

THE RSRNURBURG EXPERIENCE

GETTING ACQUAINTED IN THE PORSCHE CAYMAN S

Content by KuhenkV. Edited by Douglas R. Tan. Images by Konstantinos Sidiras of RSRNurburg.

I work at the Nurburgring. For most petrolhead's, this could well sound like your ultimate job description right there. I'm here as part of the RSRNurburg team - the 'Rings premier race car rental and track driving academy - where, as an employee, you do find yourself toying with some of the best cars in the world every other day. McLaren, Ferrari, Porsche, Lotus, and etc. - just some of the names to be found in the office's key holders. This brings me to the subject of the 2013 Porsche Cayman S - dressed in red racing stripes and RSRNurburg livery - which I found myself in recently as part of a "getting familiar" phase in the place they call the "Green Hell".



The Lotus Exige 240S. RSRNurburg has a number of them, and it's quite the thrill to have 3 similarly liveried ones filling my rear view mirror at one point during the drive



The current generation Cayman, in my opinion at least, looks a million miles better than its predecessor. Both the 991 and this 981 generation Cayman have subtle design details that make an iconic and instantly recognizable shape very futuristic without trying too hard. The same can be said about the interior. Sheer quality aside, everything is just so driver-focused in there - the seats, the pedal and steering wheel positions are spot on. But I have to admit to feeling slightly less engaged using a PDK 'box in a Porsche after experiencing the rifle bolt-like manual 'box from the 997 GT3 I managed to drive not long ago.



The guys from the Autogridz HQ pointed out the refinement in the Cayman's ride and drive quality on KL roads, and I am glad to report that it is

a very much relevant opinion in Germany. There weren't any unruly shunts from the double clutch 'box, the power is creamy and smooth in its

delivery, the suspension never jarring, and the entire setup, for all its dynamic focus, still manages to be cossetting enough to soak the minor bumps and



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undulations on the road exceptionally well. This is suspension tuning nearing perfection in my books.

My benchmark for the ultimate in on-road performance and feedback so far is the Lotus Exige 240S. RSRNurburg has a number of them, and it's quite the thrill to have 3 similarly liveried ones filling my rear view mirror at one point during the drive. With no power assistance and a weight that will shame any supermodel; the British flyweight relays feedback of the road and grip levels through the

seats and steering so precisely that if you want any more clarity you'd have to rub your own palms on to the tarmac outside. The Cayman provides similar levels of communication through its steering and chassis, but it's like it's all been distilled through velvet, so you can charge down a mountain road with an opulent ambiance without having to feel like you're trapped in a claustrophobic corner of a WW2 battleship's engine room (yes, I'm talking about the Exige).

320bhp might not sound much on paper but when you only have 1320kg to push around, it is more than enough. The flat six is eager to rev, especially in Sports Plus mode, though I'm sure the climate here will have it operating at a marginally higher level than back in Malaysia's humidity. Not to mention, the fuel here is

better. You can sense that the engine's been left unshackled and it's always hell bent on hunting down the revs. An E92 M3 V8 feels too bulky in comparison despite having 400bhp. The Cayman is compact, offers wonderful all-round visibility (dare I say better than a Megane RS265?) which is important when taking on the 'Ring and its surrounding roads, while the lack of weight affords it fantastic agility for the narrow (and sometimes very wet) hairpin turns between Adenau and Hohe Acht. Perhaps we'll do a full description of the Nurburgring sometime soon.

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but the richness in greenery makes this perimeter a very pleasant place to drive in and of course, as you'd expect from Germany, the road conditions are simply superb. It doesn't get much better than this – a great route snaking through natural surroundings only lightly threaded on by commercialization - there's a nice amount to soak in from a romance point of view, and it certainly helps that I'm in a Cayman, sharing road space with some fantastic cars as part of the drive.

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Having a car that inspires confidence is very important to have fun here and again, this is where the Cayman fits the bill so well. In many other possible alternatives, the Exige for example, driving briskly will leave you feeling as relaxed as playing a round of Russian Roulette.

It is much the same when you're driving on the Nurburgring Nordschleife. On a Tourist Driving day, the track will host everything from supercars right down to family station wagons. On one lap you may see a fully tricked out GT3 RS blasting past you at

Kesselchen like you're standing still, despite doing 200kph in an R26.R Megane, and the next minute you'd pass a family station wagon with a golden retriever staring at you from the back window with its tongue hanging out. The track should be treated as more of a mountain road with traffic and no speed limits, like the road up to Genting Highlands... turned up by 11. It's in this environment that the Cayman truly shines. All Porsche's are developed at the Nurburgring, so after all, this is its 'home turf'.

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The sports car's 46:54 weight distribution really does yield its best results here, prompting good turn-in on all 154 corners of the Nordschleife. For a beginner, this car inspires more assuredness than Obama did in 2008, never feeling nervous when pushed for an answer. The PASM and traction control systems are not intrusive but they do play the 'hand of god' just at the right moment if you've overcooked it a bit at any point. And the brakes, my goodness. Fantastic pedal feel, they're never really tested or bothered on the public roads, but on the North circuit they truly come alive.

Porsches rule the Nordschleife; they are built tough, they're relatively straightforward, and they are bloody fast. Therefore it's only natural that the 'Ring is filled with Porsche GT3's of all ages and variants, going on lap after lap. In such an environment, the Cayman is what I'd like to call the "Goldilocks car" – a car that has just the right amount of pace and everything else to make it the perfect proposition to master this momentous circuit. There's no sense of intimidation, and you can quickly get comfortable, which makes it easy to concentrate on tackling the course and exploring the limits with each lap.

The drive back to the RSRNurburg garage shows off the Cayman's more relaxed side, and as mentioned earlier, it does this with equal aplomb. For me, with the windows down, it proves to be a good means of enjoying the rest of the scenery, most of which whizzed by in a blur earlier. If you love driving, then coming here, if you haven't already, should be on your list of future plans, and the Cayman would be one of the best ways of getting acquainted.

I believe it's been pointed out before in the Cayman S feature back in Malaysia that, as a sports car, it is in a class of its own. Well, even here, thousands of miles away, it still is. ■



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