

FUEL TEST- BP ULTIMATE CLASH OF THE ULTIMATES

WE BRING TOGETHER THE ULTIMATE SUPERCAR MARQUE WITH BP'S ULTIMATE FUEL TO SEE WHETHER BP'S ECONOMY CLAIMS STACK UP



Opportunities like this don't come up too often so it's best to make the most of them. To be honest,

I hadn't really known what I was going to do with the 612 Scaglietti that sat before me at Ferrari's less than glamorous Slough headquarters but filling it with BP Ultimate fuel and seeing how far I'd get seemed as good an idea as any.

With a monster 108-litre tank capacity, the Scaglietti is supposed to manage around 315 miles on a tankful of fuel. I was intrigued to see if filling the car with BP Ultimate would give it a little more in the way of range. The response side of things I already had worked out, after all we'd performed back to back tests using Ultimate on our last Performance Car of The Year event at Germany's Nurburgring and were satisfied with the findings. Here was a ready made excuse to see if any fuel economy benefits could be exercised and what better than a car that averages just over 13 miles per gallon of fuel?

The first job was to brim the car's tank with BP Ultimate fuel. Whether the attendants at the Furnival garage had ever seen one car slurp over £98 of petrol was open to debate but the guy behind the counter did a rather obvious double take when the till rang the total, checking the sum with what was sitting on his forecourt. Perhaps he was content that a man who, despite being dressed rather casually, who owned a £177,500 Ferrari wouldn't blink at signing off such a bill.

With the fuel indicator looking reassuringly turgid, I aimed the car's long nose south. Just getting used to the intimidating size of the Ferrari was quite enough to prevent any temptation to bury the throttle pedal and the local traffic wasn't getting my economy run off to a promising start.

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Still, better economy isn't the only reason for switching to BP Ultimate. The fuel claims to deliver 50% more cleaning power compared to regular unleaded and in tests, has prevented 97 per cent of the inlet valve deposits that can form when using typically low grade supermarket style fuels. This makes an appreciable difference to performance. Many of today's cars (the Ferrari being a perfect example) are built with enormous attention to detail paid to the way fuel is burnt. A slight degradation in the way the fuel enters the combustion chamber can have a very marked effect on the car's responsiveness. If you're spending serious money on your car, skimping on the fuel has to be a false economy.

The first target on the map was the historic Brooklands race track in Weybridge, Surrey which would open with a run along the M4 and then a crawl around the M25 for a few clicks. Having just missed the morning rush hour into London, the Ferrari was able to lope along with less than 3,000rpm on the clock yet still force me to keep one eye on motorway bridges and lay-bys. The traffic backed up in one or two places past the Heathrow Terminal Five works, but switching the F1 gearbox into an automatic mode made this crawl a whole lot more manageable. Unfortunately images of 8mpg kept flashing across my mind.

A knowledgeable Ferrari 456 owner was at Brooklands as I rolled up to the museum and was keen to know the details of the car that had replaced his own. With 540bhp on tap and more space in the rear, the Scaglietti manages to be more exciting and more practical than the 456 although there's little doubt that the older car represents a more aesthetically pleasing piece of styling. A quick glance at the clock tower showed that I needed to make tracks, in this instance to Goodwood. This 45 mile run would take me across the North Downs through some of the most beautiful countryside the South East has to offer. A great route for drivers, this has some empty roads and great bends. I'd also planned to get a sneaky run up Lord March's drive - the famous Goodwood Hill as used in the Festival of Speed.

As it turns out, there were far too many visitors to do anything but trundle up the hill, recalling instances where many illustrious drivers have got it rather wrong on this seemingly innocuous stretch of tarmac. An errant golf ball on the way out almost made for an interesting insurance claim before the Ferrari once again gained pace, heading for Bournemouth, home of one of the highest Ferrari concentrations in the country. If you want to play supercar spotting and don't want to sit in traffic-clogged London or Manchester, this is the place to come. Ferrari 360s are everywhere, a pair of Lamborghini Gallardos

nosed up to one another outside a restaurant but mine was the only Scaglietti in town. What's more my calculated fuel economy average had risen to an encouraging 15.5mpg, thanks in no small part to a very gentle cruise down the M27.

The A303 past Andover was better still, open flowing and affording me a treat with a string of classic Porsches headed for the Thruxton circuit. Things really got sticky as soon as I hit Basingstoke. You'd think that in a town with this many roundabouts and which has obviously been designed around the motor car that things would flow but everything had ground to a halt. The radio report used the old "sheer weight of traffic" chestnut. I sat there, transfixed by my average fuel economy figure gradually diminishing before my very eyes. The fuel indicator showed the slimmest sliver of beige left as I closed on Maidenhead. I was starting to formulate my excuses to Jason Harris, Ferrari's PR man, as to why his Scaglietti was sitting with its hazard lights on at the side of the M4 and cursed my overconfidence in not filling a plastic can with a few litres just in case. The yellow light of the Ferrari HQ had never been more welcoming.

The final reckoning? The Scaglietti managed to cover 356 miles at an average of 15 miles per gallon. On this basis, there was about 400 yards worth of fuel left in the thing. Given that I'd rather 'enjoyed' the car on the run to Goodwood I was amazed. Unscientific, maybe, but BP Ultimate had got me further and faster than I thought possible. Fun? Just a bit...