

## MOTOR TREND

# 2013 Ferrari California First Drive

Magnum Would Be Proud to Borrow One



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By Mike Floyd

The updated 2013 Ferrari California is the kind of car Robin Masters, the mysterious benefactor from the "Magnum P.I." TV series, would have left for Tom Selleck to drive if the show were set in present-day Hawaii. (I see a remake...)

That's not to say the California is akin to a 308 -- it's a million miles from it. But this is the kind of Ferrari a multi-bazillionaire would likely have tucked away in his Hawaiian hideaway. An absolute pussycat for trundling around Honolulu in comfort mode, flossing with the top down, Detroit cap proudly displayed. But also a big-time performer fully capable of running from and chasing down bad guys on Oahu's volcanic back roads when necessary. And now the California has more power, less weight, and better handling. In other words, it delivers "Ferrari performance in a comfortable way," as senior members of the House of Enzo put it during our recent visit.

If you've been scanning the photos of the 2013 California for exterior updates, you can stop now, because there aren't any, save a trim piece color here and there, depending on the package and customer preference. While it won't go down in the annals of Prancing Horse history as a design masterpiece, it isn't a homely mare, either.



It looks haven't scared off a steady parade of new customers from opening up their fat wallets to buy the hardtop convertible GT (some 70 percent are first-timers to the brand) and waiting six or so months to get one -- not a long time in Ferrari's world. Roughly 8000 Californias have been sold to date, with 30 percent coming Stateside. At slightly more than \$200K a pop, the state-of-the-art production campus in Maranello has been humming along to meet demand for the least-expensive Ferrari.

So what will a newly inducted *Ferraristi* get with the 2013 model that didn't come on the previous car? An updated 4.3-liter V-8 to start, now rated at 483 hp and 372 lb-ft (up 30 hp and 15 lb-ft), thanks in large part to new piston and exhaust manifold designs, along with a reprogrammed ECU. While a nice bump, it's not too updated. Ferrari officials forcefully made the point that this is about as powerful as they want this car to get. Believe us, it's plenty, and any car with a LAUNCH button in the center console has our immediate attention. The California will launch itself in as little as 3.5 seconds to 60 mph and an 11.9 second quarter at 117.4 mph -- a time we recorded in the previous car. Fun fact: It can also touch 194 mph.

After far too short of a stint through the medieval hamlets and hills around the Maranello holy land where Ferraris have been prancing for decades, we're here to tell you the Cali can get its launch on. Mash the gas and it's go time to 8 grand in all 7 gears, flat-plane crank V-8 wailing madly. As the last light flashes red on the trick F1-inspired wheel, I grab the long, slender up paddle to activate Ferrari's amazing dual clutch. The shifts are infinitesimally short and land you right in the heart of the power band as another locks and loads. Equally as impressive is how effective and seamless the tranny operates in low speed situations. "We wanted to make the automatic very useful which is very important for U.S. customers," said Ferrari test driver Raffaele De Simone. We found it plenty useful.



Flying down toward a tight hairpin, pressing progressively harder on the large-and-in-charge (15.4-inch front, 14.2-inch rear) carbon ceramics, it's time for a downshift paddle pounding. The song is just as sweet, with perfectly matched throttle blips. As I start to wind in the wheel, the California's new Handling Speciale package (a \$7227 option) begins to work its magic. The bend tightens and the optimized ECU starts furiously transmitting instructions at a 50 percent faster rate to the car's Magnetorheological SCM damper system, ordering it to keep the California from rolling under hard cornering (you can get the SCM setup separately for \$5200). The HS package also features revised, quicker steering and a stiffer set of springs all around (15 percent front, 11 percent rear).

"We didn't want to go too overboard with HS and change the mission of the car," said De Simone. Given its strictly defined role as a GT in the brand's pantheon, Ferrari is keen to keep the California from straying into super sports car territory. A good chunk of owners are actually driving the car every day, using the 12 cubic-foot trunk (8.5 cubes with the top closed), and yes, even stuffing their kids in the back. We're not sure if they're doing it for punishment or not. One thing's for sure; the car's sublime on-road feel won't be doling out any punishment of its own.

Yes, we'd choose the HS option, and Ferrari thinks some 15 percent or more of Americans will, too. But after quickly sampling a non-HS car with SCM, we're not sure the differences are all that great to begin with (the base car has also been improved), something De Simone was happy to hear. And if you're really in the mood to play Scuderia driver, you can always turn the manettino switch to CST, which disables the traction and stability control, and have at it.

In addition to the [engine](#) and handling updates, Ferrari's aluminum fabrication team got busy mixing in new alloys, implementing advanced techniques, and reducing steel use for the car's updated chassis, saving some 66 pounds off of the 3916-pound curb weight of the 2010 car we tested. It still has a 47/53 weight distribution, which likely moves a percentage point or two toward the rear when the top is down.

Inside, the California has all style and panache we've come to expect from the Italians -- a small cattle's herd worth of leather; enveloping, infinitely adjustable seats; and numerous other upscale touches. The nav system could use an upgrade, however (something we're betting Americans would appreciate). If you have more bank than Warren Buffett, you can visit the Ferrari design center and pimp out your interior any way you want it. Love your gator shoe pattern and want it in the cabin? Yeah, they can do that, within reason, of course. And for the first time, Ferrari is offering a seven-year service plan that covers regular maintenance.

Bottom line, the California is a car in which Magnum and his mustache would feel right at home, impressing bad guys and hot chicks alike -- that is, if that crotchety old bugger Higgins would ever give him the keys.

2013 Ferrari California	
<b>Base Price</b>	\$201,290
<b>Vehicle layout</b>	Front-engine, RWD, 4-pass, 2-door convertible
<b>Engine</b>	4.3L/483-hp/372-lb-ft DOHC 32-valve V-8
<b>Transmission</b>	7-speed dual-clutch automatic
<b>Curb weight</b>	3850 lb (MT est)
<b>Wheelbase</b>	105.1 in
<b>Length x width x height</b>	179.6 x 74.9 x 51.5 in
<b>0-60</b>	3.4 sec (MT est)
<b>EPA city/hwy fuel econ</b>	13/19 mpg
<b>On sale in U.S.</b>	June 2012