising about in the Italian sunshine for a while, there was a need for radiator water, and also a big thirst for distilled water in the battery. Both these points want watching in a hot country, especially as



(Above) Climbing out of France by the Mont Cenis pass. Temporary bridges and sacked villages are no obstacle to the tourist these days.

(Below) Milan's wonderful marble cathedral of the thousand statues marks the centre of the city.

(Below right) Beside the River Isère the road runs straight for many miles. French roads in the south are pleasantly free from traffic

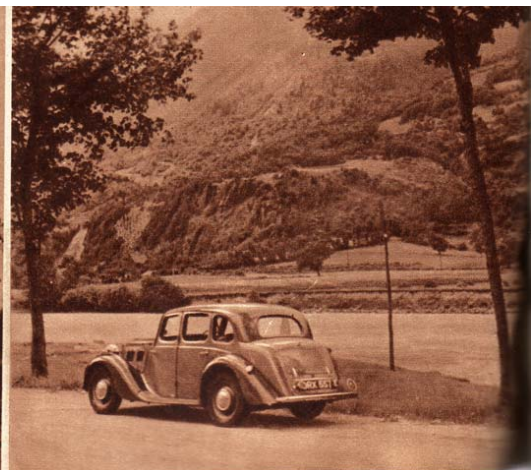


an overheated engine will also mean overheated passengers. I am not hinting that the M.G. boiled on the Alpine passes. It did not; it ran quite cool. But it used water, probably because it was on the new side.

The varied road conditions experienced are a good exercise for car and driver; jittery *pavé* in the north of France, long straight stretches between Sens and Bourg to the South of Paris, the steady pulls up to the mountain passes follow with numerous hairpin bends. All through, the M.G. gave a comfortable and silent drive. The excellent lock is comparable with that of an Italian car designed for mountain roads. The new independent front-wheel suspension with coil springs and rack and pinion steering brings to the latest M.G. quite a different character from that of the hard little sporting car which made the make's illustrious name. I once raced a lightweight 1,100 cc. Magnette capable of about 110 mph. and the front-wheel judder under braking stresses was most unpleasant. If that car had had this new suspension it could have been driven faster as and more safely. However, a more rigid chassis would have been necessary, and this is always difficult to achieve.

Still, a saloon body has its own advantages. It takes plenty of luggage and the inevitable odd packages. It possible to stow the heavy luggage on this journey, suitably wrapped in rugs, between the front and the rear seats. This is quite the best place, especially with a small car, in order to give good riding, because the extra weight is thus set centrally and low. Avoid the old-fashioned rear luggage carrier at all costs. No car was designed to carry a heavy load behind the rear wheels.

As to spares, and extra kit—for what it is worth—the M.G.'s consisted of two full jerricans (if you ran out of petrol in Italy it would be extremely difficult to obtain any; but make sure that your Channel ferry allows you to take unsealed cans), spare oil, a Sorbo mat to insulate the cans, rugs, and those invaluable adjuncts to all roadside repairs—a coil of copper wire and of insulating tape. Never be without the last two. Other possibles are a torch, a leather with which to clear the screen and





**THIS SUPERB CATHEDRAL OVERLOOKING TURIN – ITALY’S COVENTRY –  
STANDS UNDEAMAGED BY WAR**

Although it is an industrial centre, Turin is a beautiful city with fine hotels and broad boulevards. Near by, the 2,000ft mountain of Superga is topped by the perfect proportions of Juvara’s basilica, built in 1706 to celebrate a Piedmontese Victory against the French. At week-ends tourists drive up to Superga by the winding road which is still a noted hill-climb venue. Italy abounds in such historic treasures, but the visiting motorist should not leave his car unattended. There are new sites today; for instance, the Milan petrol station where Mussolini’s dead body was hung.



lamps of the swarms of suicidal insects which they attract, a picnic basket, sun glasses and a log book. If you keep a record of mileages between stops it enables you to chart a return journey with accuracy — and unfortunately these days not all cars have a trip reading on the speedometer (the M.G. has).

To sum up concerning this nice little car, it is mysterious how it achieves such a speedy performance with an engine of the same size as the well-known type TC M.G. Midget but with one carburettor in place of two and about 5 cwt more weight. It covers the ground remarkably well, and obviously deserves the praise which has already been given to it in the full description and Road Test (*The Autocar*, May 9).

As to equipment, the brakes took quite a test on the mountain roads and only confirmed a previous predilection for Lockheed hydraulics. I was interested to note the Italians' reaction to the M.G., and the points which they specially liked were the fine leather upholstery, the sunshine roof, the hydraulic jacking system and adjustable steering wheel. They have none of these good things.

The only troubles encountered were a short-circuit in the starter motor switch, which caused a few heated moments, and the loss of a mackintosh and rug when a Milan thief broke into the car with the type of half brick shown below. Always leave the car in an official park!

Now most people going abroad today are looking forward to a holiday from housework and some good-sized and well-cooked meals. So there is little excuse needed for a digression on to this important subject. In France, outside Paris, and other crowded centres such as Riviera resorts, there seems little need to book hotel rooms in advance. You should be able to tour in the true sense of the word.

Remember, milk in France is for children only, and bread is scarce (you will need your food coupons issued at the port of entry). The bread is also of poor quality. So you cannot expect a pre-war *café complet* for breakfast, because all you get is two rusks in Cellophane, very little butter, jam after an argument,



and a small portion of coffee minus milk. On the other hand, an omelette made with several fresh eggs is easily bought at a reasonable price. If you are staying in France it is sensible to take tinned dried milk. If you are picnicking for the first two days'

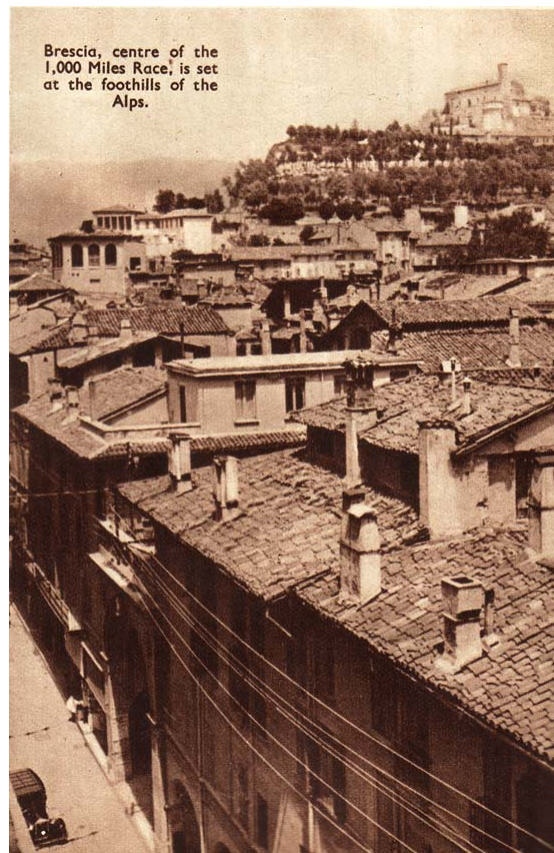
driving, take a fresh loaf from home and buy the eggs, cheeses and fruit obtainable at the delicatessens.

### Useful Literature

To find meals at main road hotels is made simpler and more appetizing if you are forearmed with a 1947 Michelin Guide and a 1947 *Les Auberges de France*. The R.A.C. touring department sells both. Michelin grades the best hotels everywhere and includes maps and distances. *Les Auberges* tells you in detail where and what to eat. As to wine, it was surprising to find it as expensive as in England, which says much for our Government-imported wines which have been on sale at controlled prices since the war. France explains her regrettable state of affairs by accusing the Americans of drinking all that the Germans had left! Be careful ordering coffee; it can cost as much as your wine.

Inevitably one dwells on expense, because the Englishman abroad is no longer a milord on the Grand Tour, but is restricted by law in his expenditure. If you feel sore about this, remember that other European tourists can take even less money out of their countries and that Italians cannot afford to go abroad at all.

About gastronomical matters in Italy, everything,



Brescia, centre of the 1,000 Miles Race, is set at the foothills of the Alps.

including white bread, rice, and coffee, is obtainable and there is nothing to worry about except *la quanta!* Prices are high.

The plentiful food in Italy and the hotels with their pre-war service are a tonic indeed, for it is very difficult to find a first-class restaurant in England today. Abroad, the chefs are cooking in butter again, but even then I do not think that scandalous little story is true which tells of the great Continental chef, who, having been at last persuaded to try a typical English

meal at an international exposition before the war, by an unhappy coincidence succumbed immediately afterwards. Finally, not only the good living but also the driving is a refresher abroad. In France, all road users are noticeably alert and their reactions are usefully quick in the emergencies which frequently arise. In Italy they are almost born drivers, probably because of their experience on mountain roads. One returns with reactions quickened.

### SUGGESTIONS FRANCE

<i>Town</i>	<i>Hotel or Restaurant</i>	<i>Speciality</i>	<i>Price</i>
Peronne	Hotel St-Claude	Home-cured ham in wine sauce with truffles	A
Auxerre	Tour d'Orbandelle	Veal in Madeira sause	A
Saulieu	De la Poste	Cream soup poulet a la crème, (wine Beaune des villages)	B
Tournus	Terminus	Sole cooked in butter, or vegetabledish of peas cooked with bacon and cauliflowers (Wine: Chardonnay blanc)	A
Chambéry	Chapon Fin	Steak	A

### ITALY

Turin	Grande Albergo Piemonte	Excellent hotel, French cooking de luxe	C
Milan	Cambio	Good Italian Food	B
	Giannino	Attractive and most popular in Milan: chicken stuffed with truffles and cheese	C
	Conti Bar	Café society: chicken roast on spit. Dancing	C
Firenze		Steak	B

A-Reasonable

B-Expensive

C-More expensive

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