



2013 Ferrari California HS - First Drive

The Handling Speciale package works wonders for the California.

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Maranello, Italy—Well, it's no secret that traveling to Italy to drive a new version of the [Ferrari California](#) is an enthusiast's dream come true. So there I was at the factory in Maranello listening to the presentation of the Handling Speciale package for 2013.



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[Ferrari](#) says that 70 percent of California-model buyers are first-time owners of a Ferrari, and the car is often used as a daily driver. So the theme of the HS package was to push technical know-how to make an even better performance car and maintain its sophisticated luxury at the same time. With the 4.3-liter V-8 engine moving up from 453 to 490 bhp along with a torque increase from 357 to 372 lb.-ft., there is abundant performance. And the HS package provides reduced body roll via stiffer springs, quicker steering response and a definite feel of more nimble handling. The electronic control unit is faster- reacting and improves shock absorber response by a significant percentage. And to make sure cornering is lots of fun, the California utilizes the latest F1-Trac traction control for stability.



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Another improvement for the California is the use of eight newer alloys to reduce weight and redistribute impact loads. We toured the Scaglietti factory near Modena where the bodies are built and saw the CORDIS casting process that provides added chassis stiffness.



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The HS package is available on all California models and the price is an additional 14,500 euros (about \$19,150). Ferrari's spokesmen see the HS package as something for a minority of California buyers—those who drive in a more sporty mode and are willing to trade a bit of

comfort for higher speed cornering, reduced body roll and quicker steering response. And the HS package also adds a newer version of the SCM (suspension control logic) specifically set for the HS models. For the eagle-eyed fans, the HS version of the California gets a special grille kit.



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Ferrari has also created a 7-year maintenance program across its entire range of cars. The 7-year program provides regular maintenance every 20,000 kilometers (about 12,500 miles) or once a year without mileage limits. The program includes a complete inspection and provides original spare parts, filters and lubricants.



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As you can imagine, the opportunity to spend hours driving the California HS in the rolling hills and curvy roads outside Maranello was pure delight. The factory also provided a non-HS California to drive for comparison, and it was clear that the Handling Speciale does provide notable improvements. But with or without HS, this is one fabulous sports car.