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July 2017

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Keegan-Michael Key
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Redwood Rush

Coasting through Mendocino in the BMW Alpina B7

Preparing to depart for Mendocino—a picturesque Victorian village on the Northern California coast—I ponder the disorienting effect of the BMW Alpina B7. Clearly, it’s a 7-series, BMW’s vaunted flagship sedan. But it’s different, somehow; its rakish front spoiler, gleaming oval exhausts, and massive 21-inch forged aluminum wheels imbue the limousine-like car with a distinctively athletic aura.

As I settle into the driver’s seat, I observe that the steering wheel’s familiar BMW shield has been replaced with an emblem that depicts an air intake and a crankshaft, a not-so-subtle clue that the B7’s modifications are more than skin-deep.

For 50 years, the family-owned Bavarian firm Alpina has worked hand-in-hand with BMW to create “exclusive automobiles for automotive gourmets.” In the case of the B7, their collaboration has produced what could rightly be called the *Ultimate Ultimate Driving Machine*.

Barreling north of the Golden Gate Bridge in a fierce wind

BMW’s collaboration with Alpina takes the 7-series to the next level

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and a downpour, the B7 feels as snug and secure as a bunker, albeit one inlaid with richly toned hardwoods, upholstered in hand-finished Merino leather, and enlivened by a Bowers & Wilkins audio system with acoustics that rival those of the LA Phil concert hall.

As my companions luxuriate, I press the black lacquer Sport button on the console, curious to experience the full force of a twin-turbo V-8 whose stock

455-horsepower has been boosted by Alpina engineers to a stark 600. Even before I probe the throttle, the pipes growl in acknowledgment, the suspension firms its footing, and the driver’s seat tightens its grip to ensure the utmost in confidence and control.

With the rain hammering down, the B7 surges forward like a juggernaut, and from a wide-eyed passenger, there comes a soft and awestruck “Wow.”

The Essentials

The Car
• BMW Alpina B7, \$137,000

The B&B
• Victorian charm meets contemporary comfort at the **Blue Door Inn**, situated in the center of Mendocino. The sunlit King Suite, complete with a gas fireplace for chilly evenings, overlooks village rooftops and the Pacific. Awake each morning to a specially tailored breakfast basket waiting by your door. bluedoorgroup.com

The Restaurant
• A 49-year-old Mendocino landmark, **Café Beaujolais** serves some of the finest food on the Northern California coast. From the freshest organic produce to locally raised meat, the menu abounds with richly flavorful, inventive



dishes. The Dungeness crab cakes with crispy noodles and scallion vinaigrette are a North Coast gem. cafebeaujolais.com

The Shop
• If Mendocino’s bird life and brilliant night skies inspire a desire for magnification, head to **Out of This World Optics**. From ultra-compact Zeiss binoculars to Celestron telescopes that reveal the rings of Saturn and distant nebulae, the selection is, well, you know. outofthisworldoptics.com