

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Manufacturer | Alfa Romeo |
| Model | 1900CSS |
| Type | Competition 2+2 Berlinetta |
| Coachbuilder | Carrozzeria Ghia |
| Body Number | 121 |
| Coachwork | All Alloy Body and Opening Panels |
| Chassis No. | AR1900C *01742* |
| Engine No. | AR1308 *00690* |



Background:

Alfa Romeo's 1900 series of automobiles were designed by Ing. Orazio Satta. They were a completely different design and departure from anything Alfa had built previously. The model made its debut in the Paris Motor Show in the Fall of 1950 where it was an immediate popular and later for Alfa Romeo, commercial success.

The 1900 was the first series of Alfa Romeos built on a standardized production line and they were also Alfa's first production car without a separate chassis as well as the first Alfas offered with left-hand drive steering configuration.

Both a sporting 2-door Coupe and 4-door Sedan were initially offered featuring an all new 1,884cc, 90 bhp, 4-cylinder, twin cam engine. The design was spacious and simple, yet quick and sporty. The slogan Alfa used when selling the new 1900 was "The family car that wins races", not-so-subtly alluding to the car's success in the Targa Florio, Stella Alpina, Mille Miglia and other races and rallies.

Alfa's 1900 was destined for competition success from the moment they made their debut. They all had independent front suspension (double wishbones, coil springs (front & rear) and hydraulic telescopic shock absorbers) and one of the very best live rear axle designs seen up to that point.

In 1951 the short wheelbase 1900C ("C" for corto (Italian for short) version was introduced. It had a wheelbase of 2,500mm rather than the standard 2,630mm standard coupe and sedan. That same year the 1900TI with a more powerful 100bhp engine was introduced. The 1900TI had bigger valves, higher compression ratio and it was equipped with twin-carburetors. Two years later the 1900 Super and 1900TI Super (also 1900SS or Super Sprint) with enlarged 1,975cc engine were introduced. The TI Super with twin carburetors produced 115bhp and featured a 4-speed gearbox with revised ratios but still using the standard final drive ratio.

1900CSS

The ultimate specification of the 1900 line-up was without question the ultra-rare "CSS" variant that featured both the shorter chassis as well as the most developed and best performing engine, gearbox and revised final drive ratios. Brakes were "alfin" double-leading shoe, self-adjusting at all four corners and the fronts featured ducting and scoops for added cooling.

Alfa's 1900CSS model also incorporated a fantastically well designed and thoroughly sorted 5-speed gearbox with full synchronization on 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th gear. The ratios were carefully selected to match the torque and rpm curve of the high specification, twin-cam "Tipo 1308" series engine. As a result of the performance increase and use of a five rather than four speed gearbox, the standard 4.1:1 final drive ratio was unnecessary. A taller 3.75:1 unit was instead fitted which allowed for far better top-speed as well as far less rpm at speed in any gear.

Alfa had always envisioned making the 1900 a platform for various coachbuilders to express themselves freely. The 1900CSS lent itself to this end quite successfully and Touring, Pinin Farina, Zagato and Ghia produced some strikingly beautiful as well as competitive examples. While those from Touring and Pinin Farina utilized mostly steel bodies with some alloy opening panels, Zagato and Ghia's examples featured all alloy body construction. The standard production 1900s tipped the scales at 2,400lbs (1,100kgs) while the Zagato and Ghia versions of the 1900CSS were often less than 2,000lbs (900kgs.) Less weight obviously translated to better performance on the track and in the tours and rallies that favored these nimble coupes. As such, today, these beautiful "custom coachwork" examples are by any measure the most sought out by both collectors and racers alike.

AR1900c *01742*

While 21,000+ different Alfa Romeo 1900s were built, there were a handful that were anything but "production machines for the masses." As already noted, Alfa always envisioned "Custom Coachwork" bodies from various designers being fitted to the 1900 line up. The most popular version chosen by the various coachbuilders was the 1900c due to the shorter and more proportionate wheelbase.