



## SWEET SIXTEEN

## 2013 PORSCHE BOXSTER S

MSRP: \$60,900 · AS TESTED: \$90,535

**B**oxster arrives for 2013 riding its first, full redesign in 16 years. Visually, the new car is a stunner. The familiar, familial front end gets a fresh look, with the windshield tugged four inches forward from the former location.

The scalloped, side view was improved on my test car by a set of 20-inch Carrera Classic rims, wrapped in Pirelli P Zero tires. The double barrel, center mount tailpipes return in back, where they're joined by oversize, LED tail lamps. In all, a classy update on a classic design.

The new Boxster is dimensionally different than the former models, yet still the same. While the car's footprint of length and width is almost identical to the outgoing version, the wheels have been pulled closer to the corners, and those corners were trimmed. The wheelbase is 2.4 inches longer, with a wider track and a lower center of gravity. The overhangs on both ends are shorter, too. The base Boxster slimmed down

55 lb. over the 2012 edition, while Boxster S models like our test car check in 77 lb. lighter.

The weight loss is complemented by a power gain. The base car's 2.7 liter, direct injection, flat six engine makes 265 h.p. — up 10 over 2012 levels — while S models gain five h.p., for a total of 315, from their 3.4-liter flat six. Both engines are linked to a six-speed manual gearbox, or optional (\$3,200), seven-speed, PDK automatic transmission.

Regular readers of this column know that I favor a stick shift in anything that skews sporty. I think that the driver's active involvement and the enhanced engine control make for a more enjoyable drive. That said, dual clutch automatics are a nice choice for those that want the option of shifting themselves or letting the car do the work.

My test "S" was so equipped, and Porsche's PDK is a good gearbox; smooth and quick to respond to paddle shift requests. So quick, in fact, that the



PDK is faster (and more fuel efficient) than the stick. Porsche reports a 0-60 best for the S of 4.5 seconds, and that number may be conservative. Fuel economy for the S is estimated at 21 mpg's in the city and 30 on the highway.

Torsional rigidity is improved by 40 percent. Cowl shake is basically a non-issue, and even with the optional, tall rims (and rubber-band thin sidewalls), ride quality is quite good. The front suspension is all new and the rear setup carries over with some upgrades. Handling is really exceptional. This is a car that basically goes where you point it, period. And if you get it to a track where you can explore the car's limits (and your own), you'll find that it's impressively capable and forgiving. The car's mid-engine balance and supple chassis are

major reasons, of course. But, a scan of the option list reveals several hardware and electronics contributors as well (see my Boxster Short Take column on page two for details).

Like other Porsches (and other automakers), Boxster now uses electrically-assisted power steering. Some reviewers argue that it provides less feel to the driver than the former hydraulic unit. While they may be right, the difference is so small that only a fractional portion of the car's buyers will ever notice, and even less will care. And there are added advantages in efficiency and interaction with other electronic systems on board.

The interior is handsome and well finished. You sit low in Boxster, with the door sill at about shoulder height. The combination of that, the behind-seats wind deflector, and the car's tall-in-the-tail stance, means that wind buffeting inside is quite well managed. Rear visibility is limited, and even

more so when you raise the roof. The one-button, electric convertible top folds quickly and neatly atop itself. It takes about 10 seconds to raise or lower, and the feat can be accomplished at speeds of up to 32 mph.

The dash layout shows the design influence of the flagship Panamera. Switchgear is plentiful, but logical in its layout. Driving position is first rate, and the Adaptive Sport Seats (part of the — ouch — \$5,265 Premium Package) are 18-way adjustable, and impressively comfortable and supportive.

Interior storage is sparse. Larger cargo benefits from a design novelty of mid-engine cars: front and rear trunks. The split is 5.3 cubic feet in the front (deep) bin, and an additional 4.6 in the (shallow) rear space. The collective capacity is good, by sports car standards. The rear might be big enough to squeeze in a skinny, travel golf bag, but that's a guess from a non-golfer. If you play, make a test fit of your clubs part of your test drive.

Boxster prices start at an MSRP of \$49,500 and range as far as your pockets are deep. Owing to the amount of desirable, available items on the menu, this is one of those cars where DBO (Death By Options) is a distinct possibility. The good news is, it's all a la carte. So, your final price is ultimately a matter of your willpower (or lack thereof). A loaded Boxster S is supremely satisfying, and if your wallet is wide enough, go for it. But a "stripper" base model with few or no options can also be had.

This more elemental Porsche is also a ton of fun, and you'd hardly be roughing it. Either way, the new Boxster is an eye-opener — as charismatic and engaging a driver as any sports car in its class.

A regular contributor to the Times Union for the past 20 years, Dan Lyons is the award-winning author of six books, and photographer of 135 calendars. Read Dan's recent reviews on line anytime at [www.timesunion.com/cars](http://www.timesunion.com/cars).

