



## autobuzz



# Citroen 2CV lovers gather in Slovenia to take the slow road

AFP | Postojna, Slovenia

**F**ans of an iconic French car gather this week in Slovenia to reclaim a slow, stress-free way of life where repairs are easy and cars are slow. “Once you sit down, all the stress from your office is gone,” Karmen Uglesic, one of the organisers of this year’s 25th world meeting of Citroen 2CV fans, told AFP.

“You stop worrying and simply enjoy,” she said.

As head of the Slovenian parliament’s public relations office, Uglesic has more than 20 years’ experience working with politicians and managing events as the tiny former Yugoslav state transitioned into a fully fledged member of the European Union and NATO.

Preparing for retirement, Uglesic says she owes her mental well-being to her passion for the “Spacek”, or “little freak”.

That is what one journalist, bewildered by the car’s appearance, called the 2CV when it appeared in the Yugoslav market in the early 50s.

“When I get home from work and my husband asks me if I would go for a ride with our ‘Spacek’, I’m immediately for it! I put on my Citroen T-shirt, open the foldable roof and go for it,” Uglesic said.

### ‘A different world’

The Citroen 2CV was launched in 1948 as the French carmaker Citroen’s answer to Germany’s Volkswagen Beetle. The 2CV stands for



A view of Citroen 2CV and other Citroen vehicles parked at a camp during the 25th World Meeting of 2CV Friends in Postojna, Slovenia

“deux chevaux” (two horses), a reference to its original horsepower.

Admired for its simplicity, utilitarian design and low-cost maintenance, more than five million 2CVs were built until 1990, when production stopped due to tougher emissions standards.

Uglesic is one of more than 300 volunteers who organised the 25th world meeting of 2CV friends at an airfield near the Postojna cave, around 50 kilometres (30 miles) south of the capital Ljubljana.

The previous gathering was in Switzerland in 2023.

“If you want to, you can repair it yourself thanks to the engine’s simplicity,” 55-year-old Italian Gabriele Salvoni told



AFP.

He was sitting with friends, drinking a beer, eating popcorn and surrounded by four 2CVs in different colours.

His group did the 400-kilometres-long trip to Postojna driving at 80 to 90 kilometres per hour, letting traditional Italian supercars shoot past them.

“This is a different world, we travel in peace, that is our way of living,” Salvoni said proudly, displaying tatoos on his chest representing two 2CVs with the names of his two children.

### ‘A piece of art’

Their cars were parked in one of the many camping areas marked by organisers to leave space for more than 3,000 2CVs to parade around.



sic from their loudspeakers.

Many of the participants were not even born when 2CV production stopped.

“It was my dream for years,” 26-year-old freelance artist Jamie said as she sat with her 32-year-old boyfriend Mike under a tent hanging from her blue 2CV.

“I went to France and I fell in love with the car.”

### ‘Chill a bit’

Mike, who works in aircraft maintenance, is teaching her to repair it herself.

He admitted that, when it rained, their recently restored foldable roof “drips a little, but just on one side, but we don’t really mind”.

They drove from Hamburg in Germany, where highways have some of the fastest speed limits in the world.

“I don’t mind being the slow one on the highway,” Jamie said. “I think it’s better to slow down. Maybe they should learn something from us: to chill a bit.”

Not far away, 16-year-old Aleksandar Dincic from Vranje in Serbia and his father were checking out a tent where 2CV spare parts were being sold.

“I adore these cars, they are very good and can easily be driven in the 21st century,” Dincic said.



It was designed to carry a basket of eggs across a ploughed field without breaking a single one

Citroen’s original design brief in the 1930s was to create a rugged, low-cost car that could transport four people and 50 kg of goods over rough rural roads – even muddy fields – while being so gentle that a basket of eggs wouldn’t crack during the ride.

This led to the 2CV’s legendary soft suspension system and minimalist design, making it one of the most iconic and practical cars in automotive history.

And his father had promised him one for his 18th birthday, he added.

“It’s a car that you drive with pleasure,” he said with a smile.



## China’s Baidu to deploy robotaxis on rideshare app Lyft

AFP | Beijing, China

**C**hinese internet giant Baidu plans to launch its robotaxis on rideshare app Lyft in Germany and Britain in 2026, pending regulatory approval, the two companies said on Monday.

Last month, Baidu announced a similar agreement with Uber

in Asia and the Middle East as it seeks to take pole position in the competitive autonomous driving field both at home and abroad.

Lyft and Baidu said Monday that “in the following years” the fleet of Apollo Go driverless cars will be expanded to thousands of vehicles across Europe.

They did not specify which other countries the cars would

be deployed in, and it was not clear how long it might take to gain regulatory approval for the initial deployment.

Driverless taxis are already on some roads with limited capacity in the United States and China, most notably in the central city of Wuhan, where a fleet of over 500 can be hailed by app in designated areas.

Their reach is spreading, with

Shanghai’s financial district Pudong recently announcing a batch of permits for multiple companies to operate robotaxis.

China’s tech companies and automakers have poured billions of dollars into self-driving technology in recent years, with intelligent driving the new battleground in the country’s cutthroat domestic car market. Baidu is not alone among Chi-

nese companies in searching to expand its foothold abroad.

Its rival WeRide is also active in the Gulf region, and in January announced it had been picked to lead a small pilot project in Switzerland.

Pony.AI, another Chinese company, said in May that it had signed a deal to launch its self-driving taxis on Uber in “a key market in the Middle

East later this year”.

San Francisco-based Lyft in April said it had agreed to buy German taxi app Freenow, planting a flag in the European market.

The acquisition marked Lyft’s “most significant expansion outside North America”, the group said.