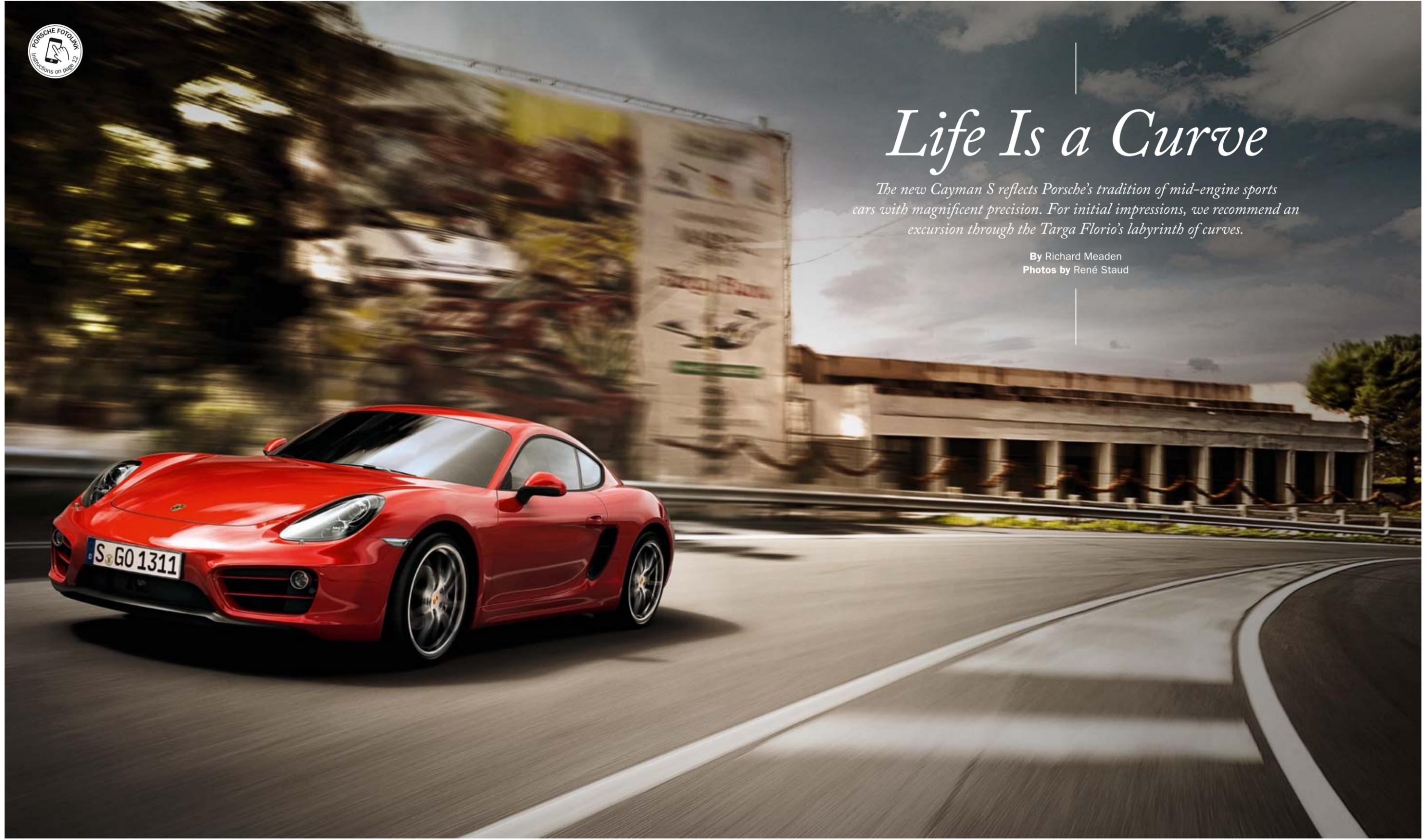




Life Is a Curve

The new Cayman S reflects Porsche's tradition of mid-engine sports cars with magnificent precision. For initial impressions, we recommend an excursion through the Targa Florio's labyrinth of curves.

By Richard Meaden
Photos by René Staud





The Cayman S
takes the Via Isnello
in Collesano

Temptation takes many forms, but few are so irresistible as a deserted mountain road, its twists and turns draped invitingly across the landscape, snaking away into the far distance, the stuff that dreams are made of.

It's an evocative scene that could be straight from Porsche's illustrious motorsport past, when some of the greatest drivers in the world did battle on public roads in the fastest cars of the era. Races such as the Targa Florio on the rugged island of Sicily, where Porsche triumphed eleven times in eighteen years before the event was finally deemed too dangerous for international competition.

That final win was forty years ago, but Porsche's bond with the open road has never waned. There's no clock ticking today. No victory to be fought for, no history to be made, yet still your pulse quickens at the prospect of the challenging miles to come. This is how a great car and a great road should make you feel. This is what it feels like to drive the new Porsche Cayman.



Like every Porsche sports car, the Cayman can trace its pedigree back to those glory days via a strand of DNA that connects all road-going Porsches to racing successes of the past. In the case of the Cayman, those enviable genetics run right back to the first of Porsche's Targa Florio winners—the mid-engine 550 Spyder—but its ancestry is at its most obvious when you recall the gorgeous 904 Carrera GTS, winner of the 1964 Targa.

Of course, the demands of 21st-century motoring mean that no road car can match the diminutive size and

The new Cayman S
on the legendary
Strada Statale 120
to Caltavuturo

single-minded design of a mid-20th-century racing car, but the Cayman's shape and proportions retain the same fluidity and appealing rightness. Clean, uncorrupted curves shrink-wrap the hardware to evoke what lies beneath, such as those deeply sculpted doors that channel air through intakes to feed the mid-mounted engine. At the rear, a smooth hatchback and voluptuous buttresses meld into a wraparound rear spoiler that flows seamlessly into the taillights, creating one of the most successful and distinctive details of the Cayman's functional—and beautiful—exterior form.

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It may not be a racing car, but the Cayman's design is informed by those timeless motorsport obsessions with minimizing weight, maximizing efficiency, and boosting all-round performance by means of intelligent engineering. These objectives have been pursued with fanatical zeal by Porsche's brightest minds, the results being a new Cayman that is not only lighter and more powerful than its predecessor, but also faster and more fuel-efficient.

Still, as all Porsche engineers know, it's not about the fact that the Cayman's body structure is 44 percent alu-

minum and boasts a 40-percent increase in torsional stiffness. Nor is it about a 2.3-inch-longer wheelbase, a 1.6-inch-wider track at the front axle, or weight savings of up to 66 pounds and as much as a 15-percent reduction in fuel consumption. No, like with every Porsche, it's not about the adoption of technology for its own sake, but rather how the advancement and application of that technology enhance the driving experience that really counts.



Which brings us back to the road and our adventure in the Cayman. As you'd expect of a mid-engine sports coupe, you sit low and snug, perfectly positioned behind the steering wheel with adjustable height and reach. Thanks to the longer wheelbase you have more space, yet you still feel cocooned in a cockpit that's intimate and of exceptionally high quality. Your view through the windshield provides a tantalizing hint of the Cayman's fresh, muscular curves thanks to the rising arc of the fenders as they climb to meet the base of the A pillars. Glance at the door mirrors and you're treated to a reflection of the Cayman's fulsome rear haunches, while the rearview mirror showcases the graceful speed-dependent rise and fall of the new rear wing. Wherever you look, the Cayman makes you smile.

With the road spooling away before you, temptation wins the day. As your pace increases, your point of focus is directed solely through the windshield, your sense of connection increasing as you become ever more immersed in the driving experience. There aren't many things that sound better than a Porsche flat-six at high revs, and the 3.4-liter engine of the Cayman S is no exception.

It positively sings to the redline, revving with infectious enthusiasm and delivering serious performance that seamlessly blends mid-range torque with top-end zing. Breathing through the optional sports exhaust, its exu-

The Cayman's design is informed by timeless motorsport obsessions with minimizing weight, maximizing efficiency, and boosting all-round performance by means of intelligent engineering.

A longer wheelbase and wider track ensure even greater stability in curves



PASM has three settings for smooth to bumpy roads



berant voice could be an echo from the Targa Florio itself, howling under full throttle and delivering a percussive fusillade of pops and crackles with every downshift.

With 325 horsepower propelling just 2,910 pounds (2,976 lbs. with PDK transmission), the Cayman S is supremely responsive, yet never so fast as to feel intimidating or excessive. With wide-track suspension and the added control of Porsche Torque Vectoring, which works in conjunction with a limited-slip differential to maximize drive and stability out of corners, you can put every last horsepower to good use. As a result, there's formidable traction; but should you breach those limits, Porsche Stability Management provides a discreet and minimally intrusive safety net. Under ideal conditions, and with growing confidence, you can lean harder and harder on the available grip, testing the prodigious levels

The Targa Florio's mountain roads reach elevations of nearly 2,000 feet





The last straight stretch
before the finish; world
championship races usually
consisted of ten laps

of road-holding until you can feel the tires just begin to relinquish their grasp of the road. It's an intoxicating process, and one of which you could surely never tire.

The Cayman's natural balance makes it intuitive to drive hard, while its progressive limits are always encouraging, never punishing. New electromechanical power-steering contributes to the overall increase in fuel efficiency, yet remains precise and direct, providing plenty of feedback and allowing you to position the Cayman with confidence and accuracy even on the most relentlessly twisty road. When combined with the optional Porsche Active Suspension Management (PASM), it's possible to stiffen the suspension to exploit the smoothest surfaces, or relax the damping a little to allow the Cayman to work in harmony with bumpy tarmac.

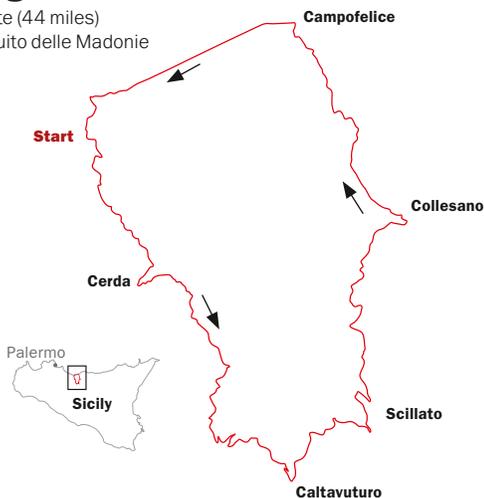


Fitted with the optional seven-speed PDK transmission, each gearshift is but a finger flex away, every pull on the left- or right-hand paddle delivering an effortless, instantaneous gear shift for maximum acceleration and the satisfaction of absolute control at all times. It's a brilliant system, but for those who prefer the purity and challenge of the standard manual transmission, there's a neat surprise, at least if specified in conjunction with the Sport Chrono package, for when you select Sport Plus mode, every downshift is accompanied by an automated throttle blip that replicates the perfect heel-and-toe technique.

It's a memorable, tactile development that maximizes the excitement and satisfaction you can get from the

Targa Florio

Route (44 miles)
Circuito delle Madonie



Fading charm:
The stone wall
along the pit lane
in Cerda



manual transmission. Whether you seek contemporary control and immediacy or traditional thrills with a modern twist, the Cayman delivers.

As is customary for a Porsche, the brakes are brilliantly sensitive and powerful, with a firm, consistent pedal no matter how hard you work them. Stiffer calipers, improved brake pad design, and a larger contact surface are just the start. Cooling has also been improved, while the Cayman S gets bigger front discs that were originally developed for the 911 Carrera. For the ultimate in stopping power and stamina, both the Cayman and the Cayman S can be ordered with optional Porsche Ceramic Composite Brakes (PCCB), which increase resistance to fade and wear, and also reduce unsprung mass for enhanced wheel control. As ever, yellow calipers are a discreet visual clue for true Porsche aficionados to appreciate.



A great road is all it takes to learn that there's something genuinely magical about the new Cayman. Film-star looks and race-car athleticism are rare enough qualities, but when combined with exceptional refinement and everyday practicality, the Cayman makes for a bewitching combination. Above all, no matter your experience level, the Cayman feels like it was born to tackle corners, with its natural poise, agility, and carefully crafted dynamism ensuring that it's never less than an utterly rewarding and engaging machine. It might be four decades since the public roads were a natural habitat for racing, but in the new Cayman it's clear that Porsche still knows how to build a winner. ●

CAYMAN S (TYPE 981)

Engine: Six-cylinder mid-engine boxer

Displacement: 3,436 cc

Power: 325 hp (239 kW)

Maximum torque: 273 lb.-ft. at 4,500 rpm

0-60 mph: 4.7 (4.6*) sec.

Top track speed: 176 (175*) mph

* with Porsche double-clutch transmission (PDK)