

CLASSIC DRIVER

Ferrari F355 GTS

Lead

Following the introduction of the four-seater 456, the next all-new Ferrari in the mid-90s was the F355. While these days we have become used to the Maranello company's mid-engined cars providing scorching performance, the 308s, 328s and 348s were nice cars, but... well... not neck-snappingly quick.

The F355 changed all that, with its 3495cc V8 producing 375bhp, and the carefully sculpted aerodynamic bodywork allowing drivers to enjoy every bit of its potential at very high velocities - careful management of the airflow under the car meant it generated negative lift at speed.

It also looked pretty good, something the boxy 348 never seemed to do.





The F355 ('35' for 3.5-litre and an extra '5' for its 5 valves per cylinder) was first available in 1994 as a coupé and a targa-roofed GTS, the car you see here. A proper Spider, with a soft roof that retracted totally followed a year later.

The car was the last Ferrari to employ a vertical rear window with rear 'flying buttresses', a styling device that started with the 206 Dino and was subsequently replaced by a flat glass panel, showing off the latest engine.





The semi-automated 'F1', 'paddle' gearbox was offered as an option in 1997, its name capitalising on the company's success in Grand Prix racing (despite '97 being the year Michael Schumacher was disqualified from the Championship for unsportsmanlike behaviour).

This F355 GTS, however, proudly carries a traditional steel gear lever, topped by a turned alloy ball and sitting in a chromed gate: classic Ferrari, and nowadays almost impossible to order.



Stir that lever and it's a quick old car. Your author remembers racing against standard F355s - and they were fast: 0-100km/h (0-62mph) was just 4.7 seconds and the F355 went all the way to a shade under 300km/h

(295km/h to be precise, that's about 183mph).

And, as with the [current California](#), when in place, the hard roof gives occupants the *berlinetta* option while being able to enjoy fresh air after just a short stop to stow the hood. Compared with the coupé and Spider, the GTS is the rarest version of the F355.

Fast, relatively hard to find and with the option of hassle-free open-air motoring, the Ferrari F355 GTS has much to commend it.

Photos: William Loughran

Gallery

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