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**B**uy any normal car and you have to dicker over options, extras, and things like floor mats. Buy the new Ferrari 456 GTA and the Italian automaker generously spares you all that annoying decision-making. You see, everything's included as standard on the grand touring Ferrari—including a five-piece set of sumptuous leather luggage, precision fit to the curvatures of the car's trunk and obviously liberated from the most relaxed, lanolin-swathed bovine on God's green earth.

Showing off the luggage to gape-mouthed friends seems to be its most common use, however, as the notion of subjecting the ultra-expensive virgin hides to the tortures of America's baggage handlers feels tantamount to high treason. Not only would Enzo likely roll over in his grave at the first gash, but he'd probably find his way to a pay phone and read you the riot act. Interestingly, the luggage set in our stunning black test car was wrapped in plastic, as well as protected further by individual green velour shrouds. Uh, are we supposed to take off the plastic but leave on the shrouds, or what? Perhaps the best solution would be to set up the luggage in one's living room as a shrine to beautiful cattle, and buy a set of more dispensable baggage for travel.

Free suitcases aside, the 456 GTA is still a phenomenally terrific automobile. With Pininfarina's distinctive wedge-shape styling, a 436-horsepower V-12 powerplant, aluminum

and composite body panels, and more subtle clout than Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan, this is a machine that far surpasses the needs of all but the most discriminating of car enthusiasts. And if that's not enough to ensure rarity, the \$229,950 pricetag should do the trick.

Following the tradition of four-seat Ferraris such as the first 250 "2+2" in 1960, the 330 of 1964, and the '72 365 GT4, the 456 GTA expands the regular 456 GT's purview one step further by including an automatic transmission. Codesigned by FFD Ricardo and Ferrari, the rear-mounted four-speed transaxle is electronically operated via interface with the Bosch Motronic M5.2 engine-control computer and is able to change from "GT" to "sport" shift-logic modes without a driver-activated pushbutton. The best tactic for city driving is to leave the metal shifter in third gear (a 1:1 ratio) and save the 0.68:1 ratio fourth cog for the highway. Nonetheless, the automatic will be welcomed by those who regularly suffer through urban traffic, as it can deliver a wallop of performance that belies its normally sedate temperament. However, be advised the character of the car remains the most rapacious in six-speed manual 456 GT form.

It's with the automatic that the 456 takes on a true dual-personality. Fire up the delicious 5.5-liter DOHC 65-degree V-12 and you won't have the urge to blip the throttle incessantly as with the manual gearbox car. Instead of powering away from stoplights and running to redline in the first two

**FOR \$230,000 YOU  
GET MATCHING  
LUGGAGE**

by C. Van Tune

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEVIN WING

# FERRARI 456 GTA



gears, you'll find yourself focusing more on the culture of driving such a machine, taking time to caress the comely cowhides, finding the correct mood music on the powerful stereo, and looking in store windows for 50-percent-off sales on Armani suits. Then, just as you're thinking this isn't so much a sports car as a touring cocoon, some smartass in a 911 tries to out-accelerate you from an intersection and sneak by you in the gutter lane.

To quote George Bush: "Not gonna happen."

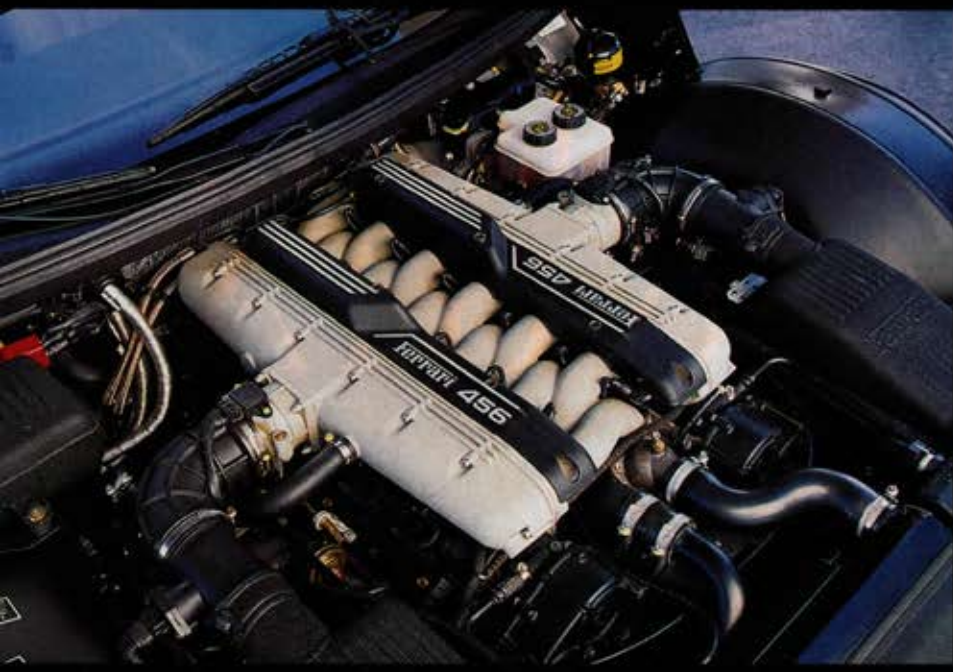
Plant your right foot on the firewall and the luxu-Ferrari transforms into an unholy she-beast from another dimension, lunging off the line with the urge of big-cube torque and rocketing its 3898 pounds to 60 mph in 4.9 seconds. With 436 horses at 6250 rpm, 398 pound-feet of torque at 4500 rpm, and a 7250-rpm redline, this 10.6:1-compression-ratio engine continues to accelerate rapidly as road speeds build.

By the time the quarter-mile elapses in 13.3 seconds at 105.2 mph, you've either blown that Porsche onto someone's manicured dichondra lawn or the Beverly Hills police have set up a roadblock and await your imminent arrival.

At wide-open throttle, the automatic shifts crisply enough to bark the rear tires on the 1-2 gear change, though during more normal driving it's as unobtrusive as a BMW or Mercedes unit. From freeway speeds the performance becomes truly staggering, with a kickdown into second gear forceful enough to pull your ears back toward the headrest and rocket you to triple-digit velocities in a heartbeat. Above 4000 rpm, the intoxicating wail of the 48 valves and dozen tuned exhaust ports is better than anything Mozart ever penned, encouraging you to be really bad and taste the sweet juices of all-out top speed. We did just that, all 177 mph of heady forward motion. And we want to do it again!

Evoking 436 horsepower from 334 cubic inches, without the aid of a trick like turbocharging or supercharging, ranks this Ferrari's V-12 as one of the most thrilling powerplants currently in production. Weighing only 518 pounds, the all-aluminum engine sits far enough rearward in the chassis to allow a 49/51-percent front/rear weight distribution (an improvement over the six-speed 456 GT's front/rear balance of 51/49 percent).

That factor, plus the inherent smart design of the car's chassis (tubular steel with welded-on aluminum bodywork, suspended by upper and lower control arms, coil springs, and anti-roll bars front and rear) produces a package that remains highly controllable and secure-feeling over a wide variety of surfaces—and at every speed up to terminal velocity. Automatic-adjustable-damping shocks at all four corners and automatic-leveling rear suspension help maintain proper ride



and handling characteristics regardless of whether the car's fully loaded or with only the driver on board.

Fitted respectively front and rear with beefy 255/45ZR17 and 285/40ZR17 Bridgestone rubber and backed up by road-race-ready disc brakes with aluminum calipers and anti-lock at every corner, the big mover from Maranello goes, turns, and stops like a much smaller vehicle. Despite its 186.2-inch overall length (18.7 inches longer than a Jeep Cherokee), 29-gallon fuel tank filled to capacity, and resulting near-two-ton curb weight, the 456 GTA maneuvered through our 600-foot slalom at an average speed of 65.2 mph, conquered the skidpad at 0.88 g, and stopped from 60 mph in an amazing 114 feet.

It's difficult to get a sense of this car's size in photographs. Pininfarina's deft body sculpting has resulted in a shape that masks its grand scale, so it's not until you get to see the car in person

(especially viewed from the rear) that you realize its relative enormity. Bring a tape measure and you'll find the 456 GTA is 3.6 inches wider than a Lexus LS 400, but sits atop a wheelbase 2.8 inches shorter than that of a new Camry. The extra bumper-to-bumper acreage is taken up mostly by the Ferrari's long composite-construction hood, so you'll realize the cockpit is commodious only for the front two humans. The rear "+2" seats are scooped out enough to accommodate narrow butts of real adults, but the head- and legroom is so sparse that you won't want to be back there for long.

Slide into the business seat and breathe in the savory smell of big-buck motoring, where virtually everything you'll touch is either real leather or polished alloy metal. Slide the tiny ignition key into place and engage the precision-sounding starter, then take a moment to commit it all to permanent memory. Your first drive, whether a

not caring if those speeding tickets raise your car insurance premiums. So, if you have the monetary equivalent of five and a half new Corvettes to spend on one car, why not go for the best grand touring coupe on the planet?

Just don't let the skycap grab your luggage. **MT**



**Rich cowhides, a 200-mph speedometer, and more sex appeal than Yasmin Bleeth, Fiona Apple, and Tea Leoni combined promise you'll have big fun in the 456 GTA. Under the composite hood lives a 5.5-liter/436-horsepower V-12 connected to a rear-mounted four-speed automatic transaxle that'll take you to 177 mph. This is grand touring at its finest.**

banzai midnight run to Las Vegas or just a 7000-rpm blast around the block, will be one of those incredible experiences that even Tom Clancy would have trouble retelling with proper drama. It's this taste of the rarefied air of the millionaire lifestyle that portends European junkets in a Gulf-stream execujet, vacationing in Monte Carlo with Michael Schumacher, and

## TECH DATA

### Ferrari 456 GTA

#### GENERAL

Location of final assembly	Maranello, Italy
Body style	2-door, 4-passenger
EPA size class	Subcompact
Drivetrain layout	Front engine, rear drive
Airbag	Dual

#### POWERTRAIN

Engine type	65° V-12, aluminum block/heads
Bore x strokes, in./mm	3.56 x 2.95/90.4 x 75.0
Displacement, ci/cc	334/5474
Compression ratio	10.6:1
Valve gear	DOHC, 4 valves/cylinder
Fuel/induction system	Multi-point fuel injection
Horsepower, hp @ rpm, SAE net	436 @ 6250
Torque, lb-ft @ rpm, SAE net	398 @ 4500
Horsepower/liter	79.6
Redline, rpm	7250
Transmission type	4-speed automatic transaxle
Recommended fuel	Premium unleaded

#### DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase, in./mm	102.4/2600
Track, f/r, in./mm	62.4/63.2/1585/1606
Length, in./mm	186.2/4730
Width, in./mm	75.6/1920
Height, in./mm	51.2/1300
Ground clearance, in./mm	4.7/119
Base curb weight, lb	3898
Weight distribution, f/r, %	49/51
Cargo capacity, cu ft	6.8
Fuel capacity, gal	29.1
Weight/power ratio, lb/hp	8.9

#### CHASSIS

Suspension, f/r	Upper and lower control arms, coil springs, anti-roll bar/upper and lower control arms, coil springs, anti-roll bar, auto-leveling system
Steering type	Rack and pinion, variable power assist
Turning circle, ft	38.0
Brakes, f/r	Vented discs/vented discs, ABS
Wheels, in.	17 x 8.5/17 x 10.0, cast magnesium
Tires	255/45ZR17/285/40ZR17 Bridgestone Expedia

#### PERFORMANCE

Acceleration, sec	
0-60 mph	4.9
0-100 mph	12.1
Standing quarter mile, sec/mpg	13.3/105.2
Top speed, mph	177
Braking, 60-0 mph, ft	114
Lateral acceleration, g	0.88
Speed through 600-ft slalom, mph	85.2
EPA fuel economy, mpg, city/hwy	10/16

#### PRICE

Base price	\$221,950
Options included	Gas guzzler tax (\$6400) preparation fee (\$450), delivery fee (\$1350)
Price as tested	\$229,950

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