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MAGAZINE

## Porsche 911 Turbo S

Venerable Model Keeps Getting Better



## Land Rover Discovery Sport

The first Discovery of what is yet to come

## Rolls-Royce Ghost Series II

The Ultimate Symbol of Success

## BMW's latest 7 Series







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**Publisher**  
Hares Fayad

**Editor in Chief**  
Myles Mellor

**Contributing Writers**  
Andrew Ling  
Benjamin Yong  
Sonia Akraa

**Editor**  
Alex B. G.

**Sub-Editor**  
Boutros C. Michael

**Art Director**  
Ahmad Yazbek

**Photographers**  
Andrew Ling  
Benjamin Yong  
Sami Abed



[www.carbookmagazine.com](http://www.carbookmagazine.com)

**Offices**

(U.A.E.), Dubai  
Jumeirah Lakes Towers,  
JBC 2  
P.O. Box: 50324  
T.: +971 4 457 2348  
F.: +971 4 457 2126

**For Inquiries  
Editorials, Advertisements**  
M.: +971 55 302 5550  
+971 50 653 4050,  
hares@carbookmagazine.com

info@carbookmagazine.com

**Lebanon, Beirut**

P.O. Box 90 -1096  
T. +961 1 513 121  
F. +961 1 513 141

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**Agents Distribution**

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Qatar: Arabian Establishment for Commerce, +9745518898 | London: General Co. for the distribution, +447818088777 | Jordan: Jordan Distribution Agency Co. +96265358855 | Kuwait: United Distribution Co. +9652412820 | Cairo: Today News Corporation, +20225782700

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# Porsche 911 Turbo S

Venerable model keeps getting better



Just when you think the Porsche 911 Turbo S can't possibly get any better, the German luxury manufacturer proves everyone wrong releasing a new version that is faster, prettier and even more advanced. Unveiled at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit in January, the 2017 Turbo S is being offered in both coupe and convertible form factors, making 20 additional horsepower and boasting a whole host of changes.

Before we dive into specifics, a look back at models past. A Turbo trim has been offered in the Porsche

lineup since the early 1970s, and at the time the gnarly, snail-powered monster was truly something unique. Fast forward 40-plus years, however, and virtually all 911s at present have been given twin-turbos of their own, including the Carrera 4 Turbo that offers a lot of the same fun at nearly half the cost. So how and why is Stuttgart, Germany's latest and greatest worth the hefty sticker price? Let's break it down.

### If it ain't broke...

Don't expect a ground-up reimagining of the exterior, as any enthusiast can tell you such methodology

is simply not part of this particular manufacturer's DNA. Subtle but effective enhancements is the name of the game here, such as the redesign of the front fascia sporting side aerodynamic air blades. The LED running lights have been split into two long strips and the centre air intake gains a fin, together bestowing upon the car the illusion of being wider.

Other upgrades include different seven-spoke centre lock wheels measuring 20x9 front and 20x11.5 rear, deletion of the door handle recess covers for a more streamlined look, reworked three-dimensional tail





lamps with four-point brake lights, and a separated deck lid featuring outer longitudinal vents and a centre louvred cover to promote increased air induction for the engine. The dual exhaust tips now resemble quadrangles, finished in black chrome to differentiate from the regular chrome non-S variants.

### Easier infotainment

All 911s, regardless of grade, receive a newly developed iteration of the Porsche Communication Management (PCM) infotainment and navigation system.

Thankfully easier to use than prior examples hampered with too many buttons and switches, PCM utilizes a seven-inch multi-touch monitor integrated into the centre console that recognizes handwritten inputs.

The built-in GPS can access Google StreetView and Google Earth, as well as real-time traffic information.

The process of connecting a compatible smartphone is much simpler, and one can do so via Wi-Fi, Bluetooth or physical cable. Once paired, select vehicle functions can be controlled remotely using an app.

Although the only soundtrack I normally prefer listening to while on the road is the roar of the motor mounted behind the front seats, the 12-speaker Bose stereo sounds fantastic. If you can pony up a little more dough, the 821-watt option by German mobile audio specialist Burmester is even better.

The aforementioned motor is still a force-fed 3.8-litre six-cylinder, and as alluded to in the beginning has been massaged with a larger turbocharger to produce a total of 580 horsepower and 750 Nm of torque. A new dynamic boost function prevents psi from dropping when the accelerator is briefly released, so the engine responds to throttle inputs much quicker than previously.

### New Sport Response button

The popular Sport Chrono Package is now standard equipment on all Turbos. Besides the nifty stopwatch it comes with atop the dash and a GT sport wheel inspired by the 918 Spyder hybrid supercar, it provides user-selectable drive mode settings like Normal, Sport, Sport Plus or Individual. For instance, Sport Plus alters the Porsche Doppelkupplung (PDK) dual-clutch automatic gearbox shift points and stiffens up the suspension, among other things, to allow for a more spirited driving experience. Individual gives the operator the ability to fine tune settings according to his or her liking and store them in the computer. Rounding out the package is a Sport Response button that when pressed, preconditions the powertrain for the maximum possible performance for up to 20







seconds.

What all this results in is the fastest Turbo S offering to date. Savage is the only adjective I can think of to describe the acceleration, capable of shooting the car from 0 to 100 km/h in 2.8 seconds, .01 seconds faster than its predecessor. Top speed is 330 km/h, an increase of 11 km/h. Despite the extra kick-in-the-pants, advancements in engine and transmission management have resulted in better fuel economy than

ever, somewhere in the 9.1 L/100 km range for mixed city and highway use.

#### Driving at the limit

On the safety side of things, the Porsche Stability Management (PSM) System gets a Sport Mode feature too, raising the threshold higher when activated, so that the limits of the car can be reached more closely before PSM kicks in to restore vehicle composure.

There's also an active roll stabilization program, ceramic

brakes, radar-based lane-change assist, park assist sensors, LED headlights with the Porsche Dynamic Light System and a neat front lift aid that can raise the nose by 40 millimetres to clear pesky driveway includes or parking curbs.

Still have any doubts the next-generation Porsche 911 Turbo S is worth it? If not, the car rolls off assembly lines this spring.



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# 2016 Chevrolet Camaro

Better than ever



Each time GM decides to revive one of America's favourite sports cars, the Chevrolet Camaro, it comes back faster, lighter and looking meaner than ever. Enthusiasts will be glad to hear that this trend continues in a big way with the launch of the sixth-generation version.

From far away, the exterior seems familiar, and that's on purpose. It's not until you move closer that you start to notice the differences, like a long, narrow grill spanning the width of the vehicle reminiscent of the first generation Camaro. The roof possesses a more defined shape, and the side profile has a flowing, fastback-like appearance.

Visually, the car appears to be significantly wider and longer, when in fact it's 20 millimetres narrower and 57 mm shorter. Chevy says that's because of the more

sculpted and pronounced features like the beefy rear fenders, and the slightly lower ride height.

## Function and form

Combining aggressive aesthetics with real-world functionality are brake cooling ducts integrated into the front bumper and a set of air vents carved in the hood. There is also a built-in "air curtain" that guides incoming air around the wheels to reduce drag.

Despite the classically inspired styling, the Camaro is chock full of 21st century amenities. Customers can opt for HID projector headlights housing LED signature accents, and matching LED taillights in the higher tier models. Carrying over the theme to the interior is an available LED ambient lighting system complete with "car show" mode, which cycles with all available 24-colours randomly.

Important vehicle information like navigation and performance statistics is conveyed via an eight-inch centre display screen, as is the MyLink infotainment settings. Everything is managed using the Camaro's new Drive Mode Selector located on the centre console, responsible for controlling eight different attributes including dynamic drive modes like Tour and Sport.

## Surround sound

Even engine sound output can be adjusted, due to mechanical sound enhancers installed on our press car. With the 3.6-litre V6 mill and dual-mode exhaust fitted, the mufflers can be bypassed electronically resulting in glorious noise being funnelled into the cabin area through resonators. Thoughtfully, a quiet mode can be activated when civility is required, say



rolling through a residential neighbourhood late at night.

The aforementioned 3.6 L is all-new for 2016 boasting output of 335 horsepower and 385 Nm of torque, and mated to either a six-speed manual transmission or a Hydra-Matic eight-speed automatic gearbox with paddle shifters present in the example CarBook tested. Shifts are snappy and the overall driving feel is responsive, no doubt helped by the optional cooling and Brembo brake package and impressive 90-kilogram weight loss between generations. Much of the shed mass comes from extensive use of aluminum in its construction, which extends to suspension components as well.

Speaking of suspension, the Camaro introduces a multi-link MacPherson strut setup advertised to give increased control and better communication from the electric steering. I had the good fortune of being able to take the rear-wheel drive beast for a lap around a small track, and especially after properly putting it through its paces in a controlled environment, in my opinion the improvements made by the company are tangible rather than just being marketing highlights on paper. And for the true speed junkie, Chevrolet also offers a top-of-the-line 6.2 L LT1 V8 powerplant, shared with the Corvette, in the SS trim pumping out 445 horsepower and a bonkers 455 lb-ft of torque — the most powerful SS they've ever built.





# 2016 Jaguar XF

Jaguar's latest sport luxury sedan has its claws out



A few years ago, Jaguar was still playing to its old-world aesthetics. The S-Type sedan played on the lavish chrome, the quad circular headlamps, and the traditional leaping Jaguar hood ornament that recalled the British firm's heyday in the 1960s. There was no doubt that driving it could make you feel like you borrowed your great uncle's car.

When the XF made it debut in late 2007, its utter rejection of retro design was something fresh, something new, and something the world hadn't seen before from Jaguar. It was this shake up of some of the design vestiges of the 1950s and 1960s that arguably allowed the firm to move forward with its design language.

## Exterior

For 2016, the XF enters its second generation. Sure, it may look similar to its predecessor but this is a whole

new cat. No sheet metal is shared between the two cars. Put the old and new cars side by side and the new car visually looks longer. But the added length is simply a visual trick thanks to its blunter nose, more upright side glass, and longer tail. The new platform offers an extra two inches of wheelbase, but the 2016 XF is only a fraction of an inch shorter overall and lower.

Taking its rightful place between the all-new Jaguar XE compact sports sedan and the full-sized luxury Jaguar XJ sedan, the latest generation XF mirrors the evolution of the Jaguar design language with its sleek, coupe-like profile, long hood with deep power bulge, and a short front overhang.

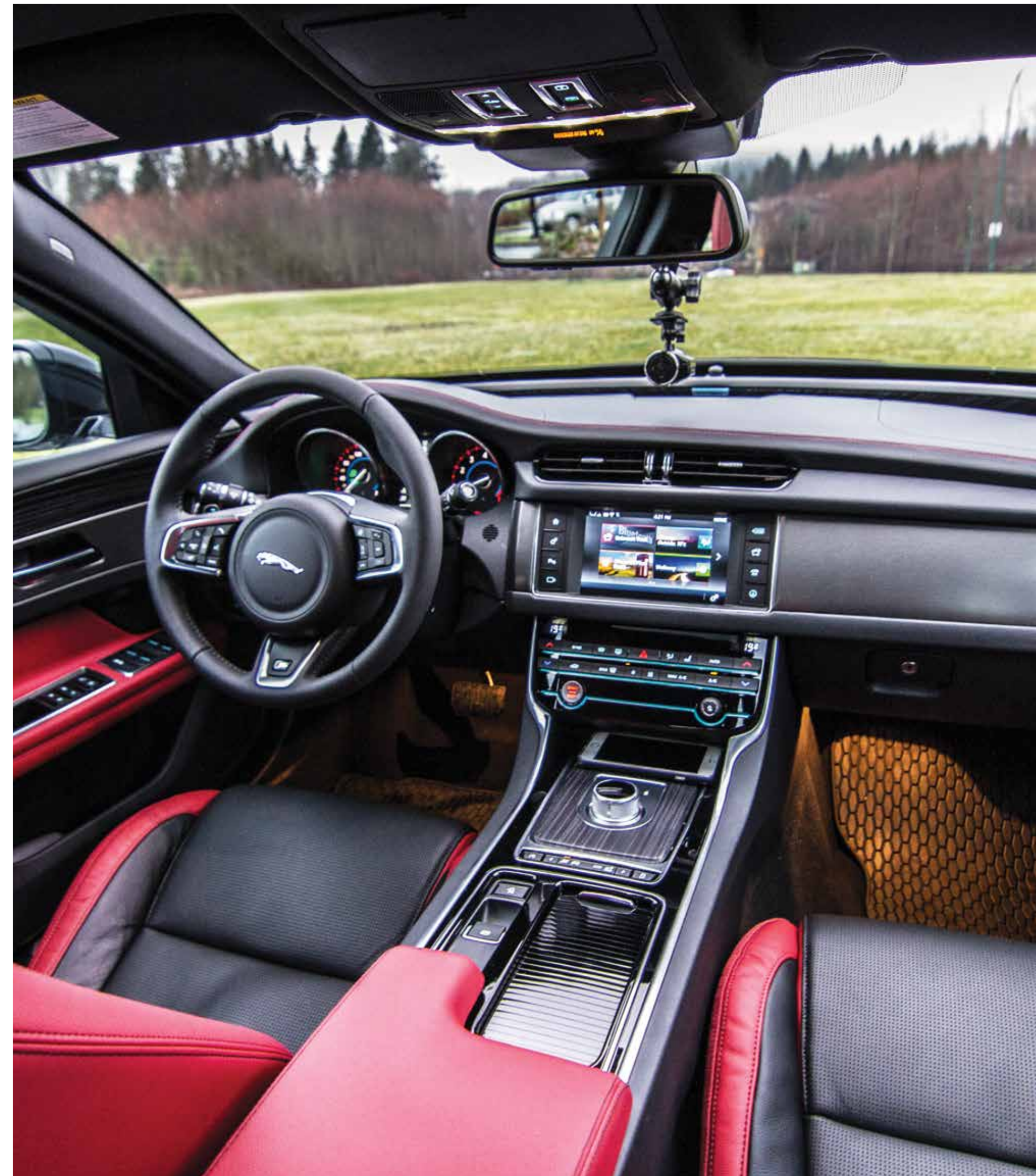
## Aluminium underpinnings

It's well accepted that weight kills all driving fun. That's why auto manufacturers are forever on a quest to reduce weight without compromising safety.

Redesigned from the ground up, this newest generation Jaguar XF is the second Jaguar model to feature the brand's advanced lightweight aluminium-intensive architecture. Aluminium alloys, self-piercing rivets, and structural adhesives are all used in the construction process.

The one-piece aluminium body side stampings contribute to the overall stiffness of the body and also add to surface purity and quality as there are no visible joints. The hood and front fenders are also aluminium, while the front end substructure and cross-car beams are cast from even lighter magnesium alloys. But the whole car is not just made of aluminium and magnesium. Strategically placed high-strength steel is also hidden away to bolster rigidity and improve crashworthiness.

In all, the XF's unibody is 75 per cent aluminium and





28 per cent more rigid than its predecessor. Combined with the other weight savings made throughout the vehicle, the all-wheel-drive XF tips the scales a significant 265 lbs lighter than the previous generation model.

### Performance, Ride and Drive

The all-new Jaguar XF exceeds expectations of how a luxury sports sedan should ride, handle, and steer. Comfort and refinement have been taken to a higher level and combined with excellent agility and responsiveness. The light yet exceptionally stiff body now delivers a near 50:50 weight distribution. Launching with a choice of a 340hp or a 380hp supercharged 3.0L V6, both of which are shared with the F-Type coupé and roadster, and mated to an ZF 8-speed automatic transmission, the XF delivers an exceptional driving experience, blending smooth power delivery with seamless shifting.

This is the first time that the 380hp version of the supercharged V6 has been used in a Jaguar sedan and is reserved for the top of the range XF S. This model is capable of covering the 0-60 mph (96 kph) sprint in 5.1 seconds on its way to an electronically-limited top speed of 155 mph. Power is plentiful, whichever engine you opt for. Performance is silky smooth and power is abundant especially with the 380hp engine from the XF S. First developed for the Jaguar F-Type,

Configurable Dynamics is also available for the XF S, taking the duality of character of the XF to the next level. This system allows the driver to individually tailor the throttle mapping, transmission shift speed, steering feel, and Adaptive Dynamics settings using the touchscreen.

Available with Jaguar's Instinctive All-Wheel-Drive system, the XF uses Intelligent Driveline Dynamics to deliver torque on demand for an optimum balance of performance and all-weather capability.

### On the inside

A longer wheelbase means additional rear leg, knee, and headroom while the shorter front overhang emphasises the car's sporty, rear-wheel-drive stance and the outstanding proportions characteristic to all Jaguar vehicles. The rear bench also features a 40:20:40 split, making it easier to through-load bulky items such as skis or snowboards. The bootlid now features an optional power close function.

The wraparound wood trim lip that runs below the windshield is a beautiful touch. It seamlessly ties together the dash to the doors and gives a cabin a cosy feel to it. The thick rimmed leather steering wheel signals the car's performance capability, but I do wish that at least in XF S trim, it was available with the flat bottom, just as in the F-Type.

With four-zone climate control, heated/cooled front

seats and 10-color ambient lighting, all controlled via the firm's new and much improved InTouch Control Pro infotainment system, the all-new XF reflects the standard for interior luxury and design for Jaguar. The rising Jaguar Drive gear selector and motorised air vents are carried from the previous-generation model, and add a sense of pantomime to the starting process, especially now that the car also adopts the beating heart beat Start/Stop button. It may be a little kitsch for some, but these little touches of surprise and delight help to set the XF apart from its competition.

As expected in this mid-sized luxury class, a host of cutting edge technology is included or optionally available including full-LED headlamps, a laser heads-up display, autonomous emergency braking, adaptive cruise control with queue-assist, lane keeping assist, and semi-automated parking.

### Final thoughts

Elegant and handsome, the all-new XF delivers sophisticated levels of technology, refinement, luxury and comfort combined with drop dead 007-approved styling. Jaguar has done a good job transforming the XF into a mini XJ with its V6 power and sporting luxury.

For those looking for a mid-sized European executive sedan without having to go the typical German route, this is one cool cat that is worth checking out.





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# 2016 Mercedes-Benz SLK300

Classic roadster is as slick as ever



Although Mercedes-Benz is due to rename the classic SLK roadster in 2017 to SLC, in order to maintain consistency with the changing brand nomenclature, that doesn't mean they weren't going to freshen the existing model before its badge is retired.

For 2016, the SLK300 replaces the SLK250 and is packaged with a new engine and transmission combination. The former 1.8-litre four-cylinder mill producing 201 horsepower and 310 Nm of torque has been bumped up to a 2.0 L turbocharged four cylinder making 241 hp and 370 Nm.

## Nine gears and counting

Paired to the powerplant is the 9G-TRONIC automatic nine-speed gearbox, which is an improved version of the outgoing seven-speed. Stepping on the throttle results in snappy, seamless shifting that really

gives the SLK300 some jolt in a civilized, largely quiet fashion. It might not sound like it, but acceleration is brisk and 0-100 km/h can be achieved in 5.8 seconds, according to manufacturer specs.

You can vary the amount and aggressiveness of the gear changes through three selectable modes: Economy, Sport and Manual, the latter to be used in conjunction with the steering-wheel-mounted paddle shifters. There is also an unobtrusive ECO Start/Stop function that turns off the engine while idling.

Combined with the new powertrain setup, fuel economy is improved and over a week of testing, in both top up and down conditions, I averaged a combined city and highway consumption figure of 11.9 L/100 km.

The roadster's appearance has been steadily improving

throughout the generations, and the current variant embodies a look that conveys performance and elegant top-down motoring. The large bi-xenon headlamps and rotund emblem fill the face of the car, and the sport suspension gives the SLK a low, squatting stance.

## Fully loaded

My press vehicle had a handful of bundled options that make sitting and driving in it even more enjoyable. The Panoramic Vario Roof, part of the Premium Package (PP), turns the hardtop into one giant moonroof. Operating the top is great fun as well — the controls are hidden under a flip-up leather palm rest straight out of Mission Impossible.

Included in the PP is the COMAND navigation system, which still ranks among the better OEM GPS



units I've used. The computer accepts destinations quickly and accurately, and inputs are easily entered using a rotary knob, something I normally find cumbersome to manipulate.

## Sixth sense

PARKTRONIC is an available standalone option, and one I'm not sure I could live without. Using built-in sensors fitted around the car, the parking assistance feature emits a series of increasingly urgent beeps whenever you get too close to an unfriendly object. Even though there's no backup camera, I didn't feel as though visual assistance would have been all that more useful given the efficacy of the audible alerts.

The SLK300 represents a refined open-air driving experience without too many flaws, so it will be interesting to see how Mercedes improves upon the two-seater in the remake. A mentionable downside, not necessarily unique to this convertible, is the limited trunk space. Especially when the hardtop is in the retracted position, opening becomes too narrow to fit a moderately sized cardboard box.

The 2016 Mercedes-Benz SLK300 is on sale in dealerships now, and the SLC should be released sometime later this year.



# 2016 Hyundai Sonata Hybrid

Mid-size sedan gets dash of elegance and electrification



You know that weird sensation you get when you can feel someone's eyeballs on the side of your head? I felt that, and felt it often whenever I was driving down the street — in a Hyundai.

This is a special Hyundai, though. An elegant, sophisticated looking Hyundai. A practical, comfortable Hyundai. But most importantly, a very fuel-efficient, hybrid Hyundai. That's right, I'm talking about the 2016 Sonata Hybrid.

Announced at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit last year, the Korean automaker takes the seventh-gen version of the mid-size sedan and adds a few visual and aerodynamic bells and whistles along with revised internals that improves upon fuel

economy by 10 per cent compared to the outgoing part-electric model.

## Aerodynamic facelift

Some of those exterior enhancements include a literal facelift: a larger grille now features chrome slats with an embedded emblem; the bumper has a built-in front splitter with slimmer foglamps integrated into the air intakes; the headlights and taillights have been redesigned for a sleeker look. The five-spoke "blade" wheels are also unique to the hybrid variant, as are two new colours including the Graphite Blue Pearl that was sprayed on my Limited trim test vehicle, and a nifty off-white Seaport Mist.

The inside feels much more luxurious than what would

be expected from where it sits in the market segment. An available panoramic moonroof spans almost the entire area above your head, and all the materials have a quality feel to them. Even the seatbelt buckles are hefty, so much so that when I was driving with the front windows down, the passenger-side unit would cause a ruckus while it flopped around against the b-pillar from the wind buffeting.

Hyundai says all the changes have lowered the vehicle's coefficient of drag to 0.24, identical to the Tesla Model S. The car looks long and stretched out, which is no illusion. This Sonata has grown by 34 millimetres in length and 10 mm in width, giving passengers more lounging room. In addition, a uniquely shaped



lithium-ion battery pack is able to rest underneath the trunk floor giving full use of the cargo area and even allows the rear seats to fold. People who have driven other hybrids on the market with compromised trunk space will acknowledge this is a rare and celebrated feature.

## Smaller is better

What has shrunk, however, is the engine displacement from a 2.4-litre to the current 2.0 L found in the "Nu" four-cylinder Gasoline Direct Injection (GDI) powerplant. A lighter, heartier 38-kilowatt electric motor helps the sedan achieve a net horsepower of 193. For the best performance response, you can activate Sport mode providing additional get-up-and-go, but the sound entering the cabin at the peak 6,000-rpm power band does err on the side of whiny.

The manufacturer's estimated fuel economy rating in mixed city and highway driving is approximately 5.6 L/100 km, and although I wasn't able to quite match that figure, I still achieved a better than expected 7.0 L/100 km, especially for a car of this size.





# 2016 Rolls-Royce Ghost Series II

## The Ultimate Symbol of Success



In broad strokes, we know that the top one percenters tend to be middle-aged men who are married and live in a big city. Not much of this has changed in the last half a century. These individuals tend to have university degrees and work in the areas you'd expect – business, finance, management, medicine, dentistry, law, and engineering.

Despite the homogeneity of this group, work is not necessarily a shared characteristic that would define their membership in this group. Some of them may not even work at all. But one thing is for sure. They are a definite minority.

In the eyes of Rolls-Royce Motor Cars though, these people are a unique and exclusive group of exceptional achievers who drive success in today's world, directly or indirectly. The company wants their brand to be one of the first things on the minds of these customers when

they're thinking of rewarding themselves.

### What's in a name?

Needing a Public Relations stunt for the launch of its new 40/50 horsepower model back in 1907, Rolls-Royce painted a car silver, screwed on a plaque that said "The Silver Ghost", and then set off to prove its reliability by driving it non-stop for 15,000 miles and 27 trips between London and Glasgow.

Unlike its Phantom big sister which employs a unique aluminium spaceframe, the Ghost's steel monocoque is loosely related to that of the BMW 7 Series. But unlike the 7 Series, 60 craftsmen in Goodwood UK, spend over 450 hours labouring over each custom, hand-finished Rolls.

In fact, Rolls-Royce says that 85 per cent of the cars it sells are bespoke. For example, if a customer has a favourite type of tree, or indeed a favourite grove of

trees on his estate, Rolls-Royce can take some of that wood and include it in the car's interior trim. Want the car in a certain exterior colour? No problem. The factory boffins can mix up any colour you want, even if it means matching your wife's favourite lipstick or your favourite Burberry briefcase.

### Exterior Design and Styling

As far as the "Series II" nomenclature is concerned, that goes to denote the Ghosts from 2015 onwards whereas the "Series I" cars were built between 2010 and 2014. You could be forgiven if you have trouble spotting the differences between the model years. This is by design as customers who have spent large sums of their fortunes on Ghosts would not like to be told that their impressive ingots have been made less impressive or worst yet, obsolete.

But look a little closer, and you'll spot that the

headlights have been re-sculpted, with unbroken daytime running lights framing a new, more dynamic shape. The headlamps themselves are now adaptive LED units, putting the company back in line on the lighting technology forefront.

The body surfaces have also been revised. The bonnet, for example has been festooned with what Rolls-Royce calls a "tapered wake channel", emanating from the Spirit of Ecstasy's wings. This is meant to hint at the company's aeronautical heritage, resembling a jet's vapour trail. That iconic front grille has been moved higher and the bumpers re-sculpted to create a stronger stance and a sense of extra width and height.

As with all Rolls-Royce motor cars, the famous Spirit of Ecstasy herself sits proudly up front, disappearing into the radiator when the car is locked. Want her hidden or presented permanently? Just navigate to the setting within the Ghost's re-skinned iDrive-based infotainment system borrowed from parent company BMW.

Like the Phantom, the Ghost also adopts the unique floating wheel centre caps that present the Rolls-Royce logos vertically, despite the 19" wheels whirling around. Incidentally, those wheels can now be upgraded to 21" optional forged units.

And finally, the rear-hinged power closing coach doors never hesitate to draw attention from passers-by who are wondering who is getting in and out of the imposingly impressive car. There is an undeniable sense of old-world charm and luxury, which undoubtedly keeps its fans going back to the brand time and time again.

All-in-all, with every single panel on the front of the SII car having been changed, the Ghost Series II looks closer than ever before to its big brother, the venerable Phantom.

### Interior

Rolls-Royce says that the interior comfort and style have been enhanced with redesigned front seats that have a new seat structure, all in the name of raising

interior comfort levels. A revised "Lounge seat" configuration (at which the seats are gently angled towards each other for a more intimate setting) also ensures absolute comfort for those riding out back. Everywhere you look there is soft-touch natural grain leather or a lambs' wool surface. If it's not covered in leather, it's chromed and polished. After a few days of living with the Ghost, I'm convinced that Rolls-Royce owners have to employ chauffeurs simply to keep the car's interior clean. Dust, dirt, and fingerprints show up ridiculously prominently on the highly polished surfaces.

My favourite part of the car has got to be the instrument dials and the clock, which have individually applied polish metal chaplets around the dials. These successful evoke the precision engineering and design of hand-made, luxury wrist watches and I love how the matte chrome centres "float" in the middle of each instrument.

The infotainment system, highly reminiscent of the





BMW iDrive system, is controlled with an ahem... “Spirit of Ecstasy Rotary Controller”. This 10.25-inch high definition screen can be hidden beneath a polished motorised wooden bezel should owners be wanting more of the old world charm during a weekend ride and drive.

Amusingly, Rolls-Royce says that it has not employed a touchscreen system because the fingerprints left on the screen would be “unsightly”.

### Ride and Performance

Rolls-Royce expects that around 50% of its Ghost customers still drive the cars themselves. Therefore, the Ghost is the Rolls to take to the gala or to the high street when the parking spot is tighter and it's the chauffeur's day off.

Despite being considerably smaller than the Phantom, the Ghost is still a sizeable “motor car” to pilot around town. In fact, it's ever so slightly bigger than the BMW 7 Series. Two wheelbases can be had, with my test car being the standard wheelbase model. The EWB (Extended Wheel Base) Ghost is a good 6.7 inches longer than the former.

Right from the marque's storied history, the company's engineers have sought to refine the experience for drivers and occupants with the latest in technology. Step into the driver's seat and the Ghost's driver-centric feel is immediately apparent. In that command position behind the classic thin-rimmed steering wheel, your right foot commands a 6.6-litre twin-turbo V12 producing 563 horsepower and a stump pulling 575 lb-ft (780 Nm) of torque. Connected to a new satellite-guided ZF eight-speed automatic gearbox, the Ghost reaches 100 km/hr in a mere 4.9 seconds.

The satellite aided transmission genuinely uses GPS

data to allow the car to see beyond what the driver sees, anticipating their next move based on location and driving style. It uses this information to select the most appropriate gear that ensures an effortless and seamless drive experience.

Personally, I found the power steering to be a bit too light and numb for my tastes, but then again, I'm no Rolls-Royce customer. Perhaps learning from the introduction of the Wraith and recognizing that the Ghost could use a firmer suspension setup, a Dynamic package is now offered as an option.

Saving the best for last, let's discuss the ride from the air suspension. It can be best described as “cossetting”, living up to the reputation of a Rolls-Royce interior acting as an oasis of calm in a busy connected world in which to do business in peace. Evidently the suspension is supposed to be so advanced that it can detect which side a passenger sits in the rear and adjust itself accordingly. These words likely fail to convey how unique of an experience the Ghost delivers. It is far more opulent and relaxed than any Mercedes-Benz S-Class or BMW 7 Series I have travelled in.

### Final Thoughts

There's no doubt that even this “entry-level” Rolls-Royce doesn't come cheap, and that's even before you dip into the extensive list of options.

With the mighty V12 under the hood, what is indisputable is that the Ghost still drives like that which is expected of a Rolls-Royce motor car. That is to say, wafting along like a hundred-dollar bill caught in a strong updraft, escaping even the most determined events promoter wanting a Rolls-Royce owner to contribute to yet another charity gala.







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# 2016 Mitsubishi Montero Sport

## launched in the UAE



Al Habtoor Motors expands Mitsubishi's SUV range in the UAE with a new addition of the Montero Sport. Mitsubishi, one of the top Japanese automaker answers the needs of adventure seekers and active families with a new sports utility vehicle that's slated to be a game changer in its category - The All-new Montero Sport, The Best Value Fully Loaded Japanese SUV in the market.

Al Habtoor Motors, the official dealer of Mitsubishi in the UAE unveiled the all-new Montero Sport to specially invited audience at Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve, where the invitees test drove the Montero Sport over challenging terrain to gain in-depth understanding of the new class leading SUV.

The all-new Montero Sport is a new-generation mid-size SUV developed to a "Stylish & Comfortable Off-road SUV" concept. The full-feature off-road SUV brings with it refined exterior design, high-quality vehicle performance, comfortable interior, environmental performance on a par with the best in its class, and an array of comprehensive advanced safety features.

When it come to looks, the all-new Montero Sport uses Mitsubishi Motors Corporation's new "Dynamic Shield" front face design concept. The high-quality stylish design uses both sporty and dynamic elements to set it apart from conventional cross-country SUVs. The interior uses a high console proportion dashboard,

as befits a larger SUV, while dynamically styled silver-finish ornamentation and sculpted seats add to its luxurious feel.

Powered by a robust 3.0-liter V6 MIVEC engine, the Montero Sport boasts a 8-speed automatic transmission for a smoother, more luxurious ride and improved fuel efficiency. The cruise control and sporty paddle shifters which lets driver to shift gears with a press, without removing their hand from the steering wheel adds to the driving comfort.

The all-new Montero Sport comes with comprehensive active and passive safety features. MMC's own RISE\*3 impact safety body design and a total of seven SRS airbags provide occupants outstanding passive safety.

Active safety features include Forward Collision Mitigation system (FCM), the Blind Spot Warning system (BSW, a first in a Mitsubishi model) and the Ultrasonic misacceleration Mitigation System (UMS). In addition the all-new Montero Sport is fitted with many advanced features which go well beyond what is normally found in this class, such as an electric parking brake (first on a Mitsubishi model), a Multi-around Monitor and fully automatic climate control allowing different temperatures to be set for driver and front seat passenger.

The all-new Montero Sport uses a further-evolved version of MMC's own Super-Select 4WD-II four-wheel drive system. This is complemented by the new Off-road Mode (first on a Mitsubishi model), which gives even better all-terrain performance and stability as the road surface requires, and by Hill Descent Control (first on a Mitsubishi model). Pressing the HDC mode selector activates HDC, which automatically applies the brakes to maintain the current speed when travelling downhill at 2 km/h - 20 km/h. This lets the driver to concentrate on steering and travel downhill with greater safety without having to manually apply the brakes.

Handling is stable and accurate on and off road, in all kinds of weather and driving conditions, thanks



to selectable 2WD and 4WD modes, an OFF ROAD MODE, intelligent assistance in challenging conditions, an advanced suspension and outstanding all-around clearance.



Using the drive mode selector dial, the driver can switch between 2WD (2H) and 4WD (4H, 4HLc) with shift-on-the-fly convenience at up to 100km/h. When the going gets rough, the driver can lock the center differential by entering the 4HLc setting for rugged terrain or the 4LLc setting for inclines, mud and sand.

Furthermore, Active Stability & Traction Control independently regulates braking force to the wheels during cornering to help maintain excellent vehicle stability when needed. It also optimizes traction to prevent loss of torque whenever wheel spin is detected by controlling engine output and applying brake force to the spinning wheels.

Adding to its manoeuvrability, the Montero Sport offers a class-leading 5.6m turning radius, which is surprisingly small for a vehicle of this size, making it especially easy to park and drive.

On the outside, the sophisticated LED headlamps and daytime running lights contribute to an appealing, high-quality personality. The Montero Sport's dynamic LED rear combination lamps boldly proclaim this is no ordinary SUV.

The prices of the all-new Montero Sport start from AED 89,900 for baseline to AED 107,000 for the fully loaded premium highline.



# 2016 Toyota RAV4

## The latest Recreational Active Vehicle with 4wheel drive



You know that old saying, “the more things change, the more they stay the same”? Well that’s certain something that fully applies to the all-new and fully redesigned 2016 Toyota RAV4.

If you think you’ve seen it someplace before, you have. Sure, there is slightly sharper styling fore and aft, a retuned suspension, and a few new features, but all of these welcome changes are certainly more evolutionary than evolutionary. One thing that has received a lot of welcome attention is the interior. More on that later. Being the first to spawn the small-crossover segment in 1996, Toyota has proven that it pays to be the first in line into a segment. The RAV4’s continued popularity showcases that the vehicle continues to be a solid

choice in the minds of customers.

### Refreshed Styling and New Technologies

Now, it’s safe to say that no one regarded the previous generations of RAV4s as hard-core off-roaders and this line of thinking will continue on with the latest iteration of the popular crossover SUV. In other words, the outgoing RAV4 was a wallflower, but the new one with its updated styling is less so.

The new, sleeker and more dynamic appearance starts with a stronger looking front fascia, and finishing off with a new rear bumper design and available LED taillights that add a premium touch. The front and rear silver skid plate garnishes are purely cosmetic so no

boulder bashing here.

On the safety front, RAV4 also comes with forward-collision warning, automatic emergency braking, lane-departure warning, automatic high beams, and adaptive cruise control. There’s even a pair of LED projector-beam headlamps available to light the way forward.

A Toyota-first makes its debut on the RAV4 in the form of a newly available Bird’s Eye View Monitor system. This system uses four cameras, mounted on front, side, and rear positions of the vehicle, to offer the driver a panoramic view of the surroundings.

This driver’s assistance system provides assistance in all parking situations, and also has an industry-first feature

called Perimeter Scan. With this feature on, drivers are shown a live rotating 360 degree view of what is around the vehicle, helping them to better see objects in the way.

### Performance

Under the RAV4’s hood you’ll find a 2.5-litre four-cylinder engine producing 176 horsepower and 172 lb-ft (233 Nm) of torque. If those numbers look familiar, it’s because once again they are. Toyota has left the engine unchanged to the chagrin of anyone who may have wanted more power.

Paired with Toyota’s six-speed automatic gearbox, the engine is exactly what you expect of a four cylinder. Slightly buzzy when pushed hard, but adequate. At least in this case, the engine redeems itself somewhat by being relatively fuel-efficient. Zero to 100 km/hr times are achieved in about 8.3 seconds.

Not exactly a rocket, but plenty quick enough and

more than enough to keep up with traffic. The shifts are occasionally somewhat on the lazy side, unless it’s in Sport mode, but for the most part the engine is kept in its powerband.

For those who want even greater fuel efficiency, there is an all-new first in segment RAV4 Hybrid, but sadly it’s not available in the UAE just yet.

### Experience the inside

Toyota listened to customer feedback and added more technology and refinement to the interior. The interior quality is far more premium with improved plastics, updated upholstery, and much more soft touch materials around the cabin. Contrast stitching on a RAV4? Who would’ve thought!

There is even a cinnamon coloured synthetic leather option that one can select. This colour selection, which one would find in a Range Rover, signals how Toyota is trying to take the RAV4 a bit more upscale when

compared to its predecessor.

Although it may seem trivial, small changes, such as a revised cupholder design to finally be able to accommodate tall mugs with handles, really do make a difference in customers’ every day lives.

The revised gauge cluster has an available 4.2 inch TFT multi-information display and a revised gauge cluster and the RAV4 is available with the latest iteration of Toyota’s corporate touch-sensitive infotainment system. All-in-all, the higher dose of standard electric features is appreciated.

### Wrap-up

What Toyota proves with the success of the RAV4, now in its fourth generation, is that people continue to like the rough and tumble look of their SUVs, but love the fuel savings, comfortable-ride, and creature comfort from a passenger car. The RAV4 does an admirable job at living up to its “crossover” classification by blending





in the best of both worlds in an attractive, albeit slightly conservative package. In other words, it will age well with time and lives up to its namesake as a Toyota product.

While there might be much more competition now than 20 years ago when the small SUV segment first started, it's easy to see why the RAV4 continues to be a natural fit for many buyers.



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# 2016 BMW 7 Series

## full-sized luxury technological tour de force



A look back at BMW's vehicle history will reveal that even before the company's "7 Series" nomenclature was used, the Bavarian-based company started building full-size luxury sedans along side its GT coupes as far back as 1968.

### A stroll down memory lane

The E3 sedan was the company's response to a growing market segment dominated by archrival Mercedes-Benz, and crucial in establishing BMW's reputation as a maker of sporty luxury sedans.

The 7 Series luxury nameplate was formerly introduced with BMW's E23 chassis, produced between 1977 to 1986. Over the course of this time, over 285,000 units were produced globally. Even today, it's not uncommon to see a few examples of these large old

BMW sedans roaming the streets.

### Catch me if you can

Now in its fifth model generation and after four decades, BMW is once again trying to move out of the wake of its Stuttgart rival, the Mercedes-Benz S-Class.

To give you some sense of comparison, for every single BMW 7 Series that rolled off the production line, Mercedes sold two equivalent S-Classes.

With the latest and greatest engineering efforts and advances in technologies, this latest 7 Series is the company's best chance at clawing away market share from the brand with the three-pointed star atop its grille. This is extremely important to BMW as so much that is launched on its flagship model paves the way to its smaller (and higher sales volume) siblings.

The car that we're looking at right here truly represents BMW's most ferocious attempt at trying to crack the tough nut that is the global luxury sedan market. Billions of dollars and years spent in development, BMW's engineers and designers have once again baked in the best of all they know into this car.

So does BMW's latest first class effort pose a challenge to Mercedes-Benz's S-Class? Let's find out!

### Design and Styling

Let's be clear. So much that is important to the large luxury sedan buyer is the car's ability to command a presence on the road. Fully redesigned for 2016, the 7 Series doesn't disappoint here.

It could be argued that BMW might have been able to be bolder with the exterior styling to set it apart from





its predecessor. But faced with the criticism it attracted more than a decade ago with BMW designer Chris Bangle's "flame-surfaced" 7 Series, it seems that the executives have decided that this latest flagship is more deserving of a familiar corporate BMW face and a formal aesthetic.

Despite its familiar king of the road size, the new car feels and drives much lighter thanks to the all-new adaptive air-sprung platform and all new construction principles and materials borrowed from BMW's iCar electric/hybrid car division. The new lighter-weight chassis makes extensive use of carbon fibre in an effort to make the car both more agile and improve fuel efficiency.

OK, there is nothing like an exotic carbon fibre tub that BMW designed for the i8, but thanks to the machine manufactured carbon fibre-reinforced polymer (CFRP) technology, BMW can rightfully claim to be using carbon-fibre in large enough quantities to be a structural element without the astronomically high costs in traditional handmade carbon fibre production.

Perhaps it's a bit of a shame that the only hint of the exotic materials being used is when you open the driver's door and find a badge on the 7 Series' inner B-pillar proclaiming its "carbon core".

The 7 Series' new lightweight, aluminium-rich / high-strength structure means that model-for-model, the new car is up to 130 kg lighter than its forbearer. Part of the savings is due to a new thermal and acoustic shielding technology that saves a considerable amount of weight on NVH insulation. Even the all-corner air suspension and adaptive dampeners have undergone considerable fat trimming making up to 15 per cent less unsprung weight as a result of more lightweight aluminium parts being used.

### On the Inside

It is on the inside that the 7 Series needs to excel more than ever in both technological excellence and comfort. As you would be able to predict, the 7 Series' interior is suitably limo-y. After all, outstanding levels of refinement, space, rolling comfort, and isolation are expected from demanding full-sized luxury car customers.

But before you even step into the car, BMW impresses with its light signature. The 7 Series doesn't just have any old exterior puddle lamp. Rather, it has an LED illuminated puddle "carpet", which lights up a parallel path alongside the car as you approach or depart the vehicle.







In long wheelbase form, you can even have rear electrically-adjustable heated and cooled reclining lounge-styled perches. But there is far more than that. There is a removable 7.0 inch Android tablet that offers touchscreen infotainment connectivity, and of course a wifi hotspot for all of the devices that a 7 Series owner is likely to have for a mix of both business and pleasure. On that front, the rest of the interior is also a mix of business and pleasure. You can control the main screen via the traditional business-like iDrive knob or by voice command as before. However on the fun/pleasure side, there's a whole new party trick in the form of gesture control.

A 3D camera system mounted in the overhead console constantly watches for hand movements near the screen. By waving, twirling, waving, swiping, or jabbing in 6 specific motions, you can perform common infotainment functions such as adjusting the volume, or accepting or rejecting a phone call. And if playing the conductor within your car seems a bit strange to you, the redundant buttons that you'll press on the instrument cluster or on the steering wheel have a new type of brushed-metal finish. It feels both

opulent and special, and different from other "lesser" BMWs. BMW's 1400W Bowers & Wilkins Diamond audio system is the company's latest and greatest, powered by a 10-channel amp pumping out the tunes through 16 strategically placed speakers. It all sounds very good, as you would expect.

Size-wise, the 7 Series matches the long-wheelbase S-Class on rear legroom (a whopping 860mm), and beats it on headroom by a good 30mm. The Mercedes does offer its driver marginally more maximum front legroom, but the BMW wins with a taller, longer boot. Last but not least is the 7 Series' oversized key fob that has a touchscreen LCD display. It displays various functions, such as fuel range, and in some markets allows a person autonomously backup or pull into a parking space remotely. You can even use the key to pre-condition the car's interior for your desired temperature before setting off.

#### Performance, Ride and Handling

Decisive, effortless, catapulting. Bottle all of those words together and you'll get a sense of how the 7 Series gathers speed without breaking a sweat.

The 750i's 445hp, 4.4-litre twin turbocharged V8 is teamed with BMW's super smooth shifting 8 speed automatic transmission. The shifts are quick (especially in Sport+ mode), albeit not as quick as a dual clutch transmission. Most importantly for this class, they are almost imperceptible.

A gracefully steady ride is courtesy of the standard air suspension so that even at German Autobahn speeds over undulating pavement, the big BMW is virtually silent. There is a planted and compliant sensation, and a constant cossetting feeling. No wonder these cars are so easily treated as boardrooms on wheels.

As has become the norm in this luxury class, this BMW can be spec'ed out with some autonomous driving capability. There is active cruise control, lane correction, and self-braking. The active cruise control allows for some hands-free driving, but after 15 seconds will command you to put your hands back onto the steering wheel. How very properly Teutonic! Because it's a BMW, the 7 Series still feels like it's a limo that can carve corners and yet put on its best impression of a luxury sedan. Perhaps it's not quite as sporty as a Porsche Panamera, but this latest iteration



feels far more athletic and capable than its predecessor, especially with xDrive all-wheel-drive.

#### Wrap-Up

Whether or not the latest BMW 7 Series is going to challenge Mercedes-Benz S-Class' domination remains

to be seen. It is true that the firm could've been more genuinely imaginative with the exterior design, but regardless, this is certainly the company's best overall effort yet.

With more high-tech galore, outstanding performance,

better material quality, luxury, and refinement that this review can hope to quantify or simplify, the BMW 7 Series is a luxury conveyance that many would dream to own or be chauffeured around in.





# 2017 Cadillac XT5 news

## Brand new crossover first to assume XT name



The luxury division at General Motors is moving in a forward direction with the impending release of the first-ever Cadillac XT5 this spring. Premiering at both the Dubai and Los Angeles auto shows back in November, the premium crossover — the first to wear the XT badge that will also adorn future utility vehicles — replaces the outgoing SRX with an all-new sleeker and lighter architecture.

By applying techniques like laser welding, advanced analytics and implementing the use of ultra high-strength steel, the XT5 manages to weigh in 126-kilograms lighter than its predecessor. It's also got

a longer wheelbase, by two inches, giving more interior space and 3.2 additional inches of legroom. Overall, however, the length, width and height of the new vehicle are actually smaller than the SRX, part of the reason it looks sportier.

If you compare the two side-by-side, it's quite evident the body panels on the XT5 are much curvier and more elegant. The boxy headlights have been nixed in favour of sharper units that have an integrated LED daytime running light strip swooping down into the front bumper area, meeting the foglights underneath. The grille is larger and houses a subtle, more modern-

looking Cadillac emblem.

### Decadence is key

Luxury is definitely a focal point for this new venture,



with an interior that has been designed around giving a feeling of open space. Dash and trim panels feature cut-and-sewn leather coverings in a wide variety of colour choices. Taking a page out of the Escalade's book, a Platinum edition will be made available offering unique materials and exclusive equipment. The powertrain in the XT5 revolves around a 3.6-litre V6 engine, which also powers the brand's ATS and CTS sports sedans. Output is rated at 310 horsepower and 366 Nm of torque, wrangled through an eight-speed automatic transmission with Electronic Precision Shift, representing the first application of an electronically controlled shifter for Cadillac. The



company says benefits over a traditional setup include reduced noise and vibration, and more in-cabin room. Front-wheel drive is standard, but a twin-clutch

all-wheel drive system is optional, capable of disconnecting the rear drive unit when extra traction isn't needed in order to improve fuel economy and cut down emissions.

### Industry-leading tech

The XT5 is advertised as being innovative in the technology department, and it backs up its claim with the debut of products like a streaming video rear view mirror. A display lies otop of the glass, projecting a live image captured by a high-dynamic range camera that hides the roof, rear pillars and other visual obstructions giving drivers a view 300 per cent better than normal.

An integrated wireless charger for mobile devices, 4G connectivity and Apple CarPlay/Android Auto smartphone compatibility are some of the other tech highlights customers can look forward to.

During a press conference at the LA show, Cadillac president Johan de Nysschen says, "We think it's time an American luxury brand regained its position as one of the world's best."





# Audi's virtual cockpit

## The instrument cluster of the future



In today's modern cars, infotainment systems rule the centre console. Thanks to LCD touchscreens, for better or for worse, the number of small buttons and knobs on many vehicles today has been drastically reduced. The most usable systems out there today tend to use a combination of some redundant hard buttons and some software virtual buttons. However, a lot of that information still tends to be consolidated to the display that is in the middle of the car and not in front of the driver.

The future of in-car interfaces is here thanks to Audi

and now available in the 2016 TT coupé and roadster, as well as the 2017 Q7, A4, R8. Audi has evolved its long-standing MMI (Multi-Media Interface) dramatically by skipping the infotainment screen in the middle of the dash, and in the TT's and R8's case, solely placing it right in front of the driver. Why just one screen in the sports cars? Because in Audi's mind, the driver is king in the TT and its more performance-orientated TTS and R8 big brother. The Q7 SUV still gets the traditional 2nd centre console screen for passengers to see, in addition to the virtual

cockpit.

### What is the Virtual Cockpit?

Based off a 12.3-inch high resolution full colour display, the Virtual Cockpit is made up of one super-wide screen (1440 x 540) with high-contrast, colourful sharpness. The conventional analogue gauge cluster is gone, and you can click through different core gauge views.

The display itself is very slick with 60 frames per second PC gaming display speeds powered by renowned graphics chip manufacturer Nvidia and their

core Tegra 3 processing technology. Note that Tesla's vehicles boast the same Nvidia Tegra chips.

Part of what makes Audi's system so successful is its ability to be seen even in direct sunlight and also the speed and smoothness at which it runs. Audi has cleverly equipped the MMI in the centre console with its separate chipset, and the Virtual Cockpit display with its very own.

### Fast, reliable, and fully digital

The virtual cockpit's display differs depending on which view option the driver selects. In "classic view" mode, the virtual equivalent of the traditional speedometer and tachometer are more dominant on each sides of the screen. Mapping and infotainment are in the centre, whereas fuel temperature and other important vehicle information runs along the top and bottom of the display.

"Infotainment mode" displays additional functions such as the navigation system, telephone, Audi connect and media more prominently. One can even use the entire display for Google Earth, or on a track, another mode puts the tachometer right in the middle, just where a keen driver would want it to be.

### Safety First

By placing the Virtual Cockpit right in front of the driver, everything is in view directly in his/her line of sight. In an unfamiliar city, this can be a godsend,



rather than have to take one's eyes off the road to look at an iPhone or the centre console for turn-by-turn GPS navigation directions. The information is in the driver's peripheral vision, minimizing driver distraction. Drivers can access the functions of the system via the completely redesigned MMI interface selector wheel,

or more limited functions via the multifunction steering wheel controls.

A quick drive behind the wheel of any of the Audi Virtual Cockpit equipped vehicles will surely convince anyone that all future cars deserve some sort of similar system!





# Car storage tips



It doesn't matter if you own an expensive sports car, a modest soft-top convertible or just something you don't plan on driving for a while, there may be a situation when you might think about storing your car for an extended duration. It isn't quite as simple as just hanging up the keys for a few months — there are a few things, like the 10 tips listed here, that you should look into before hibernating your vehicle.

## 1. Fill up

Having a full gas tank stops moisture from collecting inside and also helps to keep the seals from getting dried out. Consider pouring in a little fuel stabilizer, such as STA-BIL, to make sure the gasoline stays free from degradation. Let the car idle for a few minutes to ensure proper fluid circulation after adding.

## 2. Get an oil change

Even if the engine oil already in the motor hasn't run its full course yet, it's a good idea to drain it and replace with a fresh batch to prevent potentially harmful deposits from settling in over time.

## 3. Tend to the battery

A vehicle that hasn't been driven for months will be guaranteed to greet its owner with a dead battery. There are a couple of ways around this — you can unplug the negative cable, or install a battery tender that plugs into a standard household outlet and constantly provides a small amount of electricity keeping the charge topped up. If there isn't an outlet handy nearby, remove the battery and place it somewhere out-of-the-way indoors with a readily available power source.



## 4. Pump your tires

Don't worry about removing your tires and placing your vehicle on jack stands as some may suggest. Just inflate the tires on all four corners to the maximum psi stated on the sidewall to stave off flat spots from developing where the rubber is contacting the ground.

## 5. Disengage the parking brake

Although the risk is minimal, there's a chance the brake pads may not want to separate easily from the rotor after being in contact for a long time. Leave the emergency brake in the down position, and to prevent the vehicle from rolling, use a wheel chock instead.

## 6. Plug any holes

Even without any prior evidence of uninvited animal guests living in the garage, there have been many documented cases of mice and other four-legged creatures turning an automobile into their home. Cover obvious entry points, i.e. a muffler opening, with something like steel wool.

## 7. Crack the window

To promote air circulation and cut down on



moisture build up in the interior that could cause the development of mould or other unpleasant growths roll down a couple of the windows a few centimetres.

## 8. Wash and dry

You don't want dirt and grime embedding into the paint while the car sits for a long period. Give it a thorough wash and let everything dry out before the next step. For maximum protection, follow up by using a clay bar to remove any existing road tar, insect remnants or other contaminants and then apply a coat of wax.

## 9. Put a cover on it

Especially important if you have to store your prized possession in an open car park or completely outdoors,



a waterproof car cover shields it from the elements, and assists with step number five, as well. If possible, try and find one that is tailor made for the specific model being covered, which will guarantee a perfect fit and include the correct cut outs for antennas or other unique hardware.

## 10. Purchase insurance

Rather than let the insurance run out, change your policy to an option designed for storage. Usually offered at a fraction of the cost of a regular plan, since the vehicle will be immobile and not a liability on the street, this protects your investment from anything happening to it during dormancy like acts of nature or vandalism.





# Maintaining vehicle value



As you may know, buying a vehicle is often the second biggest purchase in a person's life, next to a house. A residence, though, doesn't begin depreciating the moment you get handed the keys. While you can't stop that from happening with your car, there are measures, listed below, that can be taken to help maintain its value so you won't be burned at trade-in or resale time. Here are some of CarBook's recommendations on getting the most out of your investment.

## Clean

Most people have a good habit of keeping the exterior of their vehicles clean through regular washes, whether

by going to a professional wash bay or having a DIY session in the driveway. But the condition of the interior is just as important, if not more so, as a car ages. Rather than waiting until just before someone else takes possession to detail the inside, clean it on a continuous basis by getting rid of old food wrappers and drink containers and vacuuming the seats and cloth floor mats. Have the leather option? Prevent surfaces from cracking by applying leather conditioner once or twice a year, and vacuum cloth floor mats or hose down rubber ones after they get soiled.

## Service

Stay on top of scheduled maintenance and bring your car into the shop for items like oil and fluid changes, tire rotations, and the bigger stuff like replacing spark plugs and timing belts. Make sure to keep all records of work done by a certified technician to show the dealership or potential buyer down the road that you've kept everything in tip-top shape.

## Prevent

Driving in Dubai can often mean a lot of sand and small debris finding their way into all kinds of nooks and crannies. The elements can be harsh on the car, so



take the time to rinse off stuck-on dirt, bug splatter, and any other evidence of the open road stuck to the paint. Applying a protective coat of wax can make grime removal an easier task.

## Conserve

It's no secret that a vehicle with fewer overall kilometres is worth more than one that has much more. By no means should you let your prized possession sit in the garage,

but if you're thinking of taking a long road-trip somewhere cross-country, it might be worthwhile to consider renting a car for that purpose — doing so will also cut down on the inevitable rock chips and general wear and tear from such activities.

## Store

If, for whatever reason, your vehicle doesn't get driven during certain weeks or months of the year, be mindful



of a few things when you prepare it for storage. For instance, fill up the tank with gas to prevent moisture from collecting inside, and inflate the tires to their recommended psi to prevent flat spots from developing. See our other feature on car storage in this issue for more suggestions.





# BMW Carbon Core construction

## Carbon-Fibre implants for BMW's latest 7 Series



For the last few years, BMW has been pushing their “EfficientDynamics” strategy. What is it? It’s BMW’s commitment to minimise fuel consumption and CO2 emissions while simultaneously increasing dynamics and driving pleasure.

EfficientDynamics is not one single thing, but rather a holistic and systematic approach. Think of it as a package of functions that cover the vehicle drive system, energy management, and automobile design concept.

### Float like a butterfly

Weight (or rather lack thereof) is a large part of what makes a vehicle more efficient, with the happy side effect of also being more fun to drive. And this is where

BMW’s new Carbon Core construction comes into play as part of their EfficientDynamics strategy. First and now on the 2016 BMW 7 Series, it is expected to be shared with the upcoming all-new 5 Series, and other future models down the line.

Now, the six-generation 7 Series isn’t completely made out of Carbon Fibre re-inforced plastic unlike the BMW i3 or i8 electric vehicles. BMW made many headlines by industrializing the carbon fibre manufacturing process for both of the aforementioned cars. They are the first company to make it economically viable for use in vehicle production. However, despite the advances, it’s not quite there yet

cost-wise to produce it in the volume needed for the rest of BMW line-up.

### Exotic materials for mass production

It took Audi more than 10 years to put their aluminium “Audi Space Frame” into production after



Chairman Ferdinand Piëch decided that aluminium was the new steel back in 1983. It was only in 1994 that the flagship A8 rolled off the line with that technology in place. Audi too, has been at it ever since, trying to reduce their vehicle curb weights by advancing the combination of aluminium and composites in their construction techniques. Nonetheless, there are many takeaways from the BMW i-Car division that have been distilled down and



applied to BMW’s mainstream models. If you haven’t figured out yet, BMW is also very serious about the mass production of composite cars. The 7 Series’ Carbon Core chassis is developed with extensive use of high-strength steel, aluminium, and carbon fibre. All of these exotic materials have been strategically placed in the chassis resulting in a structure that is very safe and very rigid, but yet very lightweight relative to previous chassis designs.

For example, the centre of gravity has been lowered by constructing the A, B, and C pillars as well as the roof using carbon fibre. This has the effect of reducing the weight up top, hence lowering the centre of gravity and improving handling. But furthermore, this also makes the chassis very stiff, reducing chassis flex which further improves handling.

### Results from trimming the fat

The end result, BMW claims, is a roughly 285 pound

reduction in weight over the previous generation 7 Series. 90 of those pounds came directly out of the body structure alone. Additional aluminium used in the doors further reduces the weight by 10 per cent when compared to before while still maintaining occupant protection characteristics. Another 26 pounds of cabin soundproofing was removed by

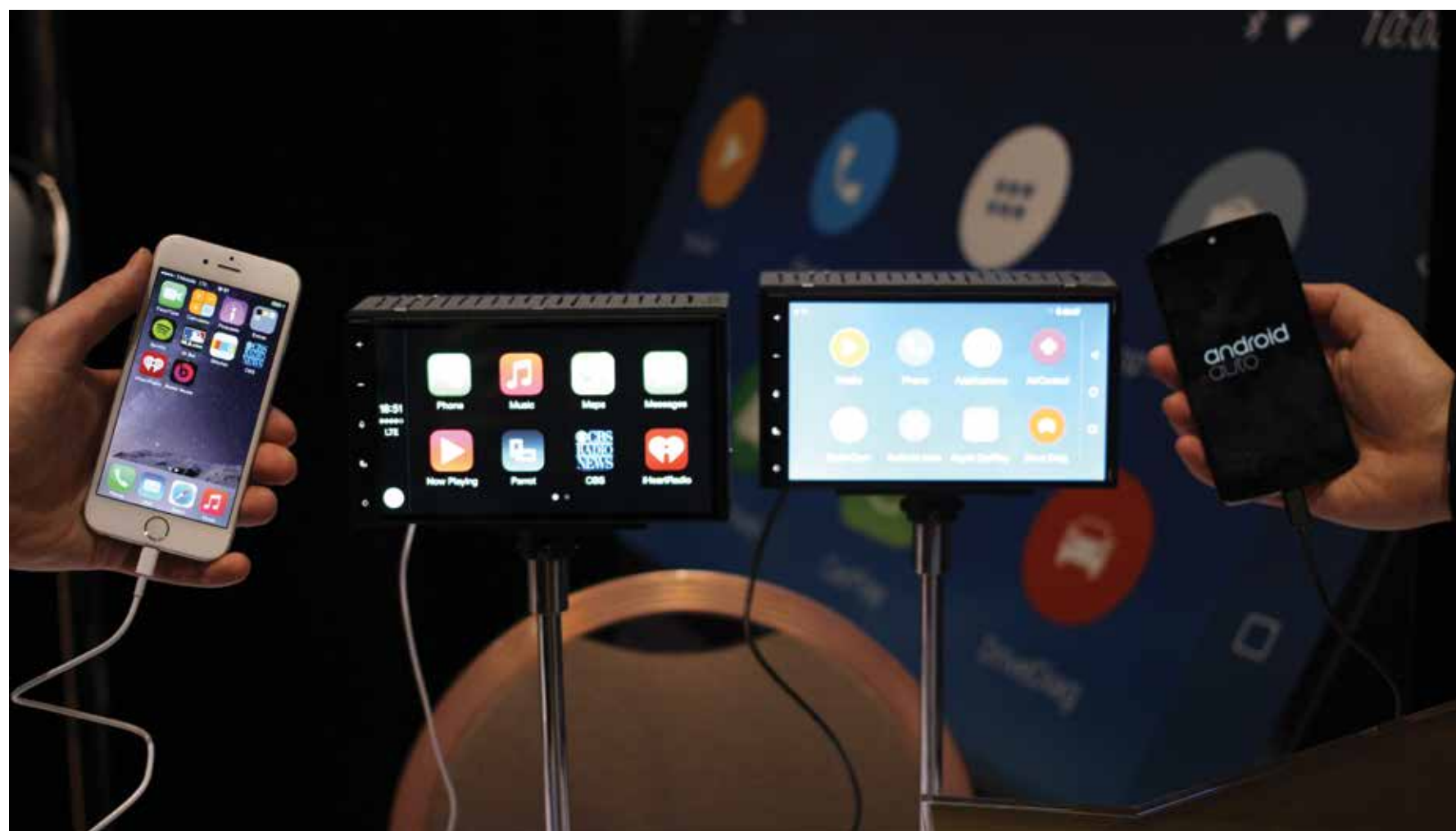


directly insulating the engine! BMW was so confident in how much of an improvement their latest 7 Series would be over top of its predecessor and the competition that they launched the car at the Monticello raceway in New York. Many journalists, who were initially baffled as to why a large luxury sedan would make its debut at a racetrack, certainly walked away with their minds changed. What interesting and exciting times we live in eh?





# Android Auto and Apple CarPlay



By now, you've probably heard people mentioning automotive slash smartphone buzzwords like Android Auto and Apple CarPlay. These are two distinctly different in functionality, yet similar in purpose, platforms that allow driver's and passenger's mobile devices to sync up seamlessly with various vehicles, sharing data and projecting apps directly to an in-dash screen.

One of the first mainstream consumer cars to offer both platforms is the refreshed 2016 Honda Accord, which the Japanese automaker debuted to an audience in California's Silicon Valley last year. Honda is calling this latest model the "highest-tech Accord ever," and aims to help drivers stay connected, and drive safer, on another level with these new features such as these. "Customers want their vehicles to be more intelligently integrated with their smartphone-powered lives, and we are committed to delivering that experience starting with the Accord," said Dave Gardner, senior vice president of Honda Canada, in a press release.

## Android Auto

Android Auto is compatible with any Android phone running the 5.0 (Lollipop) operating system, and to get started you simply plug in using a USB connector.

There is a companion app with the same name that resides on your smartphone acting as a bridge to the car. Once connected, your phone's display will turn blank and all commands are routed to the dash.



Unsurprisingly, Google is the name of the game here and they develop a lot of the software most drivers will commonly use the most such as Google Maps,



Google Now and Google Play Music. Other familiar apps include Skype, Spotify, iHeart Radio and more. Additional programs are expected to follow down the road.

Using Android Auto should feel like second nature to today's mobile device power user. On the Display Audio screen, swiping, tapping and pinching-to-zoom functionality are all available, and there is a heavy emphasis on voice input to minimize distraction to the person behind the wheel. Just a note — Android Auto only controls the entertainment and navigation, but not core vehicle settings like climate control.

## Apple CarPlay

For those favouring iPhones, Apple fans will no doubt feel a sense of comfort when greeted with a home screen in the cabin — very closely mirroring the one

found on their handheld unit — after attaching the Lightning cable. That is, as long as it's an iPhone 5 or later and running at least iOS 7.1 (for optimal use, iOS 8.3 and above).

After the link is complete, the user can call or send messages by touching the corresponding app icons on the display. iTunes is also supported, as are Podcasts, Audiobooks, Slacker Radio, and more are on the way. Like Android Auto, hands-free operation is available. Pressing and holding the TALK button on the steering wheel activates Siri, allowing everything from asking

her to play music by your favourite band or queue a specific playlist you have saved, to recommend a nearby restaurant or recite the temperatures for the week.

## Vehicle availability

Not every car rolling off the assembly right now comes with the above-mentioned connectivity options, but more and more models are adopting the cutting-edge technology due to demand and its added convenience. Some other manufacturers joining the fray are Acura (2017 NSX), Audi (2017 A4, Q7) Buick (2016 Lacrosse, Regal) Cadillac (2016 ATS, ELR, CTS), Ferrari (2016 488 GTB, California T), Hyundai (2017 Elantra), Porsche (2016 911, 2017 Macan), and Volvo (2016 XC90, 2017 S90), to name a few.

## Aftermarket options

Does your vehicle not have either of these nifty features, but you with it did? Don't fret, as some aftermarket audio companies are supplying just the thing. Pioneer for instance carries the AppRadio 4 receiver that fits right into standard double-DIN dash spaces, working with both Apple and Android devices. The 6.2-inch capacitive touch-friendly interface gives access to your cellphone's music library, messages, streaming music apps and more. It also adds Siri Eyes Free so you can ask for directions, set reminders, and do all the other earlier discussed items you're accustomed to without having to take your focus off the road.





# 2016 Land Rover Discovery Sport

## The first Discovery of what is yet to come



Land Rover promises that their new Discovery Sport, the first member of the new Discovery vehicle family, will appeal to a whole new group of people who may have never considered the brand before.

### Land Rover's aggressive product offensive

The launch marks another significant milestone in the product offensive for Jaguar Land Rover, which will see the company deliver 50 significant product actions over the next five years.

Land Rover sales continue to go from strength to strength year after year. The Halewood plant, in Liverpool, United Kingdom, home to the company's fastest selling model of all time - the Range Rover Evoque - has seen investment in the site more than

double.

This has allowed for the workforce to more than triple in size over the last four years with 4,750 people now employed at the site. Designed and engineered at the Land Rover Development Centre in the UK, the Discovery Sport will also be produced at the company's award-winning manufacturing facility.

### Discover the difference and similarities

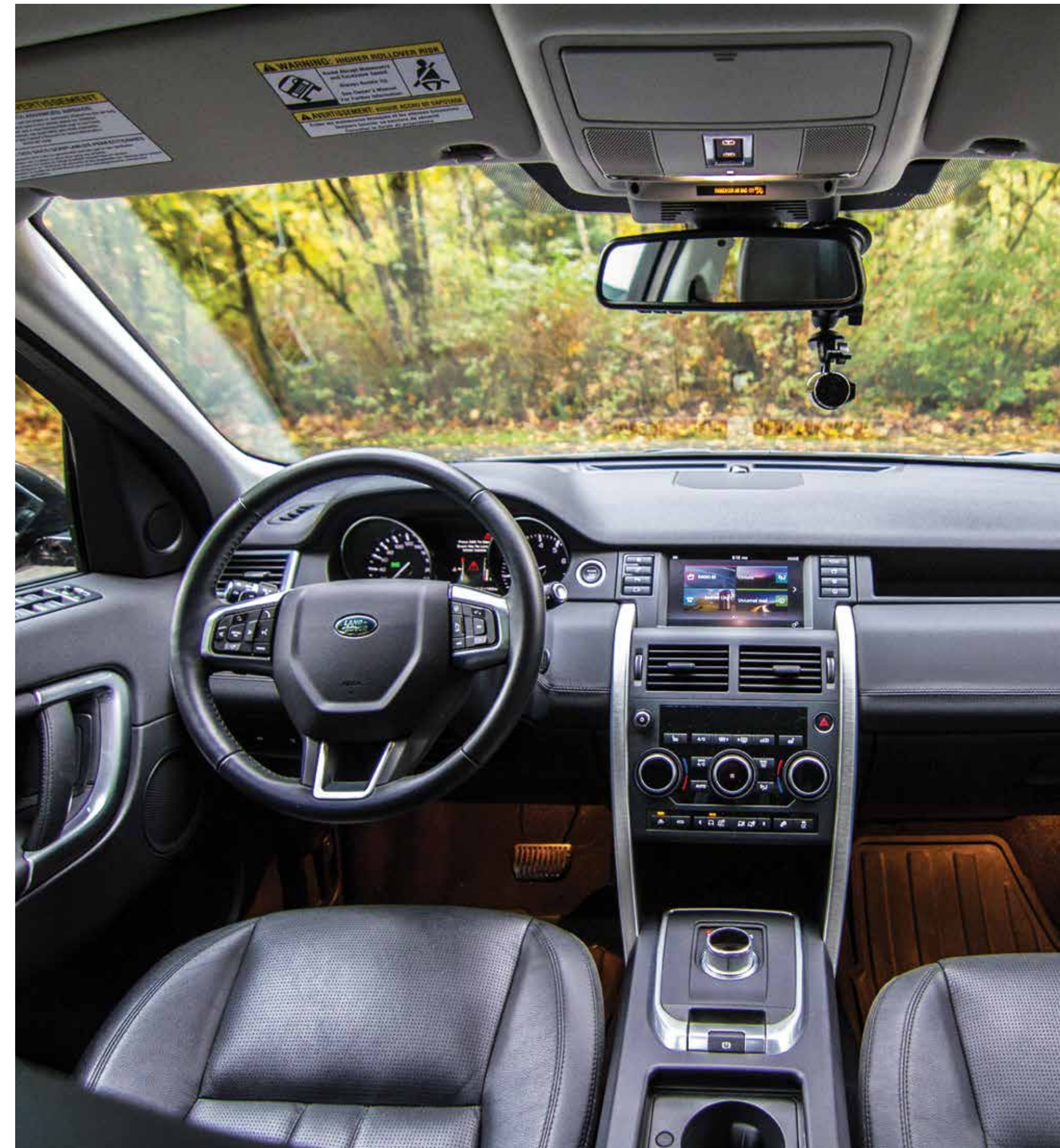
It may be easy to assume that being assembled in the same plant as the Evoque, the Discovery Sport would share the same platform. However, this would only be half of the story. Although the two are largely the same at the front end, the Discovery Sport is all-new, all-different from the B-pillars back when compared to

the Evoque.

Land Rover's engineers specifically designed the vehicle to provide seating for more than five but in a footprint no larger than existing 5-seat compact premium SUVs. The Discovery Sport's dynamic design has a more compact footprint that provides seven-passenger seating in a "5+2" configuration. The "+2" denomination really means that the 3rd row of seats are best suited for children.

### Performance

The Discovery Sport also delivers a highly refined combination of performance, safety and efficiency thanks to a body shell of high-strength steel and lightweight aluminium, a 240hp turbocharged 2.0-litre engine, nine-speed automatic transmission and







standard all-wheel drive.

The nine-speed gearbox's modus operandi seems to be to keep the engine spinning in its mid-range sweet spot as much as possible. This means that there is a fair amount of downshifting to keep the turbo boost up and the revs up. I do wish that the Discovery Sport had a wee bit more power to match the gearbox better. Keeping the gear selector in S mode does help things a bit.

Interior packaging and safety innovations also make the Discovery Sport an ideal family vehicle, as extensive use of intelligent lightweight materials and the efficient powertrain reduce fuel costs and environmental impact.

#### Off-road ability without on-road compromises

The hallmark of every Land Rover is its outstanding off-road capability and the Discovery Sport doesn't disappoint. As it has done with other its other models, Land Rover has instilled the Discovery Sport with a compelling combination of off-roadability and on-road dynamics.

Depending on the demands of the terrain, the driver-selectable Terrain Response system maximises the capability of the vehicle in challenging conditions by precisely tailoring the vehicle's steering, throttle response, gearbox, centre differential and braking and stability systems. Terrain Response features four

settings: General; Grass/Gravel/Snow (for slippery conditions on- and off-road); Mud and Ruts, and Sand, as well as an optional Dynamic Mode.

Not only is the Discovery Sport capable and luxurious, its price point makes it available to even more shoppers who want to enter the compact premium SUV market.



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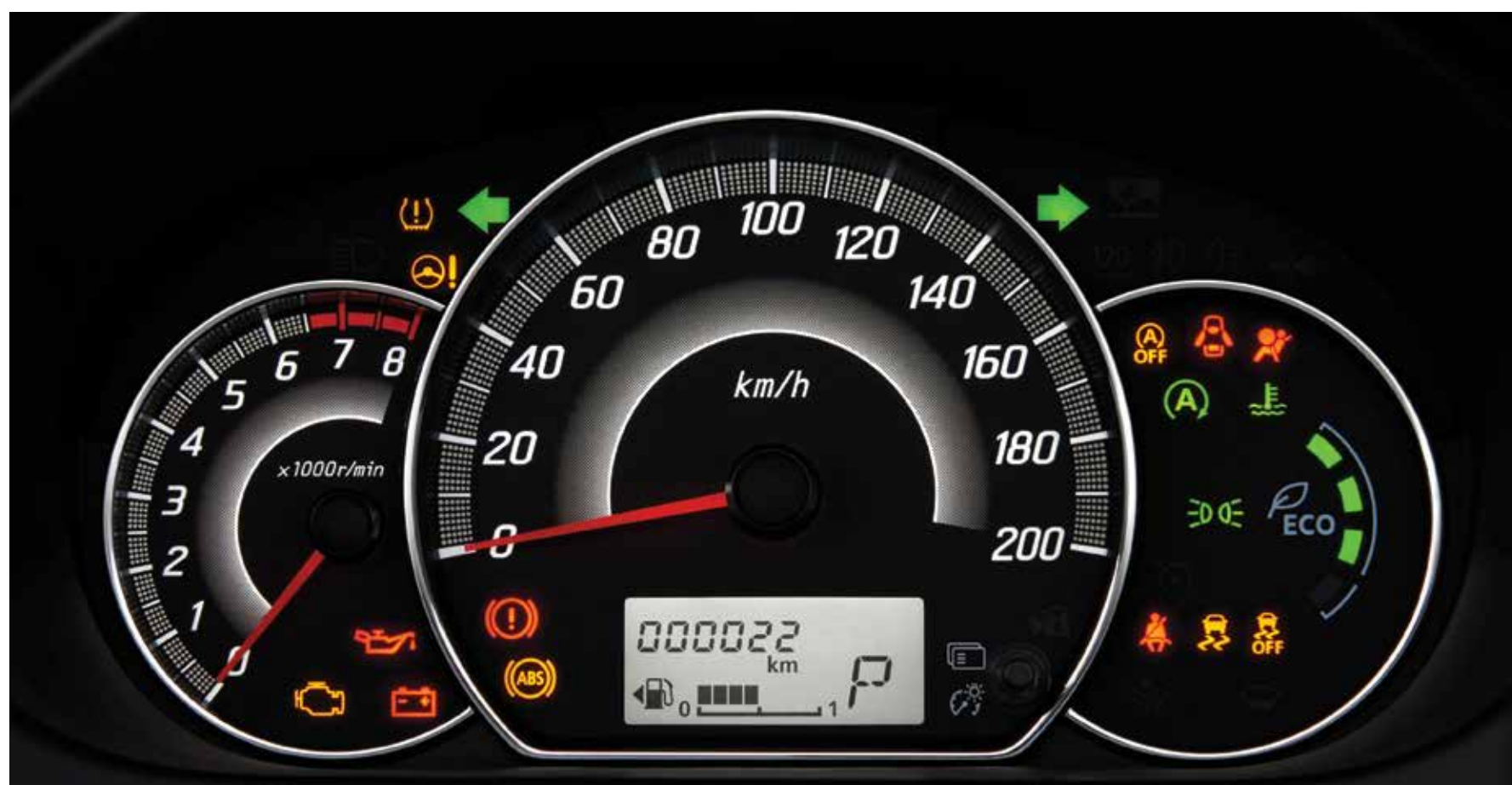
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# Dashboard warning lights



With all its flashing lights, colours and symbols, the instrument cluster can be one of the most confusing parts of a car to the average driver. While most are familiar with common icons like the turn signal arrows or windshield defroster, there are a plethora of hidden indicators, some only making an appearance when there is a potential issue with the vehicle. Let's go through a handful you may encounter from time-to-time.

## Check engine

Ah, the dreaded CEL. This little warning shaped like a little engine means the computer has detected an error with the car's emission system. Before you visit the shop, check if the gas cap is loose (or hopefully not missing) and restart the motor after tightening to see whether it goes away. If the CEL is blinking, the problem is more serious and requires immediate



attention.

## Tire pressure monitor

The icon that looks like a horseshoe with teeth and an exclamation mark in the middle suggests the air pressure in one of your tires is significantly lower than recommended. Inspect the offending tire for any damage before refilling with air.

## Traction control

This symbol has two versions: one is a car with squiggly tire marks underneath and the other is the same with the word "off" underneath. It either means the traction control system, responsible for keeping your vehicle stable in slippery situations, is on or off.

## Oil pressure

Resembling a genie lamp with a droplet coming out the end, the oil pressure light is indicating the engine isn't receiving a sufficient flow of oil. Take your car in for service as soon as possible.

## Battery charge

A miniature battery indicator is signalling there is something amiss with the vehicle's charging system. The issue could lie with the battery terminals, the

alternator, or the health of the battery.

## Brakes

I wouldn't blame you if you couldn't figure this one out. Depicted as an exclamation inside a circle inside a partial circle, the brake warning could mean that the emergency or parking brake is on, or there is a general problem with the braking system like low fluid or worn pads. Drive with caution and then get it checked out.

## Airbags

A seat-belted individual underneath a big round ball is how the airbag indicator is recognized. This illuminates if one or more of the airbags in the vehicle is deactivated, either due to an operational issue or a malfunctioning control unit. Driving without working airbags is never a good idea — make an appointment with the service department to have it looked at.



# Toyota Safety Sense

Toyota fans should already be familiar with the Star Safety System, which generated buzz a few years back when it was first rolled out, since the manufacturer was the first to provide a comprehensive standard safety suite of six technologies across the entire lineup. Now the company is evolving their products again with the introduction of Toyota Safety Sense (TSS), also known as the Lexus Safety System+ (SS+) for the premium brand.

TSS builds upon the features already included with Star (ABS, traction control, brake assist, vehicle stability control, electric brake force distribution, smart stop technology), adding up to four new functions.

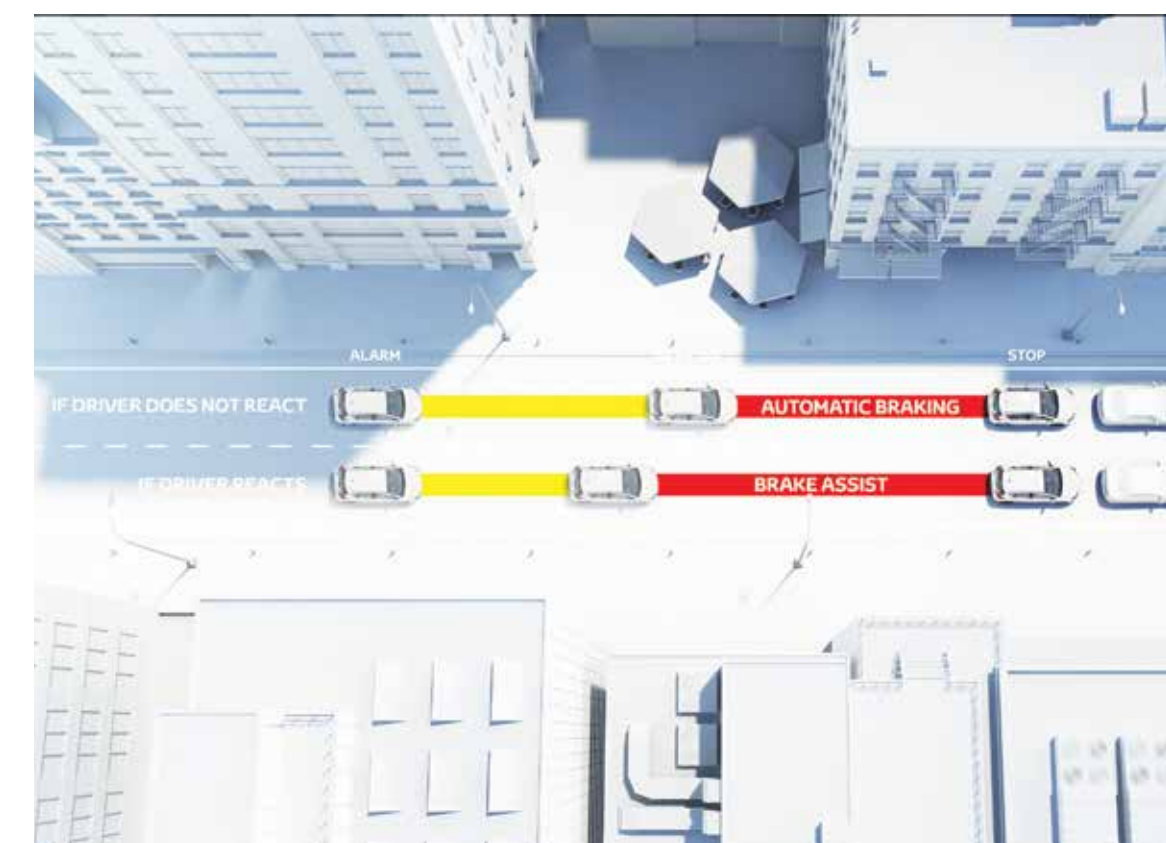


Let's take a look at them below.

## Pre-collision System (PCS)

Utilizing both a camera and laser radar, PCS detects vehicles in front of the driver, and if sensing an impending collision will send out an audible and visual alert. If the brakes are applied, the system provides extra assistance to mitigate the potential impact. If not, the brakes are automatically initiated and speed is reduced by about 30 km/h.

On Lexus models and select mid-size and luxury



Toyotas, a more advanced version of PCS will include a pedestrian detect function. While driving at speeds from 10 to 80 km/h, if the computer believes a possible impact with a pedestrian may occur, alerts are followed by braking assistance and finally full automatic braking, reducing speed by about 40 km/h.

## Lane Departure Alert (LDA)

You may have already seen this feature offered on other makes — an onboard camera detects the lane markings on the road and will warn the driver if the car drifts

into an adjacent lane.

## Automatic High Beam (AHB)

Again utilizing a built-in camera, the AHBs can detect the headlights of oncoming traffic and the taillights of someone travelling ahead of you, and will switch to low beams to avoid blinding other motorists. High beams

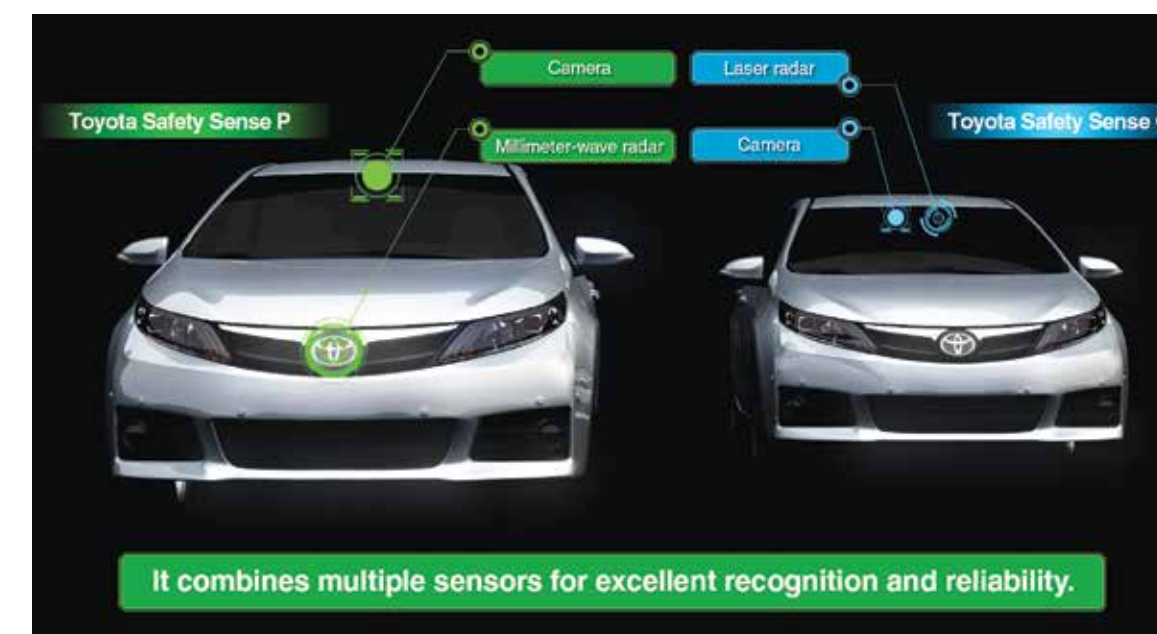


will be re-engaged when the coast is clear.

## Radar Cruise Control

When activated, a forward-facing camera and millimetre-wave radar constantly measures the distance between you and the person in front in order to maintain a safe distance, even accounting for cars that move in and out of the lane.

TSS and LSS+ will be first made available, as part of a package, on some 2016 vehicles like the new redesigned Prius hybrid and next-generation Lexus RX crossover, with the goal of being an option on all others by 2017.





# Fully-autonomous driving cars

## Are we there yet?



With every big car manufacturer conducting their own research, and even non-automotive companies like Google their hand at autonomous cars, it seems that the self-driving car is a certainty. But with the slow evolution of regulation regarding autonomous cars, and the inability of the technology to handle certain aspects of driving (such as poor road conditions or unpredictable moves from other drivers), fully autonomous cars are still a ways off.

### Why such a slow evolution towards a full-autonomous driving future?

As cars evolved, each new model comes equipped with more computational power, more electronic safety and assistance features including auto-parking, lane departure warning, intelligent cruise control, and collision mitigation emergency braking. Isn't it natural

to extrapolate this trend into the future?

The problem is that all of the driver assistance systems currently in use today operate only for short times and in extremely limited settings. Auto-parking operates for a few seconds with the driver watching and controlling the pedals. Emergency braking kicks in at the last moment before an inevitable crash. Lane warning comes on briefly when a car starts to veer out of its lane.

This changes drastically once the car drives itself continuously for minutes or hours. Here, gradual evolution is impossible: from the moment that a car drives continuously, there is no margin for error; no room for gradual improvement, learning by doing or evolution. It needs to be able to cope with all short-term eventualities and crisis situations that may arise

on the spot. That fully autonomous technology is still under development today.

### What about right now?

In the meantime, cars are more commonly being equipped with features that make them semi-autonomous. Most high-end cars from brands like Mercedes-Benz, BMW and Lexus are equipped with



radar, cameras and other sensors that allow for safety and convenience features like automatic cruise control, automatic parking, lane keeping and automatic braking.

Though they're still a far cry from full-fledged self-driving cars, they accumulate into what is essentially a semi-autonomous car or, as the US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration puts it, a "Level 2" autonomous car (Level 4 being full autonomy). For consumers, this is our first taste of a self-driving future. Two of the first manufacturers to offer a Level 2 car are Mercedes-Benz and Infiniti. Mercedes already sells cars with its Distronic cruise control system with "Steering Assist." On highways the car can make automatic adjustments to the wheel, keeping the car centred in the lane. Infiniti has a similar system in their steer-by-wire Q50 (i.e., fully electric steering). Granted, these systems aren't billed as semi-autonomous driving (though they meet the Level 2 distinction) because at their core they're still just safety and convenience features.

You can take your hands off the wheel for small



amounts of time but you'll be prompted to put them back on the wheel, otherwise the systems shut off.

### Semi-Autonomous Driving as standard equipment

When Volvo's handsome new S90 sedan enters the luxury market towards the end of 2016, it will be equipped with the second generation of Pilot Assist, Volvo's semi-autonomous driving tech that was first featured in the XC90 SUV.

In the XC90, the feature tracks a vehicle driving in front of you to know when to accelerate, brake, and steer, at speeds up to 50 km/hr, where lane markings are clearly visible to the system's cameras.



The second-generation system, dubbed Pilot Assist II, standard in the S90 sedan, will be able to accomplish those same tasks without needing to follow a car in front, according to Volvo. It will also do these functions at speeds up to 128 km/hr.

The reasoning for including the system as standard equipment is that it is part and parcel of Volvo's Vision 2020, a self-imposed goal by the automaker to eliminate deaths and serious injuries in its cars by that year.

### What happens if there is an accident?

Two questions loom over automakers and tech companies as they push forward with the development and testing of self-driving cars: "Who is responsible" and "What are the rules".

For Volvo Car Group, the answer to the first question is "us." Volvo Car Group President and CEO Håkan Samuelsson said that the company will accept full liability whenever one of its cars is in autonomous mode. Samuelsson says that Volvo is one of the first car makers in the world to make such a promise.

But not all automakers are taking the same public stance as Volvo. Audi is taking a step-by-step approach with its autonomous tech. Audi's current model cars don't have a fully, or even highly autonomous mode, though the 2016 Q7 SUV has a semi-autonomous traffic jam assist feature. The company's first highly automated system, which will handle driving tasks in congested highway traffic up to 60 km/hr, will likely make its debut in the next generation A8 in the next few years.



# 2015 Lexus RC 350

## Return of the luxury sport coupe



With last year's introduction of the all-new RC, a proper luxury sport coupe once again graces the Lexus lineup. For 2016, it's more of the same, including the introduction of an entry-level RC 300. The Japanese automaker says it's the first time they've used the term "sexy" to officially describe one of their products, and the curvaceous two-door is not underserving of such an adjective.

"There's an intangible appeal to the coupe - and for the

development team, 'sexy' was the only term that felt appropriate," says Lexus Canada director Cyril Dimitris in a news release.

Although based on the GS platform, everything built around it is different. The RC is styled in an undeniably aggressive manner, with all kinds of fender bulges, body creases, vents and slats adorning the exterior.

### Bold styling

One of the most distinctive features on the vehicle are the louvres on either corner of the rear bumper, channeling Porsche slightly. I've heard polarizing remarks on this styling cue, but I think it looks great, even if it does make the back half look sportier than the front. The signature gaping Lexus spindle grille — the biggest one yet — incorporates a slatted rather than the more menacing mesh design found on the upper

echelon models like the RC F and GS F. Tiny fog lights are cleverly hidden along the outside edges.

Upping its menacing looks is the inclusion of F SPORT packages, adding appearance, safety and mild performance enhancements inspired by the LFA supercar and F lineup of high-output offerings. Standard is the F SPORT Series 1, including huge 19-inch alloy wheels, decorative trim and a long list of interior upgrades.

The 2+2 layout inside is a snug and driver-focused one. The unique F SPORT seats are low-slung, comfortable and hold you tight, important when you're driving enthusiastically. Unfortunately, if you have passengers sitting behind you they will find nearly zero usable leg or headroom. Another Lexus first is the use of diffused upward casting lighting that provides a soft, welcoming glow at night. The dash-mounted analogue clock is also backlit with an Indiglo-like hue, which is a nice touch.

### Choose your weapon

The RC 350 is available in six different configurations, all grades using a 3.5-litre V6 developing 307 horsepower and 374 Nm of torque. My press car came with the AWD-i system combined with an electric centre differential and six-speed automatic transmission. The specialized exhaust system emits a pleasant burble under hard acceleration, exaggerated by Active Sound Control technology magnifying the engine acoustics for aural pleasure, and is surprisingly quiet under normal driving conditions. The RC feels composed on the road, absorbing imperfections and negotiating turns without missing a beat, thanks to the Adaptive Variable Suspension. AVS measures road conditions, driver inputs and vehicle speed, adjusting the damping force accordingly. For instance, if you're flying over smooth terrain, the shock absorbers automatically firm up providing better

response.

### From green to go

A Drive Mode Select toggle allows the driver to choose between ECO, Normal And Sport modes, changing the throttle and shifter characteristics. Spending most of the time in the default setting, I netted 14.9 L/100 km, slightly higher than the manufacturer's estimation of 12.6 L/100 km.

Safety-wise, the usual assortment of airbags and electronic traction aids are present, as well as extras such as a blind spot warning system, rear cross traffic alert, back-up camera, and automatic windshield wipers. Opt for F SPORT Series 2 and the bundle includes pre-collision braking, radar cruise control and park assist.

The 2016 Lexus RC is bringing sexy back starting at AED 180,000.





# 2016 Volvo XC90 T6 AWD Inscription

## The Swedes are back, safer and better than ever before!



When the original XC90 was launched in 2002, it revolutionised the SUV segment with its combination of space, versatility and safety. It went on to become a sales phenomenon across the globe, bringing in customers to the Volvo brand that would not have necessarily have turned to the plucky Swedes for their vehicular needs.

However, all was not well in the land of the Vikings, ligonberry sauce, and Ikea. A global recession and falling sales, amongst other things, caused then-owner Ford to quickly extricate itself from the Swedes. Acquisition by Chinese company Geely seemed to be a Hail Mary, but many were uncertain if the new foreign investors were content with sitting back and letting the Swedes do best, or if they were going to take a hands-on and potentially impatient approach. Fortunately, all's well that ends well and the all-new

XC90 looks like it will be a transformational vehicle in its market segment. Three years in the making and part of a USD 11bn investment programme, the new XC90 marks the beginning of a new chapter in Volvo's history, capturing its future design direction, incorporating its own range of new technologies and utilizing its new Scalable Product Architecture (SPA) technology.

### A whole new world

In many ways, the XC90 marks a new era for Volvo. It paves the way for a portfolio of new cars to come in the following years under new owner Geely. It's because of this that this particular XC90 is also the one of the most important cars in the brand's history. Volvo is not just launching a new car but indeed re-launching its entire brand. The symbolism that the XC90 represents is tremendous, and perhaps the most important in the

company's 87 year history. And the symbolism is literally skin deep too, as the XC90 is the first Volvo to carry the company's new and more prominent iron mark on the grille. The iconic arrow is now elegantly aligned with the diagonal slash across the nose of the vehicle. And there is a new T-shaped "Thor's Hammer" light signature that is particularly prominent with just the LED Daytime Running Lights activated. The XC90's larger hood and sharpened shoulders now combine with the distinctively new and confident face that will be making its way across Volvo's forthcoming generation of cars. And out back, it wouldn't be a Volvo if it didn't have tail lamps that reach towards the sky, would it now? The XC90 is also available with wheels up to 22 inches in size, the largest ever offered on a Volvo from

the factory. The 21 inchers fitted to my test car were handsome and very posh looking.

### New engine and new efficiency

The new XC90 offers a range of two-litre, four-cylinder Drive-E powertrains. My test vehicle came with the top of the range XC90 Twin Engine, which combines a 2.0-litre, four-cylinder supercharged and turbocharged petrol engine.

That's right, this engine employs both supercharging and turbocharging. Why? Turbochargers inherently have turbo lag as the turbo needs to spool up from the exhaust gasses in order to generate power. Superchargers, however, are typically belt driven from the engine and therefore create boost a lot earlier in the rev range.

Volvo uses a Roots-style supercharger to fill in the bottom end of the power range to give the relatively small 2.0-litre engine a big naturally-aspirated feel. The turbocharger kicks in when the airflow builds up. The result is an impressive 316 horsepower and 295 lb-ft (400Nm) of torque from the engine despite its small displacement and only four cylinders. In fact the main distinguishing feature of Volvo's Drive-E engine range is that they are all four-cylinder engines.

Power comes on strong and there is only a hint of turbocharger or supercharger whine or whoosh when the audio system is off. The Drive-E engine is hooked up to an Aisin eight-speed automatic gearbox and from there power is distributed to a Haldex-based all-wheel-drive system.

The transmission shift points are more tailored for efficiency rather than performance, though changing

the drive mode does quicken things up a bit. However, those looking for more sporty performance and dynamic driving in their SUVs may still want to turn to the Germans, for now anyway.

### On the inside

The XC90's interior is the most luxurious to have been designed for a Volvo. The genuine seven seater features new, innovatively designed seats that also free up interior space for passengers both in the second and third seat rows. The third row offers class-leading comfort for two passengers up to 170 cm tall and probably one of the easiest second row seat folding mechanisms I have experienced. There is 31.9 inches of third row legroom, 2.7 inches more than the 2015 Audi Q7, and a whopping 7.1 inches more than the 2016 Chevy Tahoe.

Materials such as soft leather and wood are everywhere as far as the eye can see. There is still a Scandinavian simplicity to the interior and delightful attention to detail. Just look at the diamond-cut controls for the start/stop button and volume control, as well as the knurled Sensus infotainment system selector wheel. Owners can even order a gearshift lever made of crystal glass from Orrefors, the famous Swedish glassmaker. But perhaps the XC90's most striking interior feature is a tablet-like 9-inch touch screen control console, which forms the heart of an all-new in-car control system.

This system is virtually button free and represents an entirely new way for drivers to control their car and access a range of Internet-based products and services. It also helps create an interior that is modern, spacious and uncluttered.

Since different functions are grouped in pages that can be swiped from side-to-side, much like an Apple iPad, the Sensus interface has a easier learning curve that many other competitive systems out there. The XC90 also has one of the highest resolution 360 degree camera systems I have seen on any vehicle.

My only criticism of Sensus is that the user interface looks a bit plain. The graphics and typography could use a little bit of pizzazz to reflect its upscale surroundings and high tech nature. But perhaps that would be too ostentatious to be in a Volvo. As a side note, the system can be operated while wearing gloves because an infrared grid detects finger movements across the screen. Clearly engineers who are used to driving in cold conditions have designed this!

### One of the top audio systems in the world

The XC90 also features one of the top audio systems available in the automotive world after Volvo Cars' audio experts joined forces with their counterparts at the renowned British audio equipment company Bowers & Wilkins.

The top-of-the-line system in the XC90 features a 1,400 Watt Class D amplifier and 19 Bowers & Wilkins speakers. It also includes one of the first air-ventilated subwoofers in a car. Integrated into the car body, it turns the whole interior space into a giant subwoofer.

### Most comprehensive standard safety package

It wouldn't be a Volvo review if we didn't talk about safety, would it?





“The new technologies will take us a significant step closer to our vision that no one will be killed or seriously injured in a new Volvo car by 2020,” says Dr. Peter Mertens, Senior Vice President of Research & Development at Volvo.

“Our starting point on safety is the same today as it was when the company was created almost 90 years ago: real-life situations. We study data. We crunch numbers. We innovate. The result is one of the safest cars ever made”.

The all-new XC90 offers the most comprehensive and technologically sophisticated standard safety package available in the automotive industry. Volvo’s “City Safety” now becomes the umbrella name for all of Volvo Cars’ auto brake functions, which are standard equipment in the all-new XC90. The system has been enhanced to now detect cyclists and pedestrians in front of the car, day and night, in addition to vehicles. The available Pilot Assist semi-autonomous driving system will control vehicle speed and direction at speeds up to 40 km/h.

But the XC90’s two major safety innovations are incidentally also two world first safety technologies: a run-off road protection package and auto brake at intersection capability.

In a run-off road scenario, the XC90 detects when the vehicle leaves the tarmac and tightens the seatbelts to keep occupants in position. To help prevent spinal injuries, energy-absorbing functionality between the seat and seat frame cushions the vertical forces that can arise when the car encounters a hard landing in the terrain.

The XC90 is also the first car in the world with technology that features automatic braking if the driver turns in front of an oncoming car. Volvo says that this is a common scenario at busy city crossings as well as on highways, where the speed limits are higher.

#### **Wrap-up**

With the demise of Saab, Volvo is practically what’s left of the Swedish automobile industry. Funded by Chinese cash, the company knows that it can’t pretend to be a German or Japanese brand if it wants to win back customers.

The well-executed Volvo XC90 features all-new platform, powertrain and semi-autonomous driving technologies that set a new standard for the luxury SUV segment. It is an attractive high-end package aimed for people who don’t necessarily want sports car performance in their family vehicles.

If you’re looking for practical space for seven adults, all-wheel-drive, European luxury, Scandinavian design, and the utmost in safety without the potential ostentatiousness associated with a German brand name, the XC90 may be the Swedish meatball you’re looking to get onto your vehicular dinner plate.





# Nissan 370Z

## Nissan's RWD two-seater now more accessible



The Nissan 370Z is back for 2016, and this time around it's fighting in a lower weight class. Nissan announced before the release that it would take a whopping AED 12,000 off the sticker price of the entry level offering, now boasting an MSRP of AED 127,000, helping the coupe more fairly compete with a crop of affordable V6-powered sports cars in the market.

To be expected, slashing a big chunk of the cost means removing several standard features, but more on that in a bit. This Z remains very much a looker with its black-finish 18-inch alloy wheels, bi-function boomerang

xenon headlights, daytime running LED strips in the front bumper and a Solid Red paint job (new Deep Blue Pearl released this year). That and its aggressive angry-shoe wedge shape still give the six-year-old model a faint air of head-turning exoticness which stands out on the road — and that's saying something considering I live in a city where Bentleys, Maseratis and McLaren's are an everyday sight.

### Minimalism

The interior of the 370Z is where some of the cutbacks are more evident. The good things first: the black woven "carbon" pattern seats feel great and hold you

just tight enough. It's a very driver-focused cockpit with a basic but purposeful instrument cluster and a trio of angled gauges covered by cute little hoods that read out engine oil temp, battery voltage and the time. The steering wheel has a cool Z in the middle of the horn button and the whole thing slides up and down along with the cluster, but unfortunately doesn't telescope out making operating the wheel in a comfortable manner for me an exercise in finding the right balance of sliding and tilting the driver's seat. A cubbyhole resides where a navigation system should be, and I was surprised the retro radio/CD player even had



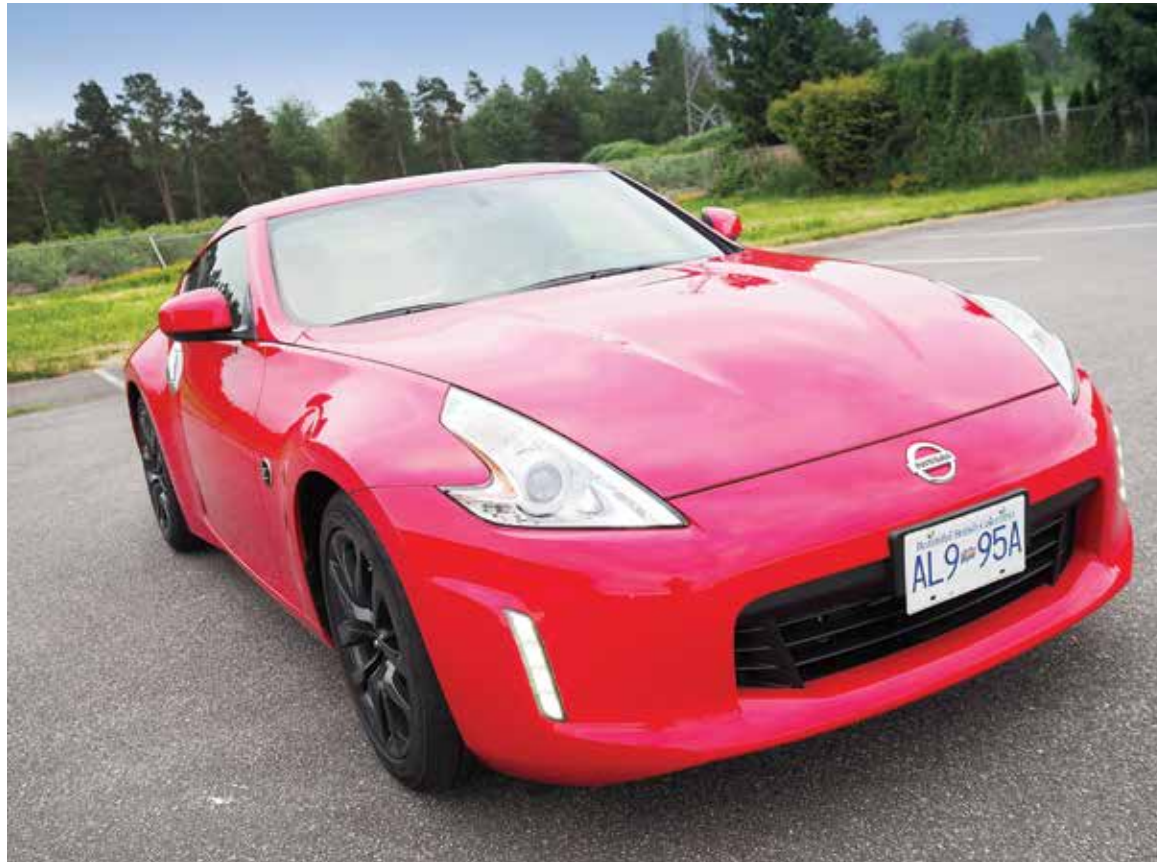


a Bluetooth hands-free option.

### Lean and mean

The upside of removing 21st century creature comforts is that the car is a tad lighter, weighing in at 1,497 kilograms. Not petite, but an improvement nonetheless. Buyers can choose between a six-speed manual transmission, present in the press car, or a seven-speed automatic transmission. The standard is fun to drive but shifts feel clunky and rough when you're quickly moving through the gears. A SynchroRev Match downshift rev matching system is available to smoothen the process, the caveat being since there are no option packages, the only way to get it is to cough up the extra money to move up to the Touring trim.

Returning to duty is the 332-horsepower 3.7-litre V6 engine. Quick revving with 366 Nm of torque on tap, the VQ37VHR is quick and emits the sufficient amount of growl. To combat its girth, Nissan has implemented significant uses of aluminum and carbon fibre in the hood, hatch, fender, engine bay



and suspension. Combined with the 55/45 front-rear weight distribution, the 370Z feels livelier than you might imagine. The speed-sensitive power steering was revised last year to provide tighter and more direct road feel, although vibrations are filtered out using a damper-like solenoid valve.

The other trim that hasn't been mentioned is the Coupe Touring Sport also sold in both manual and auto versions that comes with GPS, backup camera, upgraded BOSE audio and an auto-dimming mirror. For more adventurous types, move up to a NISMO with 350-horsepower, sport suspension and Recaro seats.



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