

TEST DRIVE: PORSCHE CAYMAN S 2014

Go to the whip. The Cayman S is best enjoyed at full gallop

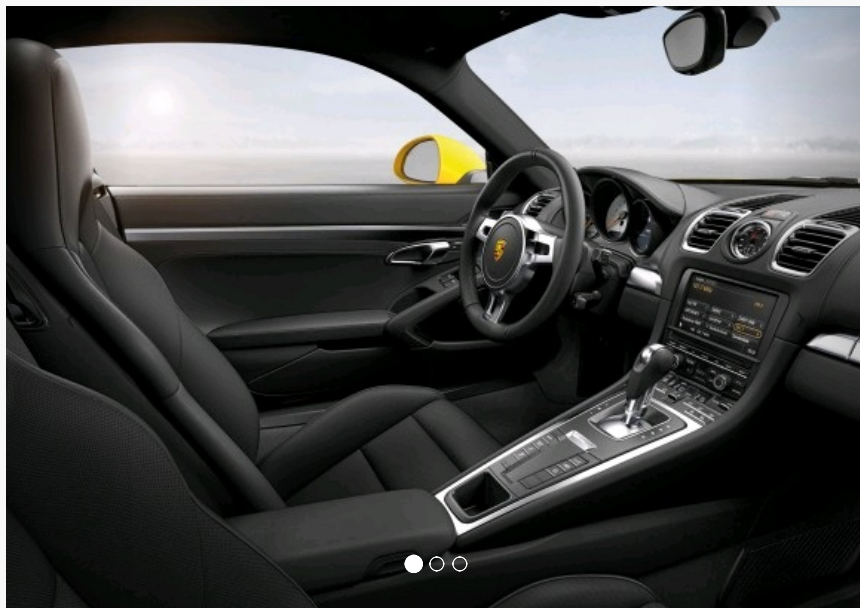
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The second generation of Porsche's nimble Cayman cantered onto the automotive field of play earlier this year with a more muscular look and, Porsche claims, 30 fewer kilograms to carry around. Longer, wider and with a larger greenhouse than its predecessor, the new version of Stuttgart's mid-engine sports car cuts a more mature figure.

Widely considered a fantastic corner carver, the Cayman has lived in the shadow of its iconic rear-engine sibling since its introduction in 2006, reigned in many have opined, to allow the more expensive 911 Carrera some breathing room. After a week spent caning a handsome aqua blue metallic example over country lanes along Maryland's storied Chesapeake Bay we think the Cayman S is Porsche's best pure sports car – with a caveat or two.

The new model's more aluminium-intensive structure along with an even stiffer chassis endows it with terrific handling. Add in improved three-mode damping (normal, sport, sport-plus), a wider track and optional 20-inch wheels, and you have a Cayman that is dynamically superior and more refined than the original.

A redesigned, leather-clad cabin sharing much of the rich look and feel of the latest Carrera's interior greets driver and passenger. It's not as Spartan as before but still refreshingly simple. In typical Porsche fashion, options abound. Our tester also boasted Porsche's infotainment package with Burmester Surround Sound stereo, an aurally satisfying but overly pricey option. Horological hounds will enjoy the sweep of the hands in optional the dash-mounted chronograph which reset upon start-up.



Porsche claims a run to 100 km/h takes five seconds in the manual

transmission-equipped version we drove. Rowing through the S's six-speed gearbox with foot hard-down is a pleasure but we felt less urge than expected. The 3.4 liter flat-six cylinder under the S's bonnet boasts 325 horsepower, just five more than the previous iteration. Torque remains the same at 370 Nm. To be clear, the Cayman S is very quick but its as-tested price puts it in the company of faster sports cars.

Around town, the S is noticeably docile. More supple than before, it's a machine which like all Porsches, can be driven daily. Pavement imperfections no longer upset the car mid-corner, particularly in the "normal" damping mode. However, a surprising side effect is that this two-seater isn't terribly exciting unless one goes to the whip.

Passing the late 17th century church and horse farms which anchor our favourite twisty road just north of colonial Annapolis, the Cayman S turns into corners eagerly. Selecting the sport-plus setting awakens the car but it's less alive than the outgoing model, providing diminished feedback.

Though its mid-engine balance is better than ever, we think it's slightly compromised by the electrically-assisted steering Porsche has introduced. It's just about the best execution of this increasingly prevalent technology we've driven but it can't match the hydraulic units that made previous Porsches so communicative.

That said, the 2014 Cayman S is now a match for the more GT-oriented Carrera. Enjoy it at full gallop.

See more of the Cayman S on the Porsche webpages



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I once had to design a dining room table 'strong enough to dance an Irish jig upon' ... That was quite an unusual brief!

David Linley - bespoke furniture designer

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