

# Fast forward

Ferrari releases its turbocharged California T racer, a stylish new take on a classic grand tourer



Historically, Ferrari has been a company of two different characters. The very first machines to leave the workshop of Enzo Ferrari were pure racing cars, built for Alfa Romeo, with whom Ferrari initially worked, and subsequently under his own name from the early 1940s onwards. Racing was Ferrari's primary focus, operating out of a small workshop in Maranello, which was rebuilt on a grander scale after it was bombed out in 1943. Ferrari's first road cars were little more than race cars made available to private buyers to help fund the racing team. But as post-war society took shape, the arrival of a new, monied and more sophisticated customer guided the future of the company.

By the start of the 1950s, the distinction between Ferraris was clearer: pared-down racing machines for enthusiasts, and more

## CABIN CREW

**This studio in the woods, near Bath, is a mixed architectural archetype. Blending rustic seclusion with hand-crafted construction and modernist lines, the elevated structure serves as the drafting studio for architects Invisible Studio. Built from locally sourced timber, with manpower drawn from the studio itself and surrounding neighbours, the project was run by practice founder Piers Taylor. Salvaged windows, minimal detailing and rough finishes juxtapose with the UK studio's pared-down silhouette, structural ingenuity and beautiful presence - total build costs were less than 10 per cent of a California T. [www.invisiblestudio.org](http://www.invisiblestudio.org)**

elegant, high-performance grand tourers for the cognoscenti, many of the latter cars styled and bodied by Italy's legion of specialist coachbuilders. In 1950, the company built the 340 America, an open sports car aimed at the booming export market. Its successors included the Superamerica and then, in 1957, the 250 California. Only around 100 of these cars were manufactured, but the model became an instant icon of Italian style, a symbol of power, wealth and exquisite taste.

There was a world between the original California and its Ferrari contemporaries, such as the Mille Miglia-winning 315 S, also from 1957. The idealised American buyer wanted style, grace and elegance in addition to performance. Both cars were beautiful, but there was a delicacy and purity of line to designer Carrozzeria Scaglietti's concept for »

## Motoring



LEFT, THE CALIFORNIA T'S HARD-TOP ROOF RETRACTS INTO THE REAR IN 14 SECONDS

BELOW, THE HANDCRAFTED INTERIOR CARRIES SIGNATURE MOTIFS SUCH AS FERRARI'S PRANCING HORSE



the California that set it apart from the functional ducts and curves of the racer.

Today, those paths continue to wind in separate directions, occasionally crossing over, diverging and splitting again. Ferrari hasn't missed a single season of Formula 1 since 1950, and the company still offers its mid-engined 458 in a racing variant. Racing is woven into its very being. The company's other products are split between extremes, from the speed-focused LaFerrari and occasional XX variants, built and maintained to order for collectors who use them only on specially sanctioned Ferrari track days and events, to the high performance GT cars, the F12berlinetta and the FF. The latter are vastly powerful but pitched as exquisite modes of transport, not grid-conquering sports cars.

In 2008, Ferrari reintroduced the California name, explicitly calling to the hearts, minds and wallets of one of the world's largest luxury car markets. The California was a marked departure for the

modern-era Ferrari, as not only did it include a folding hard top, but also a V8 engine up front, a position traditionally occupied by a more substantial V12. It was a sales sensation, shifting more units than any other model in the company's history, but the California undermined its role as a dedicated sun-seeking pleasure machine by being slightly deficient in the looks department. While classic Ferraris are beautiful, their modern equivalents often have to make do with being merely striking.

The new California T, shown above, addresses the thorny issue of aesthetics, alongside other upgrades. Keen drivers will be more interested in the arrival of a turbo-charger, boosting power significantly by 70hp, but it's the welcome tweaks and tucks to the bodywork that really grab the eye. It's still no Scaglietti-penned masterpiece, but the California T does a good job of concealing its rear-biased bulk (a necessary side effect of the complicated roof mechanism), with deep

scoops on the flanks and headlamps and a radiator that references the halcyon era of the bespoke coachbuilder.

Of course, it's also fast. Its raw numbers are comfortably in line with what today's premium customer desires – a shade under 200mph at the top, less than four seconds to attain 60mph – even if they will never find themselves with the space, legality, skill or desire to achieve them. But this is very much not a racing Ferrari. Far more interesting, perhaps, is the roof deployment, which transforms a snug metal-roofed coupé into an open car in 14 seconds flat. There are even back seats, although they are strictly vestigial.

Ultimately, just as its 1950s antecedent was built to flatter the softer end of the customer spectrum, so the contemporary California doesn't need to exhibit a raw, meaty character. For most people, the plethora of Prancing Horse motifs and the V8 snarl will be more than enough; you can take the car's abilities as read. Happily for them, the California T is up with the best, a car with which to experience the journey without sacrificing style and comfort en route. ★

Ferrari California T, from £154,490, [california-t.ferrari.com](http://california-t.ferrari.com)

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