
Ferrari 458 Italia

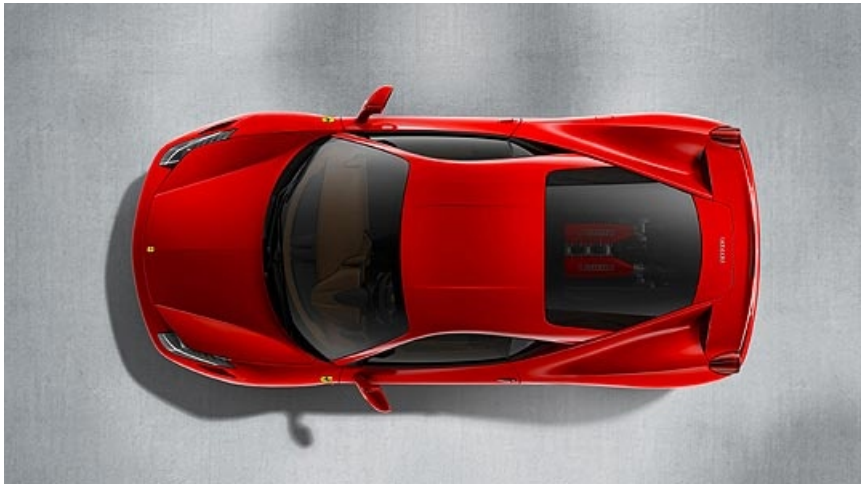
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The all-new Ferrari 458 Italia, a 4.5-litre V8 mid-engined berlinetta due to be officially unveiled at the Frankfurt motor show in late September, is an uncompromising driver's car packed with innovative design features. With much cleaner emissions and better fuel consumption than any previous car of this type, it is also seriously quick, with a top speed of over 200mph.

Every aspect of the two-seater 458 Italia is completely new, with much from the company's Formula 1 experience built in. The new style of steering wheel and dashboard are taken directly from racing experience and, as usual these days, Michael Schumacher played a key role in the car's development.

Aerodynamic efficiency lies at the core of the 458 Italia's compact, light design which gives a downforce of 140kg at 124mph. Small aeroelastic winglets, generating part of the downforce, deform as speed rises to cut drag by reducing the size of the air inlet.



The new 4499cc V8 is the first Ferrari direct-injection engine to be mid-mounted. Advanced piston design, based on racing practice, has permitted a compression ratio of 12.5:1. A traditional flat-plane crankshaft is retained and the engine produces 570HP (562bhp) at 9000rpm. That's a remarkable output of 127HP/litre, setting a new benchmark not only for the whole Ferrari range but also, it is claimed, for the entire market segment.

Maximum torque, 398lb ft, occurs at 6000 rpm, with over 80 per cent of it available from 3250rpm. Ferrari also states that a powerful-sounding growl is audible from the exhaust's three rear tailpipes.

The seven-speed, close-ratio dual-clutch transmission is claimed to give very smooth shifts even at full throttle. This highly efficient transmission has helped to reduce CO2 emissions to just 320g/km and to reduce fuel consumption – the official combined cycle figure of 20.6mpg is also said to be the best in its class.



Using a combination of advanced aluminium alloys, with aerospace industry bonding techniques, Ferrari engineers have kept the dry weight down to 1380kg, 58 per cent of which is over the rear axle. This has enabled 0-62mph acceleration in under 3.4 seconds. Top speed is over 202mph.

Superlative roadholding and handling was a key objective: the Ferrari 458 Italia's suspension includes double wishbones at the front and a multi-link set-up at the rear. A very direct steering ratio promises sharp turn-in response. Integrated E-Diff and F1-Trac, now with quicker responses and controlled by a single ECU, have been mapped to achieve a 32 per cent increase in longitudinal acceleration out of corners, compared to previous models.



The high-performance ABS system has cut the 62-0mph braking distance to 32.5m (29.7 yards) and there's a prefill function on lift-off, moving the pads into light contact with the discs for instant braking reaction when the pedal is applied.

At the wheel, all the main controls are clustered on the steering wheel. Like the new California, the Ferrari 458 Italia has a race-derived specification but this latest model is aimed at owners who want outright performance, with an occasional track-day capability, in a car that remains practical for everyday use. Prices have not been announced yet.

Text: Charis Whitcombe

Photos: Ferrari

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