

Thoroughbred thrills

Putting the Ferrari 488 Spider through its paces in the Brecon Beacons

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No
08

ThePick
CARS

3.9-litre
twin-turbocharged V8
Engine

661bhp
Power

203mph
Top speed

3 seconds
0 - 62mph

£204,400
Starting price



I effortlessly flick the carbon-fibre paddle shift and drop into second, the hairpin ahead racing towards me as I lightly squeeze the brake pedal and hurl into the corner. The tyres hold steadfast as I career around the bend, and the rear end gives a little squeal as I ease back onto the throttle. I hear the twin-turbochargers of the 3.9-litre V8 beast ignite, sending a flurry of air into the engine as I depress the throttle further. At 3,000rpm, the valves open and a throaty gurgle erupts from the exhausts; a gurgle so synonymous with the car I'm driving that I whoop at its note. A quick up-shift and I'm away along the perfectly linear stretch of road, chasing the gears, chasing the power, a wide smile on my face. I'm on the Black Mountain Pass in the depths of the Brecon Beacons, at the helm of the wondrous Ferrari 488 Spider.

When the 488 Spider was revealed last year, it was to industry-wide celebration. As the successor to the 458 Spider, and as the most powerful Spider to ever come out of Maranello, it tastily furthers Ferrari's determination to produce exquisitely race-tuned machines. In addition, the 488 represents Ferrari's ambition to dominate in the turbocharged category. Yes, when we think of Ferrari, we think of

weighty, naturally-aspirated engines, as evidenced by the show-stopping V12 812 Superfast revealed in Geneva earlier this year. But we must not ignore the wild thrill of the V12's little brother. With an impressive 661bhp, the 488 gives you endless opportunities to experience that Ferrari-fuelled adrenaline rush. With almost all of the Spider's technology originating on the F1 track, it's unsurprising that even at low speeds you get a sense of its racing pedigree. And to keep you chasing the power, Ferrari has adjusted the seven-speed gearbox to allow the full 661bhp to be available only in the top three gears. Racing, it appears, is what the 488 was designed for.

It's also astonishingly good-looking. Ferrari have got the proportions just right, and the Spider itself takes on many different guises. When the retractable hardtop folds neatly away, in a staggering 14 seconds, the entire profile of the car eases and becomes more relaxed. In a similar ilk to the Porsche Targa, and heavily inspired by the famed Ferrari 308GTS, the 488 Spider becomes a sectional cabriolet, where you feel entirely exposed, but without any of the downsides that come with a convertible. Even on the motorway I felt warm, comfortable



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► and could hold a conversation without raising my voice. I suppose what’s most impressive here is the structural integrity of the Spider, which matches that of the coupé. It goes to show the level of Ferrari’s research and development, pushing the boundaries of design and material performance. I’m also impressed by Ferrari’s attention to the driver’s primary need: comfort. Unlike the 458 Spider, which was cramped, the 488 is roomy and comfortable – at 6ft 6in, my legs have space, my head has room, and the all-too-familiar lumbar pain is far from thought, even on the long journey to the depths of Wales.

There is something about the 488 Spider that makes it even more Ferrari-like than the coupé. Although I wasn’t in the beauty of Tuscany, but rather on wet roads in the Brecon Beacons, the 488 brought everything I wanted in a Ferrari to the fore. The sounds, the smells, the raw speed; you feel it all, and enjoy every visceral minute. When all is said and done, the Ferrari 488 Spider is a breathtaking machine; a wild supercar that perpetually wants more, and there’s little better than that. ⑥