

# ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

VOLUME 23 NUMBER 3

MAY-JUNE 2024



3 AWARDS COMPAROS  
3 COLLECTOR AUCTIONS  
ROAD TRIPS & TRAVEL  
SPORTS, PICKUPS, OFF-ROAD  
SUVS, EVS, SEDANS, CARGO  
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THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

## news & features

May-June 2024

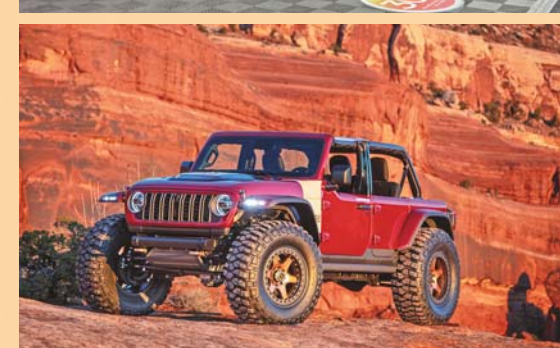
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**COVER:** The ultimate Nissan Z Car of the moment, the 420-horsepower 2024 Nissan Z NISMO. Photo: Joe Sage



Tyson Hugie

Doug Berger for NWAPA



START YOUR ENGINES : FROM THE PUBLISHER

We always cover some ground—it comes with the territory. Each vehicle we drive, most for a week, occasionally a few days (such as the EV cargo van in this issue), sparks an inspiration. Some are ideal just around town, some you would like to drive coast-to-coast, many just beg for a long drive on a country highway, and some are looking to get into a snowstorm or out into an off-highway vehicle park. Time doesn't always allow fulfillment of the best ideas (and the rules are generally likely to preclude that coast-to-coast fantasy). But we do hit a range of pretty much all of the above in this issue.

We also head up into the hills with **Tyson Hugie** for a day trip (with a variety of overnight options) to the historic Arizona town of Crown King.

What we didn't really notice until we made the map on the Table of Contents page is that quite a few items in this issue are out of state. That's not completely unusual, and there is always a reason of some sort, as there is with each of these.

Of three collector auctions in this issue, one takes place here but is presented by an auction house based elsewhere; one is elsewhere but presented by Arizona's own Barrett-Jackson; and one is of interest here due to the Penske connection—thus two out-of-town dots on the map, but with Arizona reasons.

We belong to a range of regional press associations coast to coast (as listed at right), largely for reasons of content provider and manufacturer relations, as well as for their events. Of particular interest comparo events in regions that have various commonalities with driving conditions and/or market trends and preferences here. Three of those are in this issue—one in Texas, one in Colorado and Utah, and one in the Pacific Northwest. That's three more out-of-state dots on the map, of interest to any Arizona vehicle buyer.

And both Monterey Car Week and Moab's Easter Jeep Safari are slam dunks—they're part of our extended backyard, and the vehicles and events are right up our alley.

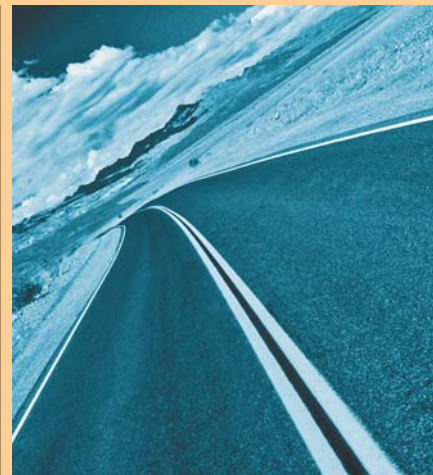
Enjoy the ride!

**Joe Sage** • Publisher/ Executive Editor

Torva

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**USMA** .....United States Motorsports Association

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▼ The **Mercedes-Benz** VISION EQXX has completed its third long-distance road trip—on the Arabian Peninsula from the Mercedes-Benz Center in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, to the new Mercedes-Benz Brand Center in Dubai, UAE—setting a new efficiency record over 1,000 kilometers. The route—1,010 km (627.6 miles), completed in a total drive time of 14 hours and 42 minutes—included urban and suburban sections with heavy traffic, as well as lengthy high-

ity to cover well over 1,000 km on a single charge twice before (from Sindelfingen to Cassis and from Untertürkheim to Silverstone). The purpose of this third road trip was to maximize on-board consumption without charging losses, test efficiency in all areas, and examine performance under extreme desert conditions. Of particular interest in the dry desert heat was the car's advanced thermal management, an intelligent on-demand system to keep the elec-

tricity. On the drive to Dubai, the roof harvested 1.8 kWh of solar energy, adding about 24 km of range. Research continues into series-production benefits. Also to be compared against previous drives were data on the influence of wind and sun on efficiency, including temperature as well as angle and direction of sunlight. Beyond the distance drives, in over two years since VISION EQXX was unveiled, it has also covered 14,503 miles testing under a wide range of demanding real-life conditions.

▼ **Kia America** made its Work Truck Week debut at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis in March, with new Platform Beyond Vehicle (PBV) concepts. The PV5—an EV optimized for rideshare hailing (Kia recently signed an MOU with Uber for new partnership ideas)—is conceived to provide customizable delivery services. Its concept was presented in Basic, High Roof, Robotaxi and Pickup versions, with potential for arrival in the US market in 2026. The PV7 is the largest in the current concept PBV lineup, conceived with more interior space, impressive all-



way sections across the open desert, with temperatures of up to 93 degrees F. Having left Riyadh at 4:15 am with a full battery, the VISION EQXX still had 192 miles of range remaining when it arrived in Dubai at 7:57 pm. Energy efficiency measured 7.4 kWh/100km, equivalent to about 282 MPGe for a gasoline vehicle, beating its own previous best by a considerable margin. The VISION EQXX had proven its abil-

ity to cover well over 1,000 km on a single charge twice before (from Sindelfingen to Cassis and from Untertürkheim to Silverstone). The purpose of this third road trip was to maximize on-board consumption without charging losses, test efficiency in all areas, and examine performance under extreme desert conditions. Of particular interest in the dry desert heat was the car's advanced thermal management, an intelligent on-demand system to keep the elec-

tricity drivetrain and the cabin cool. The air conditioning system was operational during the trip with minimal negative impact on energy efficiency thanks in part to a multi-source heat pump, a further-developed version from the Concept CLA Class unveiled at IAA Mobility 2023. The solar roof's 117 cells power many of the ancillaries, reducing energy drain on the high-voltage system and further improving overall

monitoring, temperature control and intelligent route planning for ultimate EV efficiency, with real-time data and AI integration for predictive maintenance.



▼ Great change has been expected from **Dodge**, with “Last Call” editions of the V8 Charger and Challenger rolled out as their prior generations headed for the exit. Many feared the end of the beloved muscle car era—while a parallel path seemed to lead to all EVs. Now the future is here. Muscle lives on, as the first new Charger is indeed billed as “the world’s first and only electric muscle car.” And gasoline also lives on, in a “multi-energy” lineup. The vehicles debut a new STLA Large platform, with both high-performance and multi-energy capabilities. All-wheel drive is standard. First is an all-new, all-electric Dodge Charger Daytona (variously identified as a 2024 or 2025 model) with up to 670 horsepower, aiming for 0-60 mph in 3.3 seconds to retain the title of the world’s quickest and most powerful muscle car. Estimating a quarter-mile time of 11.5 seconds, Charger Daytona Scat Pack expects to hold its claim of an unsurpassed elapsed time for any muscle car. A standard PowerShot feature can add an incremental 40 horsepower for 15 seconds. Electric Chargers will also include a 496-hp Daytona R/T. Aerodynamic downforce is enhanced via a front R-Wing. Fratzonic chambered exhaust echoes Hellcat levels of sound unlike ordinary EVs. Other upgrades include brakes, tires and wheels, plus race options and modes. New 64-color Attitude Adjustment lighting inside reacts to vehicle and driver inputs, with one-button drive personality change. One surprise is the return of two-door Chargers after decades of absence—as well as four-

doors. Coupe versions of the EV Chargers come first, beginning production in mid-2024. Then, to the relief of many, the lineup will also add back internal-combustion versions, with a 3.0L Twin Turbo I-6 Hurri-

cane engine—a 550-hp Charger SIXPACK H.O. and a 420-hp Charger SIXPACK S.O.. Production of four-door Daytona EVs, the gasoline two-door Charger SIXPACK H.O. and the four-door gasoline Charger SIXPACK S.O. are scheduled to start Q1 2025. The all-new Dodge Charger is being built at the Windsor (Ontario) Assembly Plant.

▼ **Blackbridge Motors**, a Connecticut-based specialist in reengineered vintage



Land Rover Defenders, is showing off their newest custom Classic Defender 110 Mark II, a one-of-a-kind soft top. While aesthetics, audio and interior are focal points for Blackbridge, daily drivability of each build is also a hallmark of every truck. This Defender features a 650-horsepower GM Performance 6.2L V8 LT4 engine outfitted in an aerospace grade wiring harness. Incorporating a comprehensive system from

General Motors significantly increases performance and reliability, while also ensuring clients can conveniently service their Blackbridge Defender at any GM dealer. Its GM Performance 8-speed automatic is mated to a 1:1 ratio Land Rover LT230 Heavy Duty Transfer Case, with proprietary front and rear driveshafts from Blackbridge Motors. Other details include heavy duty front and rear axle shafts; a proprietary Hydroboost Wilwood Master brake system with four-wheel discs and slotted front rotors; heavy duty springs and Fox Shocks; re-engineered steering linkage and steering box; and period-correct 16-inch “Wolf” style steel wheels in a custom Limestone paint, with BF Goodrich K02 A/T tires. A centerpiece of the vehicle is its Hi-Fi reference-grade audiophile custom sound system, with a Sony RSX-GS9 head unit and Moral Reference speakers in period-correct custom soundstage enclosures throughout the cabin, plus a discreetly hidden Diamond Audio subwoofer. Inside, an “Early Style” Land Rover dashboard with a bold display features vintage-inspired dials, knobs and touch points, including those for a Blackbridge cooling system with dual fan control. Custom seats, door cards and dashboard top are hand-upholstered in rich materials. This Mark II has two rows of captain’s chairs, each with leather console,



industry standard wait times, thanks to their exclusive Land Rover focus and their own manufacturing processes. For more info, visit [www.blackbridgemotors.com](http://www.blackbridgemotors.com).



▼ Established just a few months prior, **Automobili Lamborghini** presented its first prototype—the 350 GTV, designed by Franco Scaglione and built at Carrozzeria Sargiotto in Turin—in October 1963. The first production car, derived from that one-off prototype, was 350 GT chassis #101, in Metallic Geneva Green with white interior, exhibited at Geneva in 1964. The 350 GT was fast and extraordinary. Its chassis and frame were by engineer Giampaolo Dallara,

and production were done by Carrozzeria Touring in Milan, considered the absolute best in the early 1960s for sports cars with a luxury finish. The interior, with wide use of leather and chrome plating, has a 2 + 1

configuration—two front seats and a central rear seat. On the Geneva show stand, Ferruccio Lamborghini himself showed the car off to onlookers, future customers and journalists. The V12 was taken to 4 liters just a few months later on the 400 GT and would become the cornerstone of Lamborghini's success, as the same geometry would be used in various positions and variations for the next 40 years—in a front longitudinal position on the 400 GT,



very young at the time and now considered the best chassis maker in the world. Its 3.5-liter V12 with four overhead camshafts was by engineer Giotto Bizzarrini, envisaged for competitive use, then adapted for road use on the 350 GT by engineer Paolo Stanzani, a key figure in the history of Lamborghini and GT cars worldwide. Engineering included four independent wheels. The aluminum bodywork design

Islero, Jarama, Espada and LM 002, in a rear transverse position on the Miura, and in a rear longitudinal position on the Countach and Diablo. Later used in development and endurance tests, the first 350 GT was unfortunately destroyed by a rear-end collision while stopped at a traffic light. However, the next 350 GT, with the second chassis number, did survive: metallic gray over red interior and delivered brand

new to Geneva in August 1964. This very same car is now the oldest Lamborghini production car in existence, perfectly restored and certified by Lamborghini Polo Storico. Lamborghini wanted to celebrate its story, so this year they displayed it on the streets of Geneva, where it was first delivered and presented 60 years earlier.

▼ **Audi** CEO Gernot Döllner has made clear that product and technology, as well as stronger brand positioning on the global stage, are the focus of the Audi Agenda. Accordingly, Audi AG and Volkswagen AG have decided to strengthen their commitment to Formula 1. Audi is taking a 100 percent stake in Sauber Holding AG, with Oliver Hoffmann (who achieved motorsport successes including international wins and championships in customer racing, in DTM and in the all-electric Formula E World Championship, and who has been head of the Technical Development division) responsible for the Audi Formula 1 program overall; and Andreas Seidl as Audi F1 Team CEO, responsible for implementation of the project and management of the team. Döllner will add the Technical Development division to his existing responsibilities. Three pillars to the Audi Formula 1 program are their stake in the team; development of the power unit by Audi Formu-

la Racing GmbH at Neuburg; and strategic steering and activation of the program by Audi AG. This bundling also aims to strengthen collaboration between motorsports and series production. Recently, Audi was the first manufacturer ever to win the famous, notorious Dakar Rally with an innovative electrified drivetrain. Preparations for entry into the FIA Formula 1 World Championship in 2026 are in full swing. ■

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Kia Telluride was introduced in spring 2019 as a 2020 model, to immediate wide acclaim, which continues through today, with over 50 major-majors and countless others (see partial list on follow page). Awards and commendations generally fall into two realms—best value or just flat-out best in its category.

We’ve driven the Kia Telluride at a number of comparo events and have had it in our weekly fleet twice before—in 2021, an SX AWD, top trim of four at that time (eight builds with FWD-AWD on any); and in 2023, a new fifth trim, SXP (or SX-Prestige), ours with an also-new penultimate X-Line upgrade (the also-also-new X-Pro ran \$1,000 higher still), now one of five trim levels and fourteen builds

The lineup this year is the same as last (see sidebar), in a range from just \$36,190 to the lower-mid \$50s, but this time we’re driving that ultimate build—the SX-Prestige X-Pro AWD.

All have the same 291-horsepower 3.8-liter V6 and 8-speed automatic. All have three rows, with seating for seven on most, eight in two at the low end (or optionally seven in one of those). Legroom is exceptional—up to 44.1 inches in the first row, 42.4 in the second. Row three is fairly typical, especially as a midsize, at 31.4 inches. Weight, towing and fuel mileage vary only slightly across all.

Suspension, basically the same on all versions, is retuned for X-Pro. Ground clearance is 8.0 inches at the low end, 8.4 on others, including X-Pro. Approach-departure angles all are close, X-Pro the highest. Wheel size varies, most having 20-inch wheels, with 18-inchers the exception on just the base model (LX) and the two X-Pro versions (SX and SXP). On LX, it’s with an eye on price point. On X-Pro, the size is with an eye on off-road capability—more sidewall for tougher duty. The X-Pro is not a heavy-armor rock-crawler, aimed rather at ad-

venturous off-pavement activities, while equally at home if it never left its duties in town.

With all those factors in mind, we kept an eye on the weather, to possibly head north for snow.

Modes include comfort, sport, smart, eco and snow, also with a differential lock. We went to sport, noting that the transmission held well in corners, seldom with lag. The turning circle is quite tight for a three-row, accomplishing easy U-turns even in places we expected three-points.

As always, there are some features we would change, though we won’t nitpick those today.

The odds of springtime winter weather looked promising on a Friday afternoon. We headed north on the Beeline Highway at 2 pm, temperature 52°.

It was raining slightly, and the road surface was slick as we hit a long descent north of Sunflower. Speed demons dominated the shiny left lane, as we realized our right lane instead had a very rough

surface—but the ride in our Telluride was notably smooth, even in firmer sport mode. Nice.

By the piñons near Payson, the temperature hit 39° just after 3 pm. Did our snow foray have hope? Sunset was not until 6:30 or so, but it was very cloudy and already fairly dark. At Payson (elevation 5,100 feet), conditions were very wet, almost like fog, temperature 38°. We pushed on.

Pavement in town was rough in spots, yet our ride remained smooth and silent in sport. We tried comfort, then eco, all feeling about the same..

North of Payson on two lanes, vehicles coming the other way were starting to have slushy snow plastered up front. We still had rain, but it couldn’t be far now, or it would have already washed off. Then we saw our first plow coming south.

As we finally had patchy, thin, marginal snow on the ground, we pulled in at Tonto Natural Bridge State Park, finding the park closed by 4 pm on this sloppy weather day. But the immediate area presented great dirt road challenges—mud, slush and puddles everywhere, even fully flowing water.

Without a specific mud mode, as on some, snow mode seemed our best option here. We also applied 4WD lock, an easy overlay setting.

We climbed back up onto the highway, unlocked the differential and continued north into the ponderosa forest, as the temperature hit a very promising 33° and slush started to accumulate on the road itself. Vehicles had become sparse, each seeming to be on a purposeful mission, though box trucks and others were starting to pull off. We were thankful for our Continental TerrainContact All/Terrains, better for digging through the slush and applying the traction of their treads.

We turned up Lake Mary Road with a borderline freezing temperature of 34° and borderline slush on the road, the traction danger zone. Still in sport mode, we could feel ourselves being pulled side to side a little, so we locked the 4WD again and changed down to comfort mode for good measure. And we soon found our forest road turnout, at about 7,500 feet elevation.

We had this to ourselves, with several inches of

(cont’d)



SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY .....	West Point, Georgia
ENGINE/TRANS BUILD .....	SKorea / US
PARTS CONTENT .....	US/Can 60% / SKorea 40%
ENGINE .....	3.8L DOHC V6, GDI dir inj, DOHC w CVVT, alum/alum
HP/TORQUE .....	291 hp / 262 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO .....	13.0:1
TRANSMISSION .....	8-spd auto
DRIVETRAIN .....	full-time AWD (FWD also available on lower trims)
SUSPENSION .....	F: indep, MacPherson struts, coil springs, stblzr bar; R: indep, multi-link, stblzr bar
STEERING .....	col-mtd motor driven pwr
BRAKES .....	F: 13.4 vented; R: 120 solid
WHEELS .....	7.5x18 X-Pro black alloys
TIRES .....	P245/60 R18 Continental A/T
LENGTH / WHEELBASE .....	196.9 / 114.2 in
GROUND CLEARANCE .....	8.4 in
TURNING CIRCLE .....	38.6 ft
HEADRM (F/2/3) .....	(dual snrf) 39.5 / 38.8 / 37.8 in
LEGROOM (F/2/3) .....	41.4-44.1 / 42.4 / 31.4 in
CARGO CAPACITY .....	21.0 / 46.0 / 87.0 cu.ft
WEIGHT .....	4455-4522 lb
TOW CAPACITY .....	5500 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY .....	reg unl / 18.8 gal
MPG .....	18/24/20 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE .....	\$53,185
PAINT: Wolf Gray .....	495
CARPETED FLOOR MATS .....	225
CARGO COVER .....	155
CARPET CARGO MAT w seat protection .....	115
DESTINATION CHARGE .....	1365
TOTAL .....	\$55,540
(Price has increased slightly; see below.)	

2024 KIA TELLURIDE LINEUP



All w 3.8L V6 & 8-spd auto .....	FWD .....	AWD
LX .....	\$36,190	\$38,190
S .....	38,090	40,090
EX .....	41,790	43,790
EX X-Line .....		46,085
SX .....	45,990	47,990
SX X-Line .....		49,485
SX X-PRO .....		50,485
SX-P (SX-Prestige) .....		50,890
SXP X-Line .....		52,385
SXP X-PRO .....		53,385

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snow on the road, though we were kicking up the mud below in spots. We returned to snow mode.

When it came time to turn around, we did a five-point turn, to avoid the road's unknown edges, not helped by the rear camera image being a near-useless gloppy, drippy mess in these conditions.

More snow seemed to be moving in, but as we got back to the highway, we decided to head back down. We first unlocked the differential, also dialing it back from snow to comfort, then reengaged the differential, remembering this road had a lot of slush. Better to hit an unlikely dry patch with it locked, than a likely dangerous patch with it not.

As our slush built up, a message read, "forward side safety system limited, radar blocked." (We'd be fine, but imagine that in an autonomous car.)

It was now snowing full bore, and the road was all white. We went back to snow mode.

As the snow let up abruptly, we took the Telluride out of snow mode and went back to sport, which seemed to have no negatives in these conditions, same as everywhere. After a quick bite in Payson, we headed back down the rainy, sleety, even briefly snowy Beeline in the dark.

We often want to do the same thing with many, but are subject to our own timing as well as the whims of the weather. That said, the Kia Telluride did extremely well throughout. It's not hard to understand how it has gathered so many trophies.

The Kia Telluride, even the top trim driven here, is just 40-50 percent the cost of some competitive premium alternatives. It may have lower horsepower than the priciest, but you'd barely know it in normal use. Bottom line: as Kia constantly ups the ante in quality, content and features, they still deliver value. What's more, you won't hesitate to take the X-Pro out for a little rougher duty. ■



**KIA TELLURIDE AWARDS SAMPLING**

**2024 to date**

- 2024 *Car and Driver* 10Best Trucks and SUVs
- 2024 *Kelley Blue Book* Best Buy Award
- 2024 *US News & World Report* Best Cars for the Money Award
- 2024 *US News & World Report* Best Cars for Families Award
- 2024 *Cars.com* Best Family Car

**2023**

- 2023 JD Power US ALG Residual Value Award
- 2023 *Kelley Blue Book* Best Buy Award
- 2023 *The Car Connection* Best Family Car to Buy
- 2023 *Car and Driver* 10Best Trucks and SUVs
- 2023 *US News & World Report* Best Cars for Families Award
- 2023 *Money Magazine* inaugural Best Autos Best Overall
- 2023 *Money Magazine* inaugural Best Autos Best Value Three-Row SUVs
- 2023 MAMA Spring Rally Favorite Family Vehicle
- 2023 *SlashGear* Best Family SUV
- 2023 Hispanic Motor Press Family Vehicle of the Year
- 2023 Rebel Rally 3rd Place Podium: X-Pro

**2022**

- 2022 Edmunds Top Rated Award
- 2022 *Kelley Blue Book* Best Buy Award Best Three-Row Midsize SUV
- 2022 *Kelley Blue Book* Best Buy Family Car
- 2022 *US News & World Report* Best Car for the Money Award
- 2022 *US News & World Report* Best Car for Families Award
- 2022 *Car and Driver* Editors' Choice Awards
- 2022 *The Car Connection* Best Family Car to Buy

**2021**

- 2021 *Car and Driver* 10Best
- 2021 *Consumer Guide* Automotive Best Buy Award Midsize Crossover
- 2021 *Kelley Blue Book* Best Buy Award Best Three-Row Midsize SUV
- 2021 *The Car Connection* Best Family Car to Buy

**2020**

- 2020 *Kelley Blue Book* Best Buy Award Best Three-Row Midsize SUV
- 2020 *Kelley Blue Book* Best Buy Award Best New Model
- 2020 Hispanic Motor Press SUV of the Year
- 2020 Edmunds Top Rated Award
- 2020 NACTOY Utility Vehicle of the Year
- 2020 *MotorTrend* SUV of the Year
- 2020 *Car and Driver* 10Best
- 2020 MAMA Family Vehicle of the Year
- 2020 *AutoTrader* Best New Car
- 2020 *AutoTrader* Best Car Interior Under \$50,000
- 2020 *Automobile Magazine* All-Star
- 2020 World Car Awards World Car of the Year
- 2020 Wards 10 Best Interiors
- 2020 NEMPA Winter SUV of the Year
- 2020 Rebel Rally 2nd Place Podium Finish: X-Cross Class

**2019**

- 2019 TxMPA Texas Off-Road Invitational Best SUV
- 2019 NWAPA Mudfest Best Mid- and Full-Size Family utility vehicle
- 2019 TAWA Texas Truck Rodeo SUV of Texas
- 2019 TAWA Texas Auto Roundup CUV of Texas
- 2019 *MotorWeek* Driver's Choice Award Best Large Utility



# TEXAS TRUCK RODEO WINNERS

We drove in the Texas Auto Writers Association (TAWA) 2023 Texas Truck Rodeo last September—our tenth. We had a general recap in our November-December 2023 issue, but not known then were the winners. These used to be presented on site at the end of the event. Now they hold back the results until later. Lingering industry disruptions also had half the vehicles still that model year, though winners are titled as this year's (the 2023 Rodeo produces the 2024 Truck of Texas and so on). With these timing factors, along with not every manufacturer present (or model, e.g. Toyota skipped midsize pickups, with a new Tacoma coming), this year's awards are useful, but you may want to see what has have evolved on some in the interim.

## PICKUPS

\*(Noted vehicle was entered as both Full-Size and Luxury.)

### MIDSIZE PICKUP

2023 Nissan Frontier PRO-4X.....\$46,380  
(uncontested): **Nissan Frontier**

### FULL-SIZE PICKUP

2023 Ram 1500 Limited Elite\*\*.....N/A  
2024 Toyota Tundra 1794 Limited Edition.....N/A  
**WINNER: Ram 1500**

### HEAVY DUTY PICKUP

2023 Ram 2500 Rebel.....\$93,910  
(uncontested): **Ram 2500**

### OFF-ROAD PICKUP

2023 Ram 1500 TRX.....\$105,735  
2023 Ram 2500 Power Wagon.....87,465  
2024 Toyota Tundra HV 4X4 TRD PRO.....N/A  
**WINNER: Ram 1500**

### LUXURY PICKUP

2023 Ram 1500 Limited Elite\*\*.....N/A  
(uncontested): **Ram 1500**



Toyota Tundra



Ram 2500 Power Wagon



Nissan Frontier



## SUVS

\*(Noted vehicles were also entered in Green category.)

### COMPACT CROSSOVER

2024 Dodge Hornet R/T Plus\*.....\$53,245  
2023 Honda CR-V Hyb Sport Touring AWD.....39,845  
2024 Hyundai Kona Limited AWD.....35,145  
2024 Mazda CX-50 2.5 Turbo Meridian Ed.....43,860  
**WINNER: Mazda CX-50**

### MIDSIZE SUV

2023 Jeep Grand Cherokee Altitude 4X4.....\$54,070  
2023 Kia Sorento X-Line.....43,590  
2024 Nissan Pathfinder Rock Creek 4WD.....45,305  
2024 Volkswagen Atlas SE.....N/A  
**WINNER: Jeep Grand Cherokee**

### FULL-SIZE SUV

2023 Dodge Durango SRT Hellcat.....\$106,420  
2024 Toyota Grand Highlander Plat Hyb MAX.....N/A  
**WINNER: Toyota Grand Highlander**

### OFF-ROAD SUV

2024 Jeep Wrangler 4xe Rubicon X.....\$74,770  
2024 Jeep Wrangler Rubicon 392.....95,945  
2024 Toyota Sequoia TRD PRO Hybrid.....77,565  
**WINNER: Jeep Wrangler**

### LUXURY SUV

2024 Acura MDX Type S with Advance.....\$75,295  
2023 Genesis Electrified GV70 AWD Prestige\*75,275  
2023 Jeep Grand Wagoneer Series III.....114,180  
**WINNER: Genesis GV70 / Electrified GV70**

## GREEN VEHICLE

\*(Noted vehicles were also entered in SUV categories.)

2024 Dodge Hornet R/T Plus\*.....\$53,245  
2023 Genesis Electrified GV70 AWD Prestige\*75,275  
2023 Jeep Grand Cherokee 4xe Trailhawk.....73,125  
**WINNER: Genesis Electrified GV70**

## ATTRIBUTES AWARDS

**BEST INTERIOR: Genesis GV70**  
**BEST EXTERIOR: Genesis GV70**  
**BEST PERFORMANCE: Jeep Wrangler**  
**BEST VALUE: Nissan Frontier**  
**HIGHEST PERSONAL APPEAL: Ram 1500**

## TITLE AWARDS TRUCK OF TEXAS★

**WINNER: Toyota Tundra**

## SUV OF TEXAS★

**WINNER: Genesis GV70 / Elec GV70**

Category votes are pure math, point-by-point scoring of attributes, while the two Title Awards—Truck of Texas and SUV of Texas—are a separate subjective vote.

This can lead to Ram ruling the math in categories (some uncontested), while Toyota Tundra (which is built, by the way, in Texas) grabbed the subjective Title Award.

For SUVs, on the other hand, category awards were more varied. And yet Genesis GV70 (with its EV version entered, but both versions considered), dominated these with four individual awards, before taking home the big Title Award, too. ■



Genesis GV70 and Electrified GV70



Toyota Grand Highlander



Jeep Wrangler





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Shown: Vintage Iron Speed Shop Clock / SKU: 09-BKG-VI

~~Were \$399~~ Now \$349 / Free shipping on this item!

### All-Steel Toolboxes

The Greasemonkeys have the feeling their full line of durable all-steel portable toolboxes with lift-out tray and a variety of the most cool car guy graphics (five styles now and more coming!) just may be too good to stash tools in—we may have to call them "deco-boxes"!

- Rugged all steel end cap construction • Powder coated, rust resistant • Heavy-duty stainless steel handle • Nickel-plated steel latch and hinge for added security • Full length lift-out tote tray
- Cool car guy quality color graphics • 6 lbs • 16" x 7" x 7.5"

Wrench-In-Hand Steel Tool Box / SKU: 10-BKG-WCL

Vintage Pickup Truck Steel Tool Box / SKU: 10-BKG-VT

\$49 each / Eligible for free shipping!

♥ Not only are your products awesome, but the service and the people are too! I very much intend to pass the word along about how great it is to do business with the Busted Knuckle Garage.  
— Many thanks! Jackie B.

♥ My husband just loves everything, especially me for getting him such cool stuff. I'd have to say we will be lifetime customers, oh ya!! Thank you, Greasemonkeys.  
— Sincerely, Pam



♥ I just had the most wonderful buying experience! I only hope my father asks for something from The Busted Knuckle Garage for Christmas so I can do business with such a wonderful company once more.  
— Cheers! Michelle

♥ First, let me be the one thanking you! I honestly cannot remember such extraordinary customer service.  
— Thanks again, "JR" Jean

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## A new campground alternative

### AVOID CROWDED AND FULLY-BOOKED CAMPSITES VIA THIS FARM AND RANCH LAND-SHARING MARKETPLACE

For the prior decade or more, the number of people who go camping in America each year had been around 40 million. Since Covid, however, that number has spiked to over 50 million people, bringing new challenges in campground availability.

Fortunately, alternative ways of camping are cropping up. The 2023 North American Camping & Outdoor Hospitality Report by KOA reported that, year-to-year, around 80 percent of campers try a new form of camping they are unfamiliar with.

LandTrust, a recreation access network based in Bozeman, Montana, is offering a new alternative to traditional campgrounds by partnering with landowners to offer exclusive RV & Camping access outside of national parks and RV campgrounds, by reserving camping spots on private farms and ranches across the country.

Nic De Castro, founder and CEO of LandTrust, explains, "We started partnering with landowners to offer mainly hunting and fishing access and quickly realized we could expand to offer lodg-

ing and camping, too, since so many of the properties are off the beaten path with no nearby hotels."

Currently, LandTrust.com lists over 1.25 million acres of private land across 40 states, with more than two hundred of those listings offering RV & Camping experiences, unique from what other booking sites offer.

"LandTrust is for exclusive access to working farms and ranches," notes De Castro. "It's more for the off-grid type of camper who's looking for outdoor recreation opportunities and no one else around."

You can think of LandTrust like an Airbnb for hunting and fishing, that's now offering RV & Camping, too.

RV & Camping opportunities are sorted by state on the operation's website. (Montana, for example, shows 715 available package listings, Colorado 34, Arizona nine, the Dakota combined almost 200, and so on—and growing.)

Nightly rates start around \$25 and can include a whole range of outdoor activities—from stargazing and bird watching, to hunting and fishing, hiking and mountain biking, farm and ranch experiences, and more.

"The whole point of LandTrust is to offer a marketplace that generates income for landowners and provides recreational opportunities for trusted outdoor enthusiasts, by connecting them," summarizes De Castro.

Not only are more people camping every year but people are making reservations earlier so there's no time like the present to get ahead of the game and reserve your summer camping spots now. [www.landtrust.com](http://www.landtrust.com) ■



Photo: LandTrust.com



There are many reasons Genesis is doing so well, and distinctive good looks are a great starting point. Driven here is the smallest of their three sedans, the Genesis G70, the smaller sibling of G80 and G90 (which until eight years ago were the Hyundai Genesis and Hyundai Equus).

The G70 arrived in 2017 for model year 2018, its build having the most in common, perhaps surprisingly, with corporate cousin Kia Stinger. The production Stinger was very different from its original low-slung sports tourer concept, and though a hot performer, its production personality pushed it into a family already well-populated by sedans, and it was discontinued last year. The G70, however, is a natural addition to the simpler Genesis lineup.

Restyled in 2020, the newest G70 is instantly recognizable, as with the rest of the lineup, by its fully pointed crest grille and front-to-rear two-line light treatment. For 2023, it received a handful of refreshed features, such as heated rear and cooled front seats, while its base trim received a stronger

engine and Brembo brakes.

At its launch, Hyundai Genesis (now Genesis G80) had two engine offerings—a 311-hp V6 and a 420-hp V8. The V6 came with a choice of rear- or all-wheel drive, but the V8 was rear-drive only, a painful devil's bargain to those who would have preferred the bigger engine and AWD (a build that did work its way into the lineup later).

The G70 base engine is now a 300-hp 2.5-liter turbo-4. The upper trim, driven here, has a 365-hp 3.3-liter twin-turbo V6. Though horsepower is now lower, and much as we love the distinctive soundtrack of a powerful V8, the 3.3T twin-turbo V6 has its own awesome engine note—and delivers plenty of precision power. Both offer a choice of rear- or all-wheel drive, and both are automatics (a prior manual G70 was discontinued two years ago).

Each offers a Sport Prestige package—upgrade options, not separate trims, \$4,200 on the 2.5T or \$4,400 on our 3.3T. This adds such things as staggered 19-inch sport alloy wheels, dark chrome and

sport aluminum trim, a wide sunroof, leather interior with vented seats, Lexicon premium audio, alloy pedals and a range of tech features.

We typically have a great many voice memos to transcribe from our vehicles, usually with a number of snarky notes about ill-conceived features or interfaces. When we don't, it generally indicates smooth sailing. The G70 was smooth sailing.

Drive mode variables are not always very noticeable, which can be a plus, but on the G70 they are significant, also a plus. Our growing appreciation of these kicked in as we popped the G70 into sport-plus for a freeway ramp, easily taking top spot even against a high-torquing EV. On surface streets, it was a bit much, though, so we toned it down to just sport. Even that was a bit much in town, so we reverted to basic comfort mode. We have philosophically dismissed modes, thinking a vehicle should give its best performance, period. However, the G70's significant performance ceiling benefits from a noticeable difference.

This can work to your benefit in both directions, as intended. Already sweet and powerful on a beautiful freeway sweeper, we popped it back into sport and appreciated its noticeable boost.

We had dramatically heavy rainstorms at times during our week, and the G70—despite our example being a rear-driver (AWD is \$2,100 more and to us desirable)—handled it superbly via its well-tuned electronics and mechanicals.

The Genesis G70 is a great driver's car. And as a sedan, it's a relative rarity now. Looming on the

horizon is the brand's rapid replacement of gasoline models with EVs—and with a heavy emphasis on SUVs (see New York show callout). In fact, the G70 assembly line was diverted to EV SUV production a few months ago, to last for an unknown period of time. Rumors abound that this handsome, quick sport sedan will be discontinued. However, as the EV push is now hitting headwinds all around the globe, they are surely hedging their bets.

Either way, this is a great vehicle and a strong value. You might want to grab it while you can. ■



**GENESIS CONCEPTS AT NYIAS:** Genesis unveiled two new concept vehicles at the New York International Auto Show. • The **Genesis Neolun Concept** for their first full-size electric SUV has B-pillarless coach doors, seamlessly retracting electric side steps and radiant heating inside. • The **Genesis GV60 Magma Concept** brings high performance to EVs within a wider Magma program. Three other Magma program vehicles displayed were a GV80 Coupe Concept, G80 Magma Special and X Gran Berlinetta Concept.

# Glorious sunset?

BY JOE SAGE



## SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Ulsan, S Korea
ENGINE/TRANS BUILD	S Korea / S Korea
PARTS CONTENT	S Korea 80% / US/Can 2%
ENGINE	3.3L Twin Turbo V6, DOHC 24v, alum, dual CVTT, GDI, tuned intake system
HP/TORQUE	365 hp / 376 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	10.0:1
TRANSMISSION	8-spd auto, paddles
DRIVETRAIN	ours: RWD (opt avail AWD)
MODES	(Intelligent Drive Modes): comfort, smart, eco, sport, sport+, custom
SUSPENSION	F: MacPherson strut, hollow stblzr bar, high-performance gas shocks; R: five-link multi-link, solid stblzr bar, high-performance gas shocks
STEERING	rack-mtd motor-driven power rack & pinion, variable gear ratio
BRAKES	F: (opt Brembo), 13.8 vented, 4-piston monoblock; R: Brembo, 13.4 vented, 2-piston monoblock; red Brembo callipers
WHEELS	F: 19x8.0J; R: 19x8.5J sport alloy
TIRES	F: P225/40R19 / R: P255/35R19 summer
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	184.4 / 111.6 in
OVERHANG (F/R)	31.7 / 41.2 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	5.1 in
TURNING CIRCLE	36.3 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	39.8 / 38.7 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	42.6 / 34.8 in
CARGO CAPACITY	10.5 cu.ft
WEIGHT	3911 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	prem unl / 15.8 gal
MPG	18/27/21 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	\$49,950
PAINT: Bond Silver Satin Metal Metallic	1,500
SPORT PRESTIGE: electronically controlled suspension, limited slip diff, Nappa leather seats, microfiber suede headliner & pillars, heated steering wheel, heads-up display, surround view monitor, blind-spot view monitor, power trunk	4,400
DESTINATION CHARGE	1,250
TOTAL	\$57,100

## 2024 GENESIS G70 LINEUP

	RWD	AWD
2.5T Standard	\$41,500	\$43,600
+ Sport Prestige	+4,200	+4,200
3.3T Sport Advanced	▼ 49,950	52,050
+ Sport Prestige	▼ +4,400	+4,400



## G70 SHOOTING BRAKE (EURO)

The Genesis G70 Shooting Brake had its world premiere at the Goodwood Festival of Speed in England in July 2021, as a strategic model for the European market. With the general exterior of the G70, it brings expanded cargo space. ■

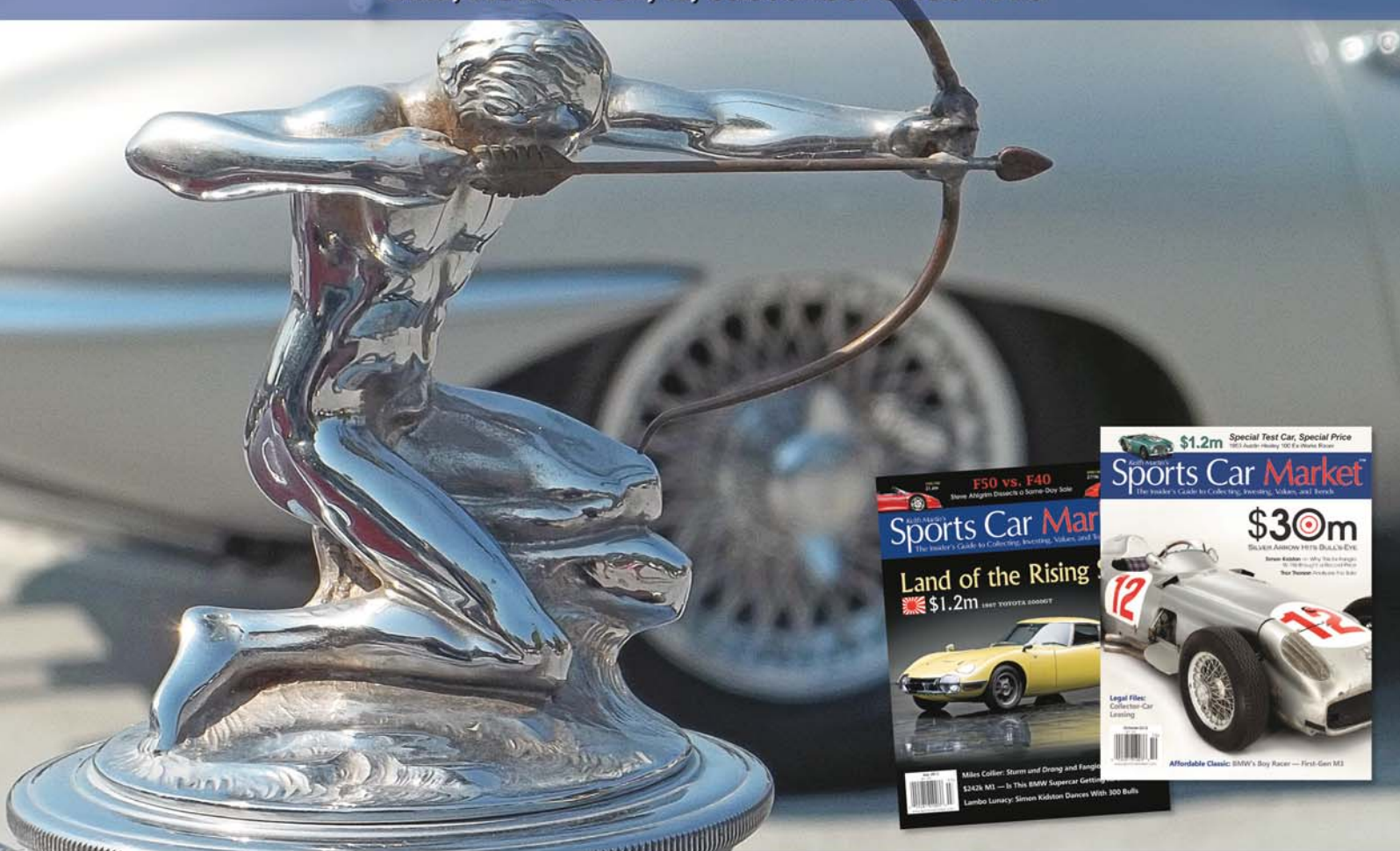


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MOTORSPORTS : PHOENIX RACEWAY FALL 2024 NASCAR CHAMPIONSHIP WEEKEND

## NASCAR CHAMPIONSHIP WEEKEND NOVEMBER 7-10, 2024

**N**ASCAR Championship Weekend returns to Phoenix Raceway this November, with four major races over four days—the kickoff to the weekend with the ARCA Menards Series Championship on Thursday and the NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series Championship on Friday, NASCAR Xfinity Series Championship on Saturday, and the big NASCAR Cup Series Championship with activities all day Sunday.

### TICKETS & INFORMATION:

To secure tickets for November NASCAR Championship Weekend, as well as for information on additional experiences and entertainment—including camping, parking, scanners, Infield Experience, Busch Light Lounge, Ally Curve hospitality club and more—call the Phoenix Raceway ticket office at 866-408-RACE (7223) or visit [phoenixraceway.com](http://phoenixraceway.com).

Fans looking to buy or resell reserved seats can also visit [SeatGeek.com](http://SeatGeek.com).

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7**

**ARCA MENARDS SERIES  
CHAMPIONSHIP**.....tba

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 8**

**NASCAR CRAFTSMAN TRUCK SERIES  
CHAMPIONSHIP**.....tba

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9**

**NASCAR XFINITY SERIES  
CHAMPIONSHIP**.....tba

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 10**

**NASCAR CUP SERIES  
CHAMPIONSHIP**.....tba

Schedule and details subject to change





Senses engaged

BY JOE SAGE

When we had a week in the new Nissan Z about a year and a half ago, a 2023, it was a Z Performance, the upper of two mainstream trims (along with a pricier first-year Z Proto Spec). All had the same 400-horsepower 3.0-liter twin-turbo V6, and any were available with either a 6-speed manual or 9-speed automatic. Ours then was the 6-speed manual, always welcome. It also had SynchroRev Match, a version of blip-shifting more commonly seen on automatics. (These may be useful for new manual drivers, but we prefer control and certainty over well-meaning help. Our enjoyment went straight to the top by turning that off.) Model year 2024 offers Sport and Performance again, with the same engine, power and choice of transmissions. But new this year is the version we are driving here—the 2024 Nissan Z NISMO, with touches aimed at delivering a track-ready Z Car.

Here, the same basic 3.0L twin-turbo V6 is retuned to 420 horses, with torque increased from 350 to 384 lb-ft. Upgrades also include added engine cooling, a steel driveshaft, retuned steering, bigger NISMO brakes, increased body rigidity, new chassis tuning, stiffer suspension, wider wheels and tires, and revised aerodynamics. Visual cues include manual Recaro seats, anodized red engine start and mode buttons, and a red band at top dead center of the wheel, an unmistakable reminder of the craft you are piloting. The Z NISMO runs about \$65 grand versus \$42 or \$52 grand for the others—the difference in price clearly fair and reasonable for what you get. The only tradeoff in all this—a big one for some—is that the Z NISMO, unlike the others, is automatic-only. If you are a manual fan, the Z is already on your radar, but with all its advantages, the newest top trim has that tradeoff. Was it an engineering need? Or based on estimated sales volume? No, it's for NISMO's track emphasis. The automatic—with revised clutch packs and revised engine management software—is said to down-

shift some 50 percent faster than the manual. If you prefer automatic, anyway, this is all win-win. Either way, anyone will straight away enjoy the strength and accuracy of the car's powertrain, rear-wheel drive and enhanced chassis. This is a driver's car that wants you to master it. We headed out to do so on the open road. We've often philosophized about drive modes. Although their purpose is clear—from a fairly neutral basis for daily driving, with the option of more power and performance when desired, or less but with better fuel economy, perhaps for a long road trip—it would still nag at us that things should just be ideal as built, without constant adaptation. The spread of drive modes is surely rooted in because-we-can opportunities as electronic management spreads throughout vehicles. Not only can you basically chip your powerplant, as has been the case for decades, but steering and electronics are also now often electronic (originally generally in the interest of weight), thus also easily played with. Maybe it represents indecision in engineering, or maybe pure driver advantage. Our attitude

has begun to shift on this in several similar cases, so we decided to take advantage. On this Z, all modes, as with the engineering itself, are aimed toward the performance end—standard, sport or sport-plus (no eco or comfort). If we're feeling sporty, we tend to go straight to sport plus, which we promptly dialed in. It gets philosophical. Sport-plus is new on the Z NISMO, again built to be highly track-capable, and it might sound like overkill in town. Or it may just be more fun. It was not earthshakingly different at first, which is a plus when you don't want sudden power bursts or wildly different steering in traffic. In fact, we didn't notice much change at all on surface streets in town, in fairly light traffic at steady speeds, pretty much in a straight line. But we were soon headed to a curvy, climbing high-speed country highway. From our last red light, accelerating through a lefthand turn, up to highway speeds, the car upshifted like a fiend—drr,drr,drr,drr—and we were in about 5th gear before we even cleared the turn. Glancing down again, we were already in 8th, then 9th, its top gear. Nice. From the main highway, we headed off to a great two-lane road, where sport-plus was top-tier through the hills and curves. We switched to stan-

dard, then back pretty quickly, concluding sport-plus tightens up steering and suspension noticeably. You might tend to think that a sportier mode is going to somehow make it faster, and in a sense it does, but it's not about making the engine more powerful—it's that electronic opportunity to amp up the mechanicals. Heading back onto the four-lane highway, we popped it back into standard mode on a rough stretch of pavement, figuring suspension might soften up, but there seemed to be no meaningful difference, so we popped it back into sport-plus. We started climbing as soon as we did that, and it downshifted right away, into 6th. As we crested the hill, we noted it had smoothly shifted into 5th, a great surprise, giving us good descent control rather than high-gear coasting. Sure enough, when we tried standard on the downhill, it shifted up to 7th, then 8th, for less control. We tried sport here, the middle setting, and it took us only to 7th, not discernibly different. But our old friend sport-plus took us back to 5th and that firm control. Then as we leveled out, it made one smooth-as-silk jump to 9th. It also seemed easy to tell that our steering was tightened up in sport-plus. This is a very solid transmission in mountain driving.

(cont'd)

SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	.....Kaminokawa, Tochigi, Japan (Final assembly stated as Los Angeles)
BODY/CHASSIS	.....unibody, corrosion-resistant resistant high-strength steel, alum hood, doors, hatch
ENGINE	.....3.0L DOHC 24v V6 twin turbo, longitudinal, alum/alum, CVTCS, dir inj
HP/TORQUE	.....(NISMO) 420 hp / 384 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....10.3:1
EXHAUST	.....(AT only) dual w sport muffler; (manual is dual w standard muffler)
TRANSMISSION	.....NISMO-tuned 9-spd auto, launch control (NISMO), paddles
DRIVETRAIN	.....RWD, mech clutch-type limited-slip diff
0-TO-60	.....(third-party meas) 4.0-4.1 sec
SUSPENSION	.....F: dbl-wishbone alum-alloy, alum subframe, solid stblzr bar; monotube shocks; R: multi-link alum-alloy, steel sub-frame, solid stblzr bar; monotube shocks
STEERING	.....NISMO-tuned elec rack pwr
BRAKES	.....(NISMO) red calipers, alum; F: 15.0x1.3 vented, fixed 4-piston caliper; R: 13.8x0.8 vented, two-piston caliper
WHEELS	.....(NISMO) RAYS® gloss black paint forged alum, staggered: F: 19x10; R: 19x10.5
TIRES	.....(NISMO) Dunlop SP Sport Maxx GT600: F: P255/40R19; R: P285/35R19
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....173.2 / 100.4 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....(NISMO) 4.9 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....na
HEADROOM	.....38.2 in
LEGROOM	.....42.9 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....(third-party info) 6.9 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....(NISMO) 3704 lb
FUEL	.....premium unl
FUEL CAPACITY	.....(third-party info) 16.4 gal
MPG	.....17/24/19 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	.....\$64,990
PREM PAINT: 2-tone steel grey / black	.....1295
FLOOR MAT PKG: NISMO floor mats, tunk mat, first aid kit, cargo net, owner's manual branded portfolio	.....410
ILLUMINATED KICK PLATE: Black Metallic	.....500
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1095
TOTAL	.....\$68,290

2024 NISSAN Z LINEUP

	6MT	9AT
Z Sport	\$42,210	\$42,210
Z Performance	52,210	52,210
Z NISMO		64,990



NISMO stands for Nissan Motorsports International.





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We logged specific example after specific example of this gearbox giving us exactly what the situation called for. Slowing down quickly when we saw an opportunity to grab a U-turn through the median, the Z in sport-plus powered us down to 2nd gear, where most standard automatics would likely not even get involved, just leaving our braking to handle the job. Engine braking versus brake-braking can of course be a tradeoff of its own over time (new brakes being far less expensive than a new engine), but sport-plus helps make that decision for you, with its wisdom and engineering strength involving and optimizing both.

Through our next dramatic climb and curves, we had three lanes, sometimes two, to ourselves, so flipped through all three modes. On the one hand, we could be happy in any of them here, while on the other hand, we think you'll find sport-plus irresistible because, after all, it's a Z Car, and that's the sport experience. (And if you have a friend along to impress, sport-plus seems a sure thing.)

Tight as the whole setup is, we were surprised and pleased when we crossed a familiar double rain trough back on the edge of civilization—pretty rough in most vehicles, but not in this, despite this being the mode with the most feedback.

It all makes for a very impressive package. On the one hand, you might think the cost is basically a few thousand more, but it's not all that different. But by the end of the week, we were saying this is magic, this is awesome, it's the top dog top tier

everything version, and only a few grand more. To us it seems fairly irresistible.

But being trim-specific, you can't get that sport-plus mode with manual shift, nor vice versa.

It was about then we realized this automatic came with a revelation. We have multiple reasons for liking manuals, but could sum up by saying they let us feel fully engaged. However, in this, we were very engaged—feeling the chassis, feeling the shifts, feeling the power. They say when you lose a major sense (such as sight or hearing), your other senses become stronger, more acute, more aware. The automatic in this Z is like that. Did its lack of a manual heighten our other senses? It's a very good automatic, so this just might be.

Top notch performance of the transmission and drive modes in the Z NISMO were beyond our expectations, underscoring our newfound appreciation of the best of them. They are core to this car's mission as a track-oriented vehicle, with maximum performance aimed at special times and places. We wouldn't have track time that week, but best of all, special places aren't always just at the track.

When the original Datsun 240Z came to our shores in 1969, it filled a niche pretty much all its own (at least in the US). Flash forward to generation seven, now in its second year, and the Z Car's mission remains just as pure.

We'd still buy a manual if they had it. But even a diehard manual shift fan can find great joy here, firing up the senses beyond just the numbers. ■





# Con más fuerza

Bolder, tougher build evokes Baja runs by Joe Sage

We feel quite familiar with Honda Ridgeline, though as we look back, we’ve had it here only three times—for a quick presentation drive in 2005 and a week each in 2017 and 2021. We have, however, driven it in various comparos for their typical 20-30 intense minutes each. And yet, it has made a big impression, as it may have for you, too.

When Ridgeline was introduced, it was a bit of an odd man out. But by now, the midsize pickup segment is chock full of innovative builds, utility mixes and other variants, all of which raise its own profile. And it has also become more pickuplike.

A significant thing on Ridgeline’s structural engineering (variously shared over time with Acura MDX, Honda Odyssey minivan and Honda Pilot, its closest visual twin)—the L-shaped pickup profile has to be specifically addressed. Without the upper structure of an SUV’s full roof, nor the free flexing of a separate cab and bed on a frame (even tiny Japanese pickups 40-50 years ago had this),

the stresses where bed meets cab are immense. On the gen-one Ridgeline (from 2006), this was addressed with a dominant triangulated buttress from the cab to the sides of the bed (itself also sloping and angular—styling in response to engineering demands), for a body like one solid ingot. On gen-two (since 2017), any such treatment is gone, or at least not visible, as it now bears a more traditional pickup profile. (A light vertical seam where cab seems to meet bed is basically cosmetic.) The vehicle now extensively uses high-strength steel, the C-pillar (rear cab wall) is particularly strengthened,

and the platform is a “three-bone” design—a unibody with integrated frame. The emphasis of this approach is on SUV-like rigidity, not flexibility.

And it has gone on to prove itself. We’ve driven plenty of SUVs in extreme conditions, anyway, and we keenly noted Ridgeline’s growing list of entries—and category wins—in Baja off-road racing. So in 2021 we took one into rough terrain, loose surfaces and climbs northwest of Phoenix, a couple of months after a few of its Baja runs—confirming it is certainly up to the task and dubbing it “the exception that redefines the rules.”

Strengthening Ridgeline’s truck credentials further is the new TrailSport version, with most specs unchanged, but adding off-road-tuned suspension,



Gen 1 (2006)



Gen 2 (2017)



Baja wins (2021)

steel underbody protection, an even more rugged mesh grille, all-terrain tires, and sand, snow, mud and paved modes atop its normal drive and sport options (plus a button for eco), plus upgraded cab-in tech. In a current four-trim lineup from \$39,750 to \$46,350, TrailSport is next-to-top at \$44,980.

The Ridgeline TrailSport’s two areas of intent—trail and sport—are delivered in moderate ways. In town, it is useful and very drivable, with nice

steering and handling in a convenient size. Even with its solid suspension, we passed smoothly over parking lot speed bumps. Handling was precise on freeway ramps and flyovers. Our dirt time was fairly minimal, as yours may or may not be.

We did play with its two traditional drive options—Sport or normal (the D in D/S in the shift area—but without the off-pavement mode added. Sport seemed to make the suspension and steering a little too lively while running errands, but will be worth a try on a long, open road.

Honda Ridgeline was originally conceived not so much to take on the pickup market as to add a new type of activity vehicle. As it evolves, Ridgeline is still, to a degree, a bit of both. But as the midsize pickup market has grown and diversified, it increasingly finds a home within it. ■

*From bones to beauty to brawn, Honda Ridgeline was stated at birth as being intended not so much to tackle established pickups, rather simply to give any Honda owners who might be considering adding a pickup a chance to stick with their favorite brand in a “two-Honda garage.” Ridgeline continues to get more trucklike, giving it a solid position in an ever more varied midsize pickup world. Front styling has evolved accordingly.*

## SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Lincoln, Alabama
ENGINE/TRANS BUILD	USA / USA
PARTS CONTENT	US/Canada 70%
ENGINE	3.5L V6, SOHC 24v i-VTEC, variable cylinder mgmt (VCM), high capacity radiator w 2 high power fans
HP/TORQUE	280 hp / 262 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	11.5:1
TRANSMISSION	9-spd auto, shift by wire, paddles, heavy duty transmission cooler
DRIVETRAIN	AWD
Intelligent Variable Torque Mgmt (i-VTM4)	
MODES	(Intelligent Traction Mgmt): normal, snow, sand, mud
SUSPENSION	F: MacPherson strut, 25.0 solid stblzr bar; R: multi-link, 26.5x4.5 tubular stblzr bar
STEERING	elec power asst rack & pinion
BRAKES	F: 12.6 vented, R: 13.0 solid
WHEELS	18-in Pewter Gray machine-fin alloy
TIRES	245 / 60R18 105T all-terrain
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	210.2 / 125.2 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	7.64 in
APPR / BRKOVER / DEPART	20.4 / 19.6 / 19.6°
TURNING CIRCLE	43.4 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	39.5 / 38.8 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	40.9 / 36.7 in
BED LENGTH	64.0 in (5 ft 4 in)
BED WIDTH	at wheel wells 50.0; walls 60.0 in
CARGO CAPACITY	In-Bed Trunk 7.3 cu.ft 2nd row underseat storage 2.9 cu.ft
WEIGHT	4495 lb
TOW CAPACITY	5000 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	reg unl / 19.5 gal
MPG	18/23/20 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	\$44,980
PAINT: Radiant Red Metallic	455
DESTINATION CHARGE	1395
TOTAL	\$46,830

## 2024 HONDA RIDGELINE LINEUP

Sport	\$39,750
RTL	42,580
TrailSport	44,980
Black Edition	46,350

**THE SHIFTER:** Honda’s electronic shift interface is not our favorite—a set of rectangles, circles and trapezoids that you variously push or pull. It is potentially very distracting, even in regular use, but seems especially so for a stand-in driver—say a sober teen, or a golfing or camping buddy, called upon to take the wheel for a safe ride home or emergency run to the ER.





# ROYAL DESTINATION BUT BRING YOUR COWBOY BOOTS

BY TYSON HUGIE

**N**estled at 5,771 feet near Towers Mountain in the Prescott National Forest is a small town that is home to about 120 full-time residents. Crown King's slogan is "Far from ordinary." It is a community that holds on tightly to its Wild West roots and prides itself in staying off the beaten path.

Driving from Phoenix, Crown King is either two hours away or five hours away. For thrill-seekers, ATV owners and Jeep convoys, the back way traverses an unmaintained, rocky trail from Lake Pleasant that attracts people who want to put their vehicles and their driving skills to the test. Anyone else can get to Crown King with about 50 miles of freeway and 25 miles of graded gravel.

Carol Boles, who sells real estate in the area, remarks, "Temperatures are 20 degrees cooler than Phoenix, making Crown King an ideal summer cabin location. All you need is a sturdy vehicle and an adventurous attitude."

## HISTORY

As with so many small towns in Arizona, Crown King got its start as a mining boomtown when the first gold claim was made in 1875. That mine was called "Crowned King," and its name was shortened to Crown King in 1888.

That's when the community got its first post office, and it received access to electricity in 1897. At its peak, there were 500 buildings in the vicinity. The hub of social

(cont'd)







activity was (and is) the Crown King Saloon. Boles says, “No matter how you find your way to Crown King, all roads lead to Main Street and the historic Crown King Saloon. Walking in is like stepping back in time—to 1906, to be exact.”

Mine operations trailed off by the 1950s, and the Crown King post office was closed on May 15, 1954. It has since reopened and is currently inside the Crown King General Store.

### SATURDAY TREK

For the 19 years I’ve lived in the Phoenix Valley, I’ve heard mention of Crown King as a popular destination for off-road enthusiasts. I finally nudged my friend Chandler, who’s big in the Jeep community, about putting together a day trip, and he was keen on the idea.

Our excursion kicked off at the Press Coffee Roastery on 32nd Street off the 51 freeway for breakfast, after which we headed out of town via I-17 to the high country.

As capable as my Acura SLX SUV (in reality, a rebadged Isuzu Trooper) is, I decided to keep the stress level to a minimum by taking the easy way.

From the Bloody Basin turnoff about 50 miles north of Phoenix, the next 28 miles toward Crown King are graded gravel for the first part. Along the way, the Cleator Bar and Yacht Club offers a glimpse of roadside Americana, complete with its own general store.

The road begins to climb sharply via

switchbacks after Cleator, eventually crossing a one-lane bridge that people refer to as the Magic Bridge. It’s magic because it marks the transition from the high desert to the tall pines, and it also symbolizes the time-travel from the modern world to the Old West. Most of the route follows the original path of the Bradshaw Mountain Railroad, which has been dismantled since 1926.

The Saloon was busy when we arrived at 11:15 am, and we managed to grab the last available open table, after signing the guest book at the entryway. The cheeseburger and potato salad were the perfect combination.

Following lunch, we hopped in Chandler’s Jeep and drove another seven miles to Horsethief Basin Lake. At just 3.5 acres in size, it’s a small but picturesque spot.

### PLAN YOUR TRIP

Crown King does offer that respite from the Phoenix heat, as well as a taste of Western culture. For me, a day trip was the perfect way to experience it. For those who want to spend a little more time, there are lots of camping areas nearby in Prescott National Forest. And for those who prefer a few more amenities, there are bed-and-breakfast type suites, as well as cabin rentals.

No matter how you get there or how long you choose to stay, Crown King is a memorable place to get your cowboy boots a little bit dusty. “Far from ordinary,” indeed. ■





# Mecum Glendale 2024 results



## Mecum Auctions Glendale 2024 Collector Car Auction Tuesday, March 5 - Saturday, March 9, 2024

State Farm Stadium, 1 Cardinals Drive, Glendale AZ 85305

**MECUM AUCTIONS'** most recent event at State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Arizona, March 5-9, saw overall sales totals eclipse \$54 million, as 942 classic and collector vehicles hammered sold throughout the five-day auction event.

Headlined by the \$1.815 million sale of a highly awarded L88 Corvette (Lot S143, shown at lower right), top sales results at the auction included a variety of American-built favorites from Chevrolet, Ford, Dodge and Cadillac.

Ford dominated top sales, grabbing seats two through five, with a 2021 Ford GT Studio Collection Series (Lot S162) leading the pack. As one of only 20 built and showing a scant 754 miles on its odometer, the Serial No. 3 car achieved a \$946,000 sale. A 2005 Ford GT (Lot S83) and a 1969 Ford Torino Talladega GPT Special (Lot S123) followed, selling for \$440,000 each, and a 1970 Ford Mustang Boss 429 Fastback (Lot S154) rounded out the group, bringing \$363,000.

Star-studded sales were also a main part of the excitement, with a 1969 Cadillac Eldorado (Lot F182), once owned by the King of Rock 'n' Roll, Elvis Presley, causing a buzz among bidders and resulting in an astonishing \$253,000 sale after an energetic round of bidding.

Another strong sale with ties to American history royalty was the presidential limousine that served First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy and then President Lyndon Baines Johnson. The 1964 Imperial Crown Ghia (Lot S149) is one of just

10 produced, and with a well-documented background including photos of the car as a presidential chauffeur, it ultimately sold for an impressive \$181,500.

The top collector car sales at the Glendale 2024 auction included:

1. 1967 Chevrolet Corvette L88 Coupe .....(Lot S143).....\$1,815,000
2. 2021 Ford GT Studio Collection Series.....(Lot S162).....\$946,000
3. 2005 Ford GT.....(Lot S83).....\$440,000
4. 1969 Ford Torino Talladega GPT Special .....(Lot S123).....\$440,000
5. 1970 Ford Mustang Boss 429 Fastback.....(Lot S154).....\$363,000
6. 2017 Dodge Viper ACR Voodoo II Edition.....(Lot S146).....\$357,500
7. 1963 Chevrolet Corvette Z06/N03 .....(Lot F129).....\$346,500
8. 1961 Chevrolet Impala Convertible .....(Lot S151).....\$302,500
9. 1969 Cadillac Eldorado .....(Lot F182).....\$253,000
10. 1965 Chevrolet Corvette Big Tank Fuelie.....(Lot F134).....\$247,500

For access to complete auction results, sign up for a free MyMecum account at Mecum.com.

Next on the Mecum auction calendar was Houston 2024, featuring 1,000 or more vehicles at Texas' NRG Center April 4-6. Following the Texas event, Mecum will head to the Indiana State Fairgrounds in Indianapolis from May 10-18 for the original, largest and best muscle car auction: Dana Mecum's 37th Original Spring Classic, which is slated to present 3,000 vehicles. From there, it's off to Tulsa, Oklahoma, June 7-8, then back to Mecum's home turf in Walworth, Wisconsin for the world's largest Live Road Art® auction, June 27-29.

For more details on upcoming auctions, to consign a vehicle or to register as a bidder, visit Mecum.com, or call (262) 275-5050 for more information.

▼ [www.mecum.com](http://www.mecum.com)





# Simple mastery

## HIGHLY USER-FRIENDLY HATCH

BY JOE SAGE

Many people traditionally think of a compact sedan as an econocar, while many think of a hatchback as a sportier entry. The 2024 Toyota Corolla Hatchback brings the best of both worlds. Or more. The gasoline version is rated 41 MPG highway, while its 169 horses are plenty for a weight of just over 3,000 pounds. (Hybrid models, the performance GR Corolla, and two powertrains of the related Corolla Cross vary the formula a bit.) Adding to our Corolla's sportiness and general appeal is its Nightshade Edition build.

For a special opportunity in a special edition, Nightshade is based on the next-to-base-model SE. It's available as a front-drive sedan or hatchback and as a hybrid sedan, either front- or all-wheel-drive. Since the hatchback is priced lower than the sedan—a win-win for sportier buyers—our hand-

some sample is one of the least expensive Corolla versions you can buy (see chart at lower right).

Pre-arrival photos in Midnight Black Metallic seemed to nail the Nightshade aura. But it also comes in silver or Wind Chill Pearl, both of those also with a black metallic roof. Our sample is the white one—less Batman, more Storm Trooper. The Nightshade is carried through with that roof, as well as black badging, grille surround, rear fascia and other details. The interior on any color is black fabric, while the wheels are bronze alloy—18-inchers, adding to its stance and presence.

Features are extensive, especially for the price—filtered automatic climate, projected path back-up camera, more intuitive than average full instrumentation and controls, power locks, drive modes, overhead console, full connectivity and much

more. A wide range of additional features via options and packages are also reasonably priced.

We routinely do initial seat and mirror adjustments first thing. The mirrors were user friendly and quick—far more rare than you might think. The seats are manual (and do include lumbar). For us, that was moot, as we realized they were already perfectly comfortable as delivered, which is unheard of—so much so, we never even thought about them again all week. Some people, in fact, will be absolutely delighted to find such things as weight-saving manual seats, now quite rare.

The Nightshade name may sound deep and sinister. But it put a smile on our face right away. While it's obviously affordable, this Corolla is a surprisingly potent little unit that can make anybody quite happy. Power from Corolla's two-liter is well suited to the task and the transmission well suited to the power.

We flipped it into sport mode to accelerate up a freeway ramp, which was sort of like lighting a

bigger fire under a smaller firecracker. This was fine, as we're happy when we like it right out of the box and don't even feel compelled to use modes. We suspect the same with eco mode, which may bump MPG up a little, also already top notch.

It is nice, though, that it has paddle shifters, which were very effective for typical use in town. An interesting flip side to lower horsepower is that you may be cruising along in a nice position on the freeway, but perhaps get bottled up. If forced to slow, brake lights could just confuse others, but paddle downshifts are very effective. Unlike many systems, this will revert back to D pretty quickly, which we don't always prefer, but it was perfect for these around-town scenarios. Something you used to find only on advanced sports cars, it's all well implemented on this little \$24,000 car.

Even hard into a turn at speed, there is no real trace of front-drive torque, another engineering marvel. Steering also got high marks through an unexpected stretch of freeway construction cones and temporary lanes at speed. Very precise.

We even mostly made friends with its CVT, seldom an active driver's preferred choice. Our early

info hadn't identified the transmission, and we had simply noted its generally great performance. We didn't learn it was a CVT until after we'd driven it a few days, after which we did notice a few typical traits—a prompted response? Be that as it may, when you have to give it some gas, it mimics a power downshift with the best of any automatic. All in all, this is a well-done CVT.

We remain impressed with Toyota's devotion to *kaizen*, the Japanese philosophy of "continuous improvement." Some have clamored for the company to throw out everything they know and just build EVs. Toyota has added these, but they have continued to fine-tune established drivetrains, steering and handling, and their benchmark hybrid systems and fuel economy overall to perfection.

Mastery may make you think of the high end. But much as the test of an audio system is not just blasting it loud, instead listening to its accuracy at quieter levels, the test of a vehicle lineup may be not just at the \$200k end, but at the \$20k end.

The Nightshade hatch shows Toyota's mastery of high value at a reasonable price, where Corolla is a well known contender, for clear reasons. ■



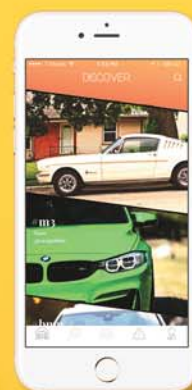
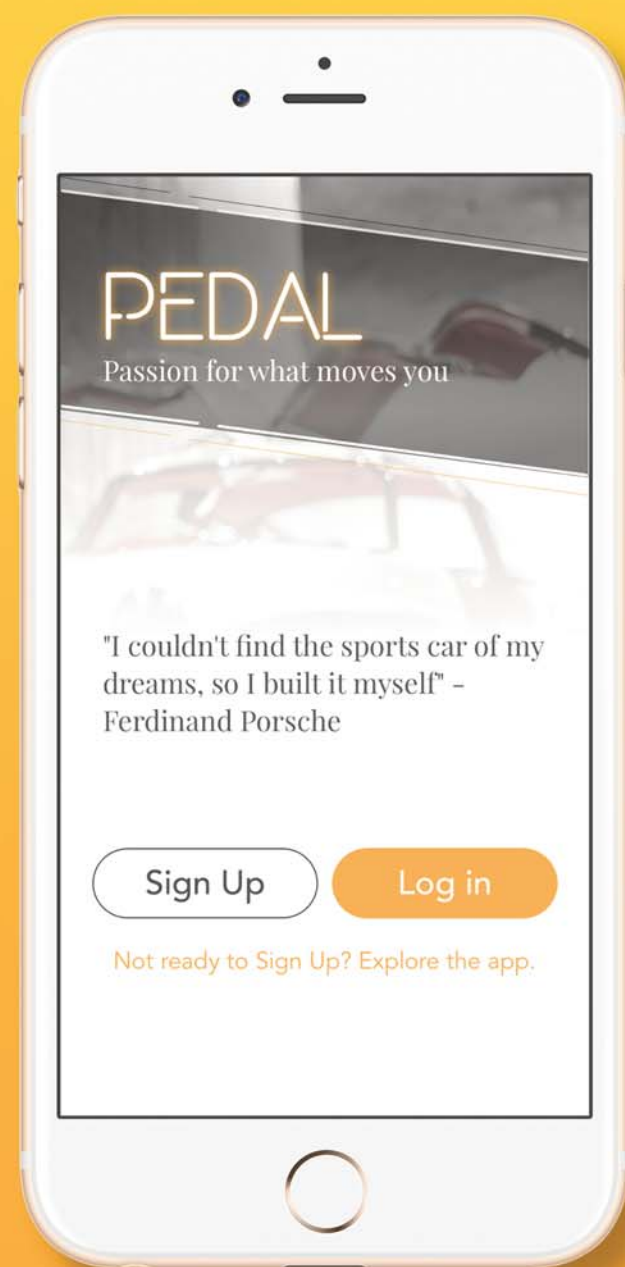
SPECIFICATIONS	
ASSEMBLY .....	Toyota, Aichi, Japan
ENGINE .....	2.0L 4-cyl DOHC 16v D-4S dual inj w Dual VVT-i
HP/TORQUE .....	169 hp / 151 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO .....	13.0:1
TRANSMISSION .....	Dynamic Shift CVT
DRIVETRAIN .....	FWD
SUSPENSION .....	F: independent MacPherson strut w 25.4 stblzr bar; R: multi-link w 26.5 stblzr bar & springs
STEERING .....	elec pwr asst rack & pinion
BRAKES .....	F: 11.1 vented; R: 10.4 solid
WHEELS .....	18-in bronze-finished alloys
TIRES .....	225/40R18
LENGTH / WHEELBASE .....	172.0 / 103.9 in
GROUND CLEARANCE .....	5.1 in
TURNING CIRCLE .....	37.4 ft
HEADROOM (F/R) .....	38.4 / 37.6 in
LEGROOM (F/R) .....	42.0 / 29.9 in
WEIGHT .....	3150 lb
CARGO CAPACITY .....	17.8 cu.ft
FUEL / CAPACITY .....	87 regular / 13.2 gal
MPG .....	32/41/35 (city/hwy/comb)
<hr/>	
BASE PRICE .....	\$24,355
SPECIAL COLOR: Windchill Pearl .....	425
BLACK ROOF .....	500
SE OPTION PKG: blind spot monitor w rear cross traffic alert, wireless charger .....	605
CARPET MAT PKG: black, silver logo .....	289
REAR BUMPER PROTECTOR .....	89
FRAMELESS HOMELINK MIRROR .....	175
DOOR SILL PROTECTORS .....	179
DESTINATION CHARGE .....	1095
<hr/>	
TOTAL .....	\$27,712
(Price has increased a little; see chart at right.)	

2024 COROLLA LINEUP	
<hr/>	
GASOLINE SEDANS/HATCHBACKS:	
169-hp 2.0L 4-cylinder - FWD	
LE .....	Sedan ..... \$22,050
SE .....	Hatchback ..... 23,505
	Sedan ..... 24,490
Nightshade .....	Hatchback ..... ▼ 24,505
	Sedan ..... 25,490
XSE .....	Hatchback ..... 26,805
	Sedan ..... 27,150
<hr/>	
COROLLA HYBRID SEDANS:	
138-hp 1.8L +133.2 hp elec - AWD	
LE, SE, Nightshade, XLE .....	
\$23,500-27,250	
<hr/>	
GR COROLLA HATCH:	
300-hp 1.6L 3-cylinder turbo - AWD	
Core, Premium, Circuit .....	
\$36,500-45,140	
<hr/>	
COROLLA CROSS:	
169-hp 2.0L 4-cylinder - FWD. AWD	
L, LE (FWD), XLE (AWD) .....	
\$23,860-29,385	
<hr/>	
COROLLA CROSS HYBRID:	
150-hp 2.0L 4-cyl / 196 hp comb - AWD	
S, SE, Nightshade, XSE .....	
\$28,220-31,405	
(Note: their combined power specifications for hybrid versions are given inconsistently between models; we've doublechecked, but if you're shopping, you'll want to triple-check. But this info gives at minimum a relative idea.)	





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PEDAL

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## ADOT : VALLEY FREEWAY NICKNAMES

### Understanding metro Phoenix traffic report nicknames

By Doug Pacey / ADOT Office of Public Information

In every city, transportation landmarks are given nicknames. Denver claims a "Mousetrap," Los Angeles boasts the "Four Level," and Seattle has its "S-curves." These colloquialisms can be baffling to new residents and some longtimers, too.

Phoenix is no different. Perhaps you've heard a helicopter-borne traffic reporter refer to slowing at the "Mini-Stack" or a crash at the "Split" and wondered what highway was affected.

Wonder no longer. ADOT has compiled a list and

map, explaining and locating popular nicknames to metro Phoenix's transportation landmarks.

**The Stack:** A four-level interchange connecting I-10 and I-17, this is located west of downtown Phoenix, near 19th Avenue and McDowell Road.

**Mini-Stack:** A four-level interchange linking I-10 to State Route 51 and Loop 202 Red Mountain Freeway, this is located south of McDowell Road and east of 16th Street.

**North Stack:** Another four-level interchange, this one is located at the I-17 and Loop 101, north of Bell Road.

**Split:** This interchange is where I-10 splits or merges—depending on your direction of travel—with I-17 near Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport. Westbound I-10 splits into lanes for drivers to

head north on I-17 or continue west on I-10.

**SuperRedTan:** A multi-tiered interchange in east Mesa, where US 60 Superstition Freeway, Loop 202 Red Mountain Freeway and Loop 202 Santan Freeway meet. SuperRedTan is formed by using part of each freeway's name—Superstition, Red Mountain and Santan.

**Broadway Curve:** Southeast of the Split, this rush-hour-challenged section of I-10 is near Broadway Road and SR 143, by the Phoenix-Tempe line.

**Durango Curve:** This curved section of I-17 near Durango Street is located southwest of downtown Phoenix.





# DIRT DREAMS

## JEEP & MOPAR CONCEPTS / MOAB 2024

Jeep® made its annual trek to the 58th Easter Jeep Safari, in Moab, Utah, in late March, with four new eye-catching concept vehicles from Jeep brand and Jeep Performance Parts (JPP) by Mopar.

The four have an array of proven, mission-capable propulsion systems: one 392 V8, one 4xe plug-in hybrid system, a 3.6-liter Pentastar V6 and a Hurricane Twin Turbo 510 inline-six.

### JEEP LOW DOWN

At the 43rd annual Easter Jeep Safari 15 years ago, attendees were wowed by the radically modified Jeep Wrangler Lower 40. Riding at stock height to maintain its center of gravity, that two-door accommodated huge 40-inch mud-terrain tires and packed a 5.7-liter V8 under its hood. An instant classic, this concept still draws a crowd a decade and a half later

and remains one of the fan favorites at EJS.

The new Jeep Low Down concept pays homage to the Lower 40. This new Wrangler concept squeezes massive 42-inch BFGoodrich Krawler 42x14.5R20 mud-terrain tires on 20-inch beadlock wheels under custom high-clearance carbon fender flares. Stock Wrangler Rubicon 392 suspension remains intact, but Dana 60 axles with 5.38 gears replace the standard Dana 44 axles with 4:10 gears. Center of gravity remains low, while ground clearance, breakover, and approach and departure angles all get dramatic increases.

The Low Down's deep Poison Apple Red

body is streamlined with its rear door handles removed, a custom carbon hood with see-through power dome, and a bespoke race-style fuel filler door in the left rear quarter panel. The interior has custom black leather seats with cloth inserts, Rhino-lined floors and a custom radio-delete instrument panel, all under the warm red glow of a purpose-built, red-tinted bikini top.

Like the Lower 40, the Jeep Low Down is powered by a V8 engine—in this modern interpretation the 475-horsepower 6.4-liter 392 V8, mated to an eight-speed automatic.

### JEEP WILLYS DISPATCHER

A mix of where the Jeep brand's been and where it's going, the Jeep Willys Dispatcher is a Wrangler 4xe-based concept with the rugged, utilitarian, nostalgia looks of the early post-war civilian Jeep, juxtaposed with the electrified off-road capability of modern,

(cont'd)



Jeep Vacationeer concept

Jeep Gladiator Rubicon High Top concept

Jeep Willys Dispatcher concept

Jeep Low Down concept



Jeep Low Down concept



Jeep Willys Dispatcher concept



advanced-tech 4xe propulsion.

Outside, the Willys Dispatcher concept has a retro makeover from the ground up.

Super Traxion 36-inch tires are mounted on vintage-style cream-colored 16-by-7-inch alloy "steelies." A classic-style custom front bumper holds a new, classic-style 8274 Warn winch with Warn Epic Series winch hook and D rings. Like old flatfender Jeeps, WILLYS lettering is embossed into the sides of the hood. The windshield header is gloss black, the rest in a custom shade of Element 115 Green.

The Dispatcher interior has a mix of distressed saddle leather and houndstooth cloth. Headrests are removed for a low-back vintage feel. A JPP bikini top keeps passengers shielded from rain or shine. To protect from water, mud and muck, rugged JPP vinyl covers the floor, while a JPP onboard air compressor handles tire pressures on the trail.

The Willys Dispatcher is powered by the award-winning 2.0-liter plug-in hybrid 4xe system with 375 horsepower and 470 lb-ft of torque through an eight-speed automatic transfers this power through Dana 50 Advan-tech front and rear axles with 4.70 gears.

### JEEP GLADIATOR RUBICON HIGH TOP

The Jeep Gladiator Rubicon High Top concept, in Ginger Snap metallic with retro-inspired two-tone graphics, rides high on new 40x13.5R18 BFGoodrich All-Terrain T/A KO3 tires mounted on 18-by-9-inch Satin Black KMC Grenade Crawl beadlock wheels. Concept JPP flat fender flares provide plenty of off-road clearance. A 3.6-liter Pentastar V6, mated to a TorqueFlite eight-speed automatic, delivers a broad torque band with a focus on low-end for off-roading, feeding Dana 60 axles with 5.38:1 gearing front and rear, all atop AccuAir adjustable air suspension.

An American Expedition Vehicles modified front bumper has a custom protective hoop above a Warn winch. Rock rail power steps from Rock Slide Engineering protect the undercarriage and provide easy entry and exit.

A DECKED truck bed storage system offers additional lockable cargo space through dual sliding drawers, while still allowing for storage on top in the bed area.

Seats have been retrimmed with custom quilted and perforated tan and black Alea leather, with an embossed JPP logo on the

The Jeep Low Down concept (upper left) is powered by a 475-hp 6.4L 392 V8. The Willy Dispatcher concept (left center) bears a 375-hp plug-in hybrid system with 470 lb-ft of torque.

headrests. Completing the interior are a JPP pedal kit, all-weather floor mats and door sill guards. Overhead protection is provided by a JPP sun bonnet.

### JEEP VACATIONEER

From Spearmint paint to an expanded, custom-trimmed interior, the Jeep Vacationeer concept is a premium SUV combining comfort and adventure with modern capability. And with a nod to nostalgia, the JPP design team meticulously fitted the Vacationeer concept with unique bodyside woodgrain graphics that harken back to Jeep Wagoneer and Grand Wagoneer models from the late 1960s through the early 1990s.

Perfect for Moab, its 35-inch BFGoodrich mud-terrains, on 18x9 bead grip 701 Method racing wheels, add 1.5 inches of lift. Larger wheel openings and custom bodyside flare extensions add to the aggressive look.

Front and rear skid plates provide underbody protection, while a front-mounted Warn winch addresses difficult off-road situations. At the front of the white, Rhino-lined roof, are three 11-inch TYRI LED lights.

Affixed to the roof of the Vacationeer concept is a custom, carbon-fiber RedTail Overland Skyloft—a climate-controlled sleeping space for two, with enough windows to take in panoramic views.

Second- and third-row seats are removed to integrate the Skyloft, with easy access via a custom weatherproof, pass-through entry from the cabin floor. A fore/aft sliding door and a small step, which also doubles as a usable table, aid access. Rear space has a bed-lined cargo floor to handle outdoor elements or muddy gear.

Fashion designer and Wagoneer enthusiast/owner Kiel James Patrick designed front Tupelo leather seats, displaying an appreciation for authentic Americana with custom fabric inserts featuring classic Jeep vehicles within a distinctive and charming pattern inspired by his native New England.

Power in the Jeep Vacationeer concept comes from a 3.0-liter Hurricane Twin Turbo 510 inline-six, delivering 510 horsepower and 500 lb-ft of torque. The powerful Hurricane engine provides premium performance while also boasting improved fuel economy as measured against many competitors' naturally aspirated V8 or boosted six-cylinder engines. ■

The Gladiator Rubicon High Top concept (upper right) has a 3.6-liter Pentastar V6. The Vacationeer concept (right center) has the new HEMI-replacing 510-hp 3.0L Hurricane Twin Turbo 510 inline-six.

Jeep Gladiator Rubicon High Top concept



Jeep Vacationeer concept

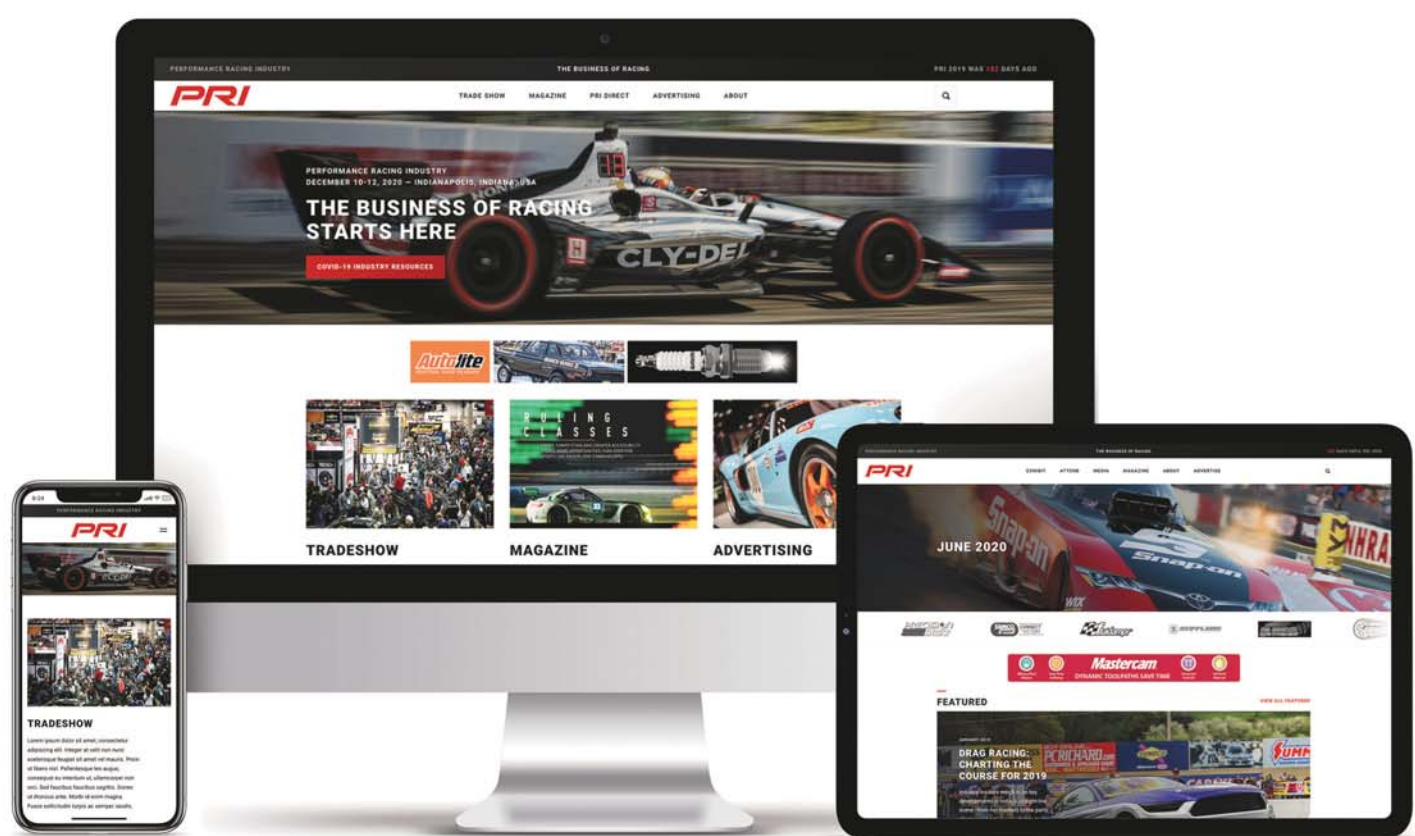






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## SPECIAL EVENTS : PEBBLE BEACH CONCOURS 2024 : UPCOMING

### 73rd Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance Sunday, August 18, 2024



The 73rd Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance does not take place until August, but the process is already well underway. Collectors hoping to vie for the world's top automotive prize—Best of Show at Pebble Beach—applied by the first week of January, with the Selection Committee due to discuss their recommendations during February.

The event will showcase an expanded range of cars, from pioneering Packards and the Speedsters equated with that 125-year-old marque, to the supercars that raced in the BPR and FIA GT Series of the 1990s. A focus on Maserati and the Coachwork of Pietro Frua add an Italian accent, and Wedge-shaped Concepts & Prototypes offer a distinctly modern look.

**PACKARD 125th ANNIVERSARY:** Synonymous with American luxury for nearly six decades, from 1899 to 1958, fine Packards have taken Best of Show at Pebble Beach four times. The 125th anniversary of its founding features a special class for early Packards, from single-cylinder horseless carriages to the massive Dominant Six in 1915, with a curated display of models in the 1930

Packard Speedster Series, essentially factory hot rods based on a custom-built shortened chassis, in five body styles, including the quintessential boat-tail.

**MASERATI:** The Maserati brothers produced their first racing car in 1926, and their competition models (built through the early 1960s) became legendary, acclaimed worldwide by drivers and owners and well respected by archrivals such as Alfa Romeo and Ferrari. In 1948, under management of the Orsi family, Maserati started to produce non-racing sports cars, and GT cars emerged.

**FRUA COACHWORK:** Pietro Frua's work defined the golden age of creativity in Italian design and coachbuilding, from the rounded lines of the early 1950s, to the sleek squared-off shapes of the 1960s. Sometimes startling, but always tasteful, his designs were always inherently beautiful.

**WEDGE-SHAPED CONCEPT CARS & PROTOTYPES:** A few 1950s prototypes hinted at the form, but Wedge-shaped designs really came to the fore with concept cars of the 1960s, '70s and '80s. The featured class will focus on One-Off Wedge Concept Cars and Prototypes.

**1990s BPR & FIA GT RACE CARS:** Just as legendary sports cars such as the Jaguar E-type, Ferrari 250 GT and Shelby Cobra went from road to racecourse with few changes in the 1950s and '60s, the BPR Series sought to bring iconic supercars to the track in the mid-1990s—and it did just that. The McLaren F1, Ferrari F40, Bugatti EB110, Mercedes-Benz CLK GTR, and Porsche 911 GT1, as well as exotics like the Lotus Elise GT1 and Dodge Viper, all took part.

Speaking of the process being underway, it's never too early to book travel and lodging for Monterey Car Week and the Pebble Beach Concours—they start filling up the minute the prior event is complete. The week includes several high-profile collector auctions, vintage motoring events and much more. ■





# Precision control

BY JOE SAGE

**GLS** is the flagship of the Mercedes-Benz SUV lineup (at least its gasoline models), descending from the longstanding GL when its first two letters were applied to all the SUV models. The 2024 Mercedes-Benz GLS 580 4MATIC we are driving here is, in turn, the upper trim of two mainstream luxury Mercedes-Benz versions. (There are also top-top-performance Mercedes-AMG and top-top-luxury Mercedes-Maybach iterations—see sidebar chart—though ours does pick up a number of features from each.)

The GLS 580 is a powerful beast, with a 510-horsepower 4.0-liter biturbo V8 mild hybrid system with 538 lb-ft of torque (or up to 531 hp and 722 lb-ft with Boost) and 4MATIC all-wheel-drive, good for zero-to-60 in just 4.7 seconds. How's that for a

big three-row SUV that can tow 7,700 pounds and also has an off-road mode?

The off-road mode may seem a bit of a surprise in a vehicle with 22-inch wheels standard (or 23-inch on our sample), with an urban executive flair. Then again, this vehicle is big enough to have what appear to be healthy sidewalls on those big wheels, so although no-one is likely to take this rock-crawling, it seems to be capable of escaping the office for a good dirt road tow of your boat or horses to your favorite remote lake or trail (we did not take this sample off road at all). Ground clearance is not stated, but it does have AIRMATIC air suspension and should have impressive numbers at any setting. Our sample also had high-performance summer tires, as do the standard wheels,

something you would likely want to revisit for dirt. To its highly equipped \$112,000 base, ours adds \$16,000 or so in options and packages, as most will—on ours, those wheels, Nappa leather, a Premium Plus package, Burmester 3D audio, handsome MANUFAKTUR Alpine Grey paint and more.

As always, we started by adjusting the seats and mirrors, and best of all, the GLS has discrete metal buttons, as opposed to the plasticky continuous membrane that interconnects them on some other models, which can trigger the wrong function. (We've seen both for awhile, so don't know if it indicates they've figured this out. Or maybe it's evolving the other way. Time will tell.)

While thinking about the seats, we went for the massage feature. Whether for bliss, therapy or both, Mercedes has some of the best massaging seats in the business, with a wide range of regions and motions, but you do have to navigate into the

screen to set them. But unlike some, they do run indefinitely, plus we soon realized that when you return to the vehicle and restart, they briefly come up on the screen, ready for another go, so you learn to seize the moment and fire 'em up again.

With its size, height and almost-three-ton heft, the GLS felt a little ponderous at first. But as we have been increasingly using drive modes, we switched to sport—which surely benefits from the range and adaptability of its air suspension—and from there forward, it always felt neat and trim, with firmer steering and its high center of gravity largely erased. As with most, you do have to switch to your preferred mode every time, but by about your first turn, you'll remember to reach down to its well-placed and easy control and kick it back into sport. As clean, modern and fully-featured as the instruments are in the GLS, we came to enjoy that—sort of like a pilot doing routine pre-flight.

(A side note: having said that, we researched a bit, and if there's a pattern at all, it seems some hybrids do allow you to stay in eco mode.)

It seems a given that sport mode, along with a 510-hp V8 and sophisticated suspension, will power you smoothly through freeway flyovers and such. While wondering what this actually does to fuel mileage (rated 20 mpg combined, not bad for such a hefty machine), we perceived that in many conditions, the engine wasn't working as hard in sport mode—child's play, like asking a weight-lifter to take out the trash—and may just as likely be preserving fuel economy in its own way.

The weather turned nasty during our week, but we had our heated massaging seats, and we continued to fall for sport mode. Even in stop-pause-go traffic, we had such tight control, we could do whatever we wanted or needed. The powertrain of the GLS was serving our whims and needs, not the other way around.

If you have the price of entry, this big SUV is hard to beat. And don't forget—though we haven't driven them back-to-back lately, in addition to the AMG and Maybach versions, there's also the 375-horsepower GLS 450 4MATIC for \$25 grand less. ■



## SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	.....Vance, Alabama
ENGINE/TRANSMISSION	.....Germany/Germany
CONTENT	.....US/Canada 10% / Germany 25%
PASSENGERS	.....six (captain's chairs, opt)
ENGINE	.....4.0L V8 biturbo mild hybrid diecast alloy block/heads
HP/TORQUE	.....510 hp / 538 lb-ft
ADDTL OUTPUT (BOOST)	.....+21 hp / +184 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....10.5:1
TRANSMISSION	.....9G-TRONIC 9-spd auto
DRIVETRAIN	.....4MATIC® AWD
0-TO 60 MPH / TOP SPEED	.....4.7 sec / 130 mph
SUSPENSION	.....4-wheel indep w self-leveling AIRMATIC® and Adaptive Damping System (ADS Plus): F: dbl-wishbone; R: multilink
STEERING	.....rack and pinion, electro-mech power assist
BRAKES	.....(no info or specs)
WHEELS	.....(opt) 23-in AMG twin 5-spoke, black (staggered; no dimensions avail) (std: 22-in AMG: F: 9.5x22; R: 11.5x22)
TIRES	.....(opt) F: 285/40 R23; R: 325/35 R22 summer high-performance (std: F: 285/45 R22; R: 325/40 R22 summer high-performance)
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....(not stated)
TURNING CIRCLE	.....41.0 ft
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....205.2 / 123.4 in
HEADROOM (F/2/3)	.....39.4 / 40.2 / tba in
LEGROOM (F/2/3)	.....40.3 / 41.9 / 34.6 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....17.4 - 84.7 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....5820 lb
TOW CAPACITY	.....7716 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....prem unl / 23.8 gal
MPG	.....14/20/16 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	.....\$112,000
PAINT: MANUFAKTUR Alpine Grey	.....1750
LEATHER: black exclusive Nappa leather	.....1370
WOOD TRIM: natural grain grey oak	.....160
WOOD/LEATHER STEERING WHEEL	.....600
EXCLUSIVE WOOD TRIM PKG	.....450
NIGHT PKG	.....400
ACOUSTIC COMFORT PKG	.....90
PREMIUM PLUS PKG	.....1800
WHEELS: 23-in AMG twin 5-spoke, black	.....1900
MB-TEX DOOR TRIM	.....350
REAR SIDE AIRBAGS	.....700
TRAILER HITCH	.....600
GLASS: heat, noise insul, infrared reflect	.....1010
AUDIO: Burmester high-end 3D surround sound system	.....4550
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1150
TOTAL	.....\$128,880

## 2024 MERCEDES GLS LINEUP

.....hp+boost	.....0-to-60
GLS 450 4MATIC	.....375+20 .....5.8 .....\$ 87,000
GLS 580 4MATIC	.....510+21 .....4.7 .....\$ 112,000
AMG GLS 63	.....603+21 .....4.1 .....145,850
Maybach GLS 600	.....550+21 .....4.7 .....174,350





## MOUNTAIN WEST WINNERS: VOTY

**R**ocky Mountain Automotive Press (RMAP), of which we are a member, is centered in Colorado and comprises automotive journalists from the Four Corners states—Colorado, Utah, Arizona and New Mexico, as well as Wyoming and adjacent plains states Nebraska and Kansas.

With its mix of urban and vast rural areas, elevation changes, open and mountain terrain, canyons, curves and climbs, desert and snow, and executive, farm and ranch and recreation users, this overall region and its vehicle choices have much commonality with Arizona itself.

RMAP's eighteenth annual Rocky Mountain Vehicle of the Year awards recognize both 2023 and 2024 models (applying an overlap due to lingering lockdown-driven production challenges) that were all-new or significantly revised these years.

These awards are not determined in their own comparative drive event. Rather, an RMAP vehicle nominating committee considers powertrain and chassis performance, overall value, and vehicle design and engineering to narrow down finalists for each of four categories, with members then voting. To be eligible, a vehicle has to have been in the regional press fleet and/or evaluated at one of the group's prior drive events.

### RMAP CAR OF THE YEAR: Acura Integra

Seven finalists for 2024 RMAP Car of the Year were the Acura Integra Type S, BMW 7 Series, Genesis G90, Nissan Altima, Nissan Versa, Toyota Crown and Toyota GR Corolla.

The winning Acura Integra "is a car that has a significant amount of power, a trick suspension, a laundry list of other go-fast goodies and a name that resonates with many enthusiasts. For many



of us, the Acura Integra Type S needed to be more than just fast; it needed to retain the spirit of the much-adored namesake. Well, it's safe to say the new Integra Type S delivers a successful modern interpretation. Its backroad performance is downright exciting, and its list of luxury features are enough to satisfy most commuters' demands," says RMAP President Matt Pilgrim.

### RMAP TRUCK OF THE YEAR: Chevrolet Colorado

Three finalists for Truck of the Year were the Chevrolet Colorado, Ford F-150 and GMC Canyon.

The winning Chevrolet Colorado "offers the complete package for our region's unique demands. The turbocharged engine is ideal for our low-oxygen air while its wide powerband makes for effortless climbs up long highway passes, even when towing or carrying a load of gear. Inside, the cabin provides modern connectivity and clean lines for a professional and upscale experience. Especially with the return of the hard-core ZR2 Bison Edition, the Colorado is well-equipped to satisfy the demands of both commuters and adventurers alike," says Pilgrim.

### RMAP SUV OF THE YEAR: Toyota Grand Highlander

Eleven finalists for SUV of the Year were the Alfa Romeo Tonale, BMW XM, Chevrolet Trax, Dodge Hornet, Honda Pilot, Kia Niro (gas), Land Rover Range Rover Sport, Lexus RX, Mazda CX-90, Mercedes-Benz GLC-Class and Toyota Grand Highlander, with the new Toyota winning this award.

Pilgrim notes, "We live in an expansive and adventurous region and we love space. And as the name implies, the Toyota Grand Highlander serves up plenty of it. It also brings impressive efficiency and performance through its two available hybrid systems, the latest in connectivity and enough premium features to satisfy the whole family. Add to that a handsome design."

### RMAP EV OF THE YEAR: Genesis GV60

Seven finalists for EV of the Year, a new category this year, were the Genesis GV60, Hyundai Ioniq 6, Kia EV6 GT, Kia Niro Electric, Lexus RZ 450e, Mercedes-Benz EQE-Class and Nissan Ariya.

The winning Genesis GV60 "is fast, efficient and packed with thoughtful connectivity features that help this tech-forward car seamlessly integrate with our busy lives. It also speaks to us on the fashion front, with precision design details and luxurious materials that speak to the brand's Korean roots. The Genesis GV60 uniquely melds these competing aspects into a coordinated package that resoundingly earned it (its) title," says Pilgrim. ■

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# N is out. N-line remains.

This 190-hp near-top-trim Kona has plenty to offer by Joe Sage

We drove the new second-generation 2024 Hyundai Kona at its media launch a year ago in South Carolina, after having previously driven it on track and off-road at a comparo event in Texas. This was all five and a half years after first driving gen one at its launch in Hawaii, in 2018, with a number of other gen-one drives in between, here in Arizona and at other comparo drives.

Gen two seems a bigger leap forward than it otherwise might have, as lockdowns and other interruptions may have made gen-one's lifespan go by fast. But the calendar has marched on, regardless. And there's more to this—they were not just ready for a new look, but continuing to expand their elec-

tric vehicle lineup. While the new Kona picks up key style cues from Hyundai's latest EVs, the platform itself is engineered "electric-first," its battery-ready form delivering a more generous interior and broader stance beyond the original ICE versions. (In EVs built upon existing ICE architecture, battery size is more likely to reduce other volumes.)

The cabin has almost 42 inches of front legroom and close to 40 inches (38.2) in the rear, and cargo volume of almost 64 cubic feet with rear seats down. With weights from 3005 to 3505 pounds in the ICE lineup, fuel mileage is as high as 35 mpg highway for the base engine, or 32 with the turbo.

Hyundai grew the smaller end of its crossover

lineup later than some, but then expanded it quickly, a strategy that has been a winner for Kona. Gen-one quickly exceeded its sales projections, rising to fifth place among Hyundai's 14 US models, with the growth rate continuing to increase—and this while their big SUVs also set records.

Emblematic of the change to EV emphasis is another change in the lineup for gen two. Just two years ago, when gen one was just turning four, we traveled to Atlanta for a track session with Hyundai's highest-performance N models—at that time adding the first Kona N, a 286-hp version with 6-speed manual or optional 8-speed wet dual-clutch, perhaps surprisingly still front-wheel-drive, though with an advanced differential, along with performance-built suspension and much else. The new EV-based gen-two Kona lineup, however, does not offer an N, the immediate likely result of new Eur-

opean restrictions on gasoline-powered performance vehicles, but a trend that is endemic.

This gives N-Line a higher profile. Though not a track-performance build like the N (N-Line shares its drivetrain with Limited trim), N-Line serves its purpose by delivering some of the N spirit in this derivatively-named, upfeatured standard build. And a bonus—the N-Line offers all-wheel-drive.

Setup was quick and easy, and we were on our way. Within the first block, we had already noted that the new Kona just does everything well. It's a nice size, with good power, and solid features in a decent interface. Hyundai's latest shifter is what we term an alternative device—up behind the wheel, twist up for drive, down for reverse—but it works, and we can hope it will be fairly intuitive for an inexperienced unexpected borrower.

We headed out for an hour or two of mountain highway driving—with a variety of climbs, curves and descents—a great place to apply sport mode, though it also delivered a fine ride in normal.

The ICE lineup offers two engines, each with a different transmission, and two drivetrains. Fuel mileage varies among all, but is generally 2-3 mpg higher with the base engine than the more powerful turbo. The turning circle is very tight, 34.8 feet, one of our favorite specs. It has shift by wire and motor driven steering, simple tech but all working great with never a second thought. Suspension is also simple yet effective. Hyundai has engineered all these areas to such a high degree of mastery by now, there's a lot to be said for a simple build.

We've often noted that a successful restyling may look like an extreme departure when you first see it, then without a day or two it looks just right and the prior one immediately looks dated. This is taking us a little longer with the gen-two Kona, but we had spent more time than average with gen one. The restyling is in line with Kia overall and in particular with their EV evolution. Sales are sure to remain strong for the ICE Kona, and its full-electric basis makes it ready for the long haul. ■

*A persistent side story: While systems and features were generally very good, easy to find and easy to set, we don't always get deep into all of them in our allotted time. We already know Hyundai's systems urgently and repeatedly warn us about e.g. traffic light speed cameras we already know about. This time we also had ding-ding-ding! warnings, beeps and voice alerts: one telling us to take a break within just our first 10 miles; another mysteriously scolding that we had "no route set"; and a series of tire pressure warnings, one informing us that the 'bad one' was, uh, exactly the same as the other three; and a couple of other even more head-scratching variants. Funny not funny. We're fairly confident (or hopeful) that all or most could be overridden, but by any definition they are annoying.*

## SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Ulsan, S Korea
ENGINE/TRANS BUILD	S Korea / S Korea
PARTS CONTENT	US/Can 3%; S Korea 90%
ENGINE	1.6L 4-cyl turbo GDI 16v DOHC
HP/TORQUE	190 hp / 195 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	10.0:1
TRANSMISSION	8-spd auto, paddles
DRIVETRAIN	active on-demand AWD
SUSPENSION	F: MacPherson strut, gas shocks, stblzr bar; R: multi-link, gas shocks, stblzr bar
STEERING	col-mtd, motor-driven
BRAKES	F: 12x0 vented; R: 11.2 solid
WHEELS	19-in N Line alloys
TIRES	235/45R19
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	172.6 / 104.7 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	(AWD, 19-in) 8.3 in
TURNING CIRCLE	34.8 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	(w/ sunrf) 38.3 / 38.3 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	41.7 / 38.2 in
CARGO CAPACITY	25.5 / 63.7 cu.ft
WEIGHT	3483 lb
TOW CAPACITY	na
FUEL / CAPACITY	reg unl / 13.2 gal
MPG	24/29/26 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	\$32,150
CARPETED FLOOR MATS	210
DESTINATION CHARGE	1335

TOTAL	\$33,695
Slight price increase; see below.	

## 2024 HYUNDAI KONA LINEUP

	FWD	AWD
147-hp 2.0L Atkinson cycle 4-cyl, IVT (CVT)		
SE	\$24,250	\$25,750
SEL	25,600	27,100
190-hp 1.6L turbo GDI 4-cyl, 8-spd automatic		
N Line	30,800	32,300
Limited	31,800	33,300

## 2024 KONA ELECTRIC

	FWD
STANDARD RANGE : est 200 miles 48.6 kWh battery : 133 hp / 188 lb-ft	
SE	\$32,675
EXTENDED RANGE : est 261 miles 64.8 kWh battery : 201 hp / 188 lb-ft	
SEL	36,675
Limited	41,045



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## SPECIAL EVENT : MECUM AUCTION SPRING CLASSIC INDY 2024 : PENSKE COLLECTION

### Mecum to auction Team Penske private collection

#### Mecum Auctions

##### 37th Original Spring Classic

Friday, May 10 - Saturday, May 18, 2024 (nine days)

Indiana State Fairgrounds, Indianapolis

**T**he winningest team in Indy 500 history and its visionary owner will take the Mecum Auctions stage in Indianapolis by storm in mid-May with a wide selection of vehicles on offer from their private collection of pace cars and more. Roger Penske and the Team Penske racing organization have consigned an assemblage of 17 cars for auction at Dana Mecum's 37th Original Spring Classic, May 10-18, at the Indiana State Fairgrounds, joining an estimated 3,000 collector vehicles to be offered in total throughout the nine-day auction event.

The city of Indianapolis turns into the car enthusiast capital of the world each May, as both the Indy 500 and the original, largest and best muscle car auction return to the city year after year to cater to the fuel-pumping hearts of car people all over the globe. This year, Dana Mecum's 37th Original Spring Classic auction will feature this extra special collection that serves as a multifaceted celebration of The Greatest Spectacle in Racing, and its accomplished owner Roger

Penske is scheduled to be in attendance on Thursday, May 16 to see it off to its next round of caretakers.

Roger Penske started in IndyCar racing in 1968, when his team entered a stock block-powered Eagle driven by Mark Donohue. The crew first competed at Indianapolis in 1969, where Donohue earned rookie of the year status, and by 1971, he'd scored the first IndyCar win for Team Penske at the Pocono 500. In 1972, Donohue secured the team's first victory at the Indianapolis 500, and today, Team Penske stands as a 19-time victor of the Indy 500 race, boasting more wins than any other team in the history of the iconic Brickyard competition.

The assemblage of vehicles to be offered by Roger Penske and Team Penske at Dana Mecum's 37th Original Spring Classic brings together a wide array of the many pace cars that have held the honor over the years along with a diverse selection of other low-mileage, unrestored and limited-edition collector vehicles, and the group includes some seriously desirable standouts. A 1979 Ford Mustang Pace Car Edition (Lot T126) that was awarded to Rick Mears after his dominating run in the 1979 Indianapolis 500 stands in unrestored condition showing just 1,633 miles, while a pair of Z06 Corvette Coupes from 2006 (Lot T137) and 2015 (Lot T141) share status as Indianapolis 500 Pace Car Replica Conversions and show shockingly low miles of 239 and 88, respectively. Other top lots from the collection include a pair of 2010 Chevrolet Camaro Pace Car Editions (Lots T139 and T140) and a 2019 Chevrolet Corvette Grand Sport Coupe (Lot T142) with just 50 miles, to name a few.

▼ [www.mecum.com](http://www.mecum.com) ■



**2010 Chevrolet Camaro Pace Car Replica (Lot T138)**  
6.2L / 400 hp / 400 miles / Indianapolis 500 Pace Car Replica Conversion



**2006 Chevrolet Corvette Z06 Coupe Replica (Lot T137)**  
7.0L LS7 V8 / 505 hp / 6-spd / 239 miles / Indianapolis 500 Pace Car Replica Conversion



**1984 Pontiac Fiero Pace Car Edition (Lot T128)**  
Awarded to Rick Mears upon 1984 Indianapolis 500 win, 6,206 miles



**1979 Ford Mustang Pace Car Edition (Lot T126)**  
Awarded to Rick Mears upon 1979 Indy 500 win, unrestored, 1,633 miles



# Toughin' it out in the rough stuff

**Mudfest! A full mix of track, terrain, weather & wheels**

By Joe Sage / Vehicle & event photos by Doug Berger (DBPics.com) for NWAPA



The Pacific Northwest has quite a bit in common with Arizona. Both have wild elevation changes, volcanos and lava fields, rivers and grassy plains, along with big modern cities, small towns, ranches, historic trails and mines. And although the climates are different, both have rapidly changing wild weather.

The Northwest Automotive Press Association's (NWAPA's) Outdoor Activity Vehicle of the Year Awards—better known as “Mudfest”—brought us once again to Washington State's lower Olympic Peninsula in April, a timeframe chosen for high likelihood of the kind of weather that gives Mudfest its name. Last year was wild indeed—temperatures in the 30s and 40s, pouring rain and frozen mix. This year was arguably even better—blue skies for the first day's paved courses, moderate rain for the dirt and mud of the second day. (And our departure day that followed? Absolute maximum rain. But all in all, this weather sequence worked well.)

NWAPA was formed in 1991 and launched this annual event not long after. Starting as largely a pickup comparo, it has evolved in parallel to the vehicle marketplace, from a handful of body-on-frame SUVs first joining the pickups, to today's broad range of crossovers and utilities of every shape, size and powertrain—the most popular vehicles available now for daily driving, as well as for outdoor activities and trails.

## CATEGORIES AND JUDGING

With pickups sure to include midsize and full-size, and crossovers and SUVs currently coming in a good half-dozen sizes—all of the above likely to vary in more extreme off-road capabilities, as well as powertrains and even luxury level—as an awards event, NWAPA has wisely consolidated the entries into just four basic categories—all pickups in one, two-row and three-row counts for SUVs, and luxury broken out for SUVs, where luxury models are clear. (For pickups, any luxury levels within models are folded in.) This eliminates two-vehicle sets seen in more heavily categorized comparos, here with four to six per category for useful comparison.

While all were distributed into the main four groups, both electrified and extreme capability vehicles—pickups and SUVs together—were evaluated again as separate subsets, and the entire stable was also evaluated for a third subset ranking by value.

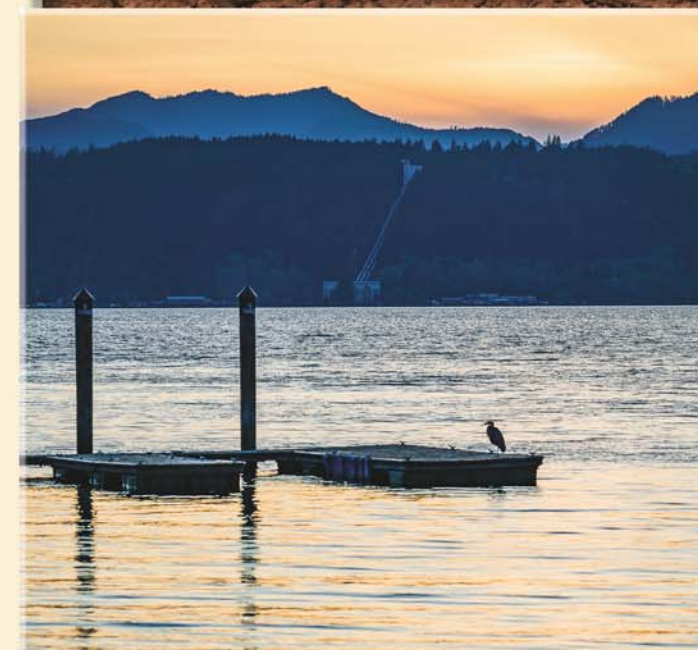
Drivers numerically score powertrain; paved ride and handling, acceleration and braking; off-road handling and capability; exterior styling; interior comfort and features; technology; and a subjective element of value. (Towing, which most but not all offered, is considered by specification, but not tested on course.)

Processes for this event are among the best in the business. Each driver votes a first and second choice in each category—with one full set of tallies and votes completed before dinner on day one (paved), the other before we leave on day two (off-road). From these, a best-of-the-best title winner is calculated, and results are provided to us within the next couple of days.

## VENUE AND COURSES

While NWAPA's fall events—Run to the Sun and Drive Revolution—are usually held in Oregon (or just across the river in Washington State), Mudfest is held in Washington and has had a few different venues over our years of participating in it. When we started, it was held at DirtFish Rally School in Snoqualmie Pass, with off-road activities staged on site and paved drives on public roads

(cont'd)







surrounding the area. Lodging was nearby, immediately next to 268-foot Snoqualmie Falls. This was a top-notch setup, but a bit far for the Oregon contingent. Next, it moved to the lower Olympic Peninsula for a couple of years—the paved portion at a small airport and the off-road in a huge county park notable for challenging natural courses among hills, trees and water hazards. Now closer to Oregon and about the same distance from greater Seattle, this was a great test course, but driving each vehicle from the staging area to the off-road courses gobbled up considerable time.

This year, the event was held for the eighth time at The Ridge Motorsports Park, near Shelton, north of Olympia. (Meals, meetings and lodging are about 20 minutes away, on the Hood Canal waterfront.) The Ridge is a 170-acre club track facility featuring a 2.47-mile, 16-turn track with 300-foot elevation changes (which we don't use); a kart track that's a one-sixth-scale replica of the big track (which we do use); and motocross acreage modified or specially built for our off-road purposes. An engineered course has the benefit of consistent comparison, as well as a chance to showcase specific features such as suspension articulation or hill descent and crawl modes.

Day one's paved circuit includes a coned chicane, a straightaway for maximum acceleration and full force braking impressions, more coned areas for turning circle and handling experiences, then on to the kart track for a full range of evaluation.

Day two is all off-road, with dirt and gravel straightaways, embankments, mild climbs and mud ruts—a full range of challenges for any entry. Vehicles designated for the Extreme Capability subcategory add more dramatic climbs and descents, water hazard fording, wheel articulation, log crawling, and other elements that push approach-breakover-departure angles toward their limits.

### (FOUR) VEHICLE CATEGORIES

The event typically draws about 20 to 25 vehicle entrants and about the same number of media driver-analysts from among the group's membership. Every vehicle is driven on each of the two days, amounting to three or four vehicles per hour, with time to meet, greet, score and annotate. It's a good volume of vehicles, especially with NWAPA's firm diligence in ensuring that every driver drives every vehicle.

This year, we had 20 vehicles, including four from three US automakers, three from Europe, eight from a full variety of Japanese brands, and five from Korea. Full information on entries and results follows. Low and high end of the range are noted for price, horsepower, torque and combined fuel mileage rating within each category, to help you gauge where the winners fall. All are 2024 models except for one 2025 as noted.

### PICKUP TRUCK

Chevrolet Colorado 4WD ZR2 Bison  
Ford Ranger Supercrew 4x4 Raptor  
Honda Ridgeline TrailSport  
Nissan Frontier Pro-4X Crew Cab 4x4  
Ram 1500 Rebel (2025)

Toyota Tacoma TRD Off-Road *\*\* (base price and specs used on this one, not as-tested)*

PRICE RANGE .....	\$41,800 Tacoma**	>	\$80,535 Ram
POWER RANGE .....	HP... 278 HP Tacoma	>	420 HP Ram
.....TORQUE.....	262 LBFT Ridgeline	>	469 LBFT Ram
TOW CAPACITY RANGE .....	5000 LB Ridgeline	>	11,580 LB Ram
COMB MPG RANGE .....	16 MPG Chevrolet	>	20 MPG Ridgeline, Tacoma

### WINNER: 2024 Chevrolet Colorado 4WD ZR2 Bison

310 HP, 430 LBFT, 5,500 LB towing, 16 MPG comb, \$65,125 as tested

Runner-up: 2025 Ram 1500 Rebel

**ANALYSIS:** There is not one in this list you would not want in your driveway. Most are new generations, new trims or fully refreshed. With only one full-size, it might have won as midsize votes were diluted, but instead, midsize emphasis brought one out on top.

### TWO-ROW FAMILY SUV

Hyundai Kona Limited AWD  
Jeep Wrangler 2-Door Rubicon X  
Kia Sorento X-Pro SX-Prestige 2.5T AWD  
Mazda CX-50 Turbo Premium Plus AWD  
Subaru Crosstrek Wilderness  
Subaru Solterra (EV) *\*(also in contention for electrified subset)*

PRICE RANGE .....	\$34,695 Kona	>	\$64,905 Jeep
POWER RANGE .....	HP... 182 HP Crosstrek	>	270 HP Jeep
.....TORQUE.....	178 LBFT Crosstrek	>	311 LBFT Kia
TOW CAPACITY RANGE .....	na LB Kona, Solterra	>	4500 LB Kia
COMB MPG RANGE .....	21 MPG Jeep	>	27 MPG Crosstrek (102 MPGe Solterra)

### WINNER: 2024 Jeep Wrangler 2-Door Rubicon X

270 HP, 295 LBFT, 3500 LB towing, 21 MPG comb, \$64,905 as tested

Runner-up: 2024 Hyundai Kona Limited AWD

**ANALYSIS:** Sometimes a middle-attributes Goldilocks factor emerges; other times a lower price equation dominates (especially in this category); and yet other times (as in any category), the priciest and most powerful wins (perhaps since, even though price is one of the considerations, the people voting can fantasize without having to actually pull out their checkbooks). This year, the priciest and most powerful Jeep—embodying the core personality of the off-roading portion of this event, but surprising us with its power and handling in the cones and on the track—won top prize, while runner-up Kia brings the Goldilocks factor, standing between the low end and middle on most attributes.

### THREE-ROW FAMILY SUV

Hyundai Santa Fe XRT  
Kia EV9 GT-Line AWD (EV) *\*(also in contention for electrified subset)*  
Mitsubishi Outlander PHEV SEL S-AWC (PHEV) *\*(also in contention for electrified subset)*  
Volkswagen Atlas Peak Edition

PRICE RANGE .....	\$42,205 Hyundai	>	\$78,430 Kia
POWER RANGE .....	HP... 227 HP Hyundai	>	379 HP Kia
.....TORQUE.....	273 LBFT VW	>	516 LBFT Kia
TOW CAPACITY RANGE .....	1500 LB Mitsubishi	>	5000 LB Kia, VW
COMB MPG RANGE .....	20 MPG VW	>	22 MPG Hyundai (80 MPGe Kia)

### WINNER: 2024 Kia EV9 GT-Line AWD (EV)

379 HP, 516 LBFT, 5000 LB towing, 80 MPGe comb, \$78,430 as tested

Runner-up: 2024 Hyundai Santa Fe XRT

**ANALYSIS:** This proved to not be a Goldilocks category, going to an entry at the top end of every key parameter—price, power, tow, fuel mileage. All the other variables aside, the Kia EV9 has another gotta-have-it factor for some: it's an all-new model (or an EV expansion model based on Telluride, but that only adds to its appeal for many).

### LUXURY SUV

Genesis GV70  
INEOS Grenadier Trailmaster  
Lexus GX 550 Overtrail  
Mercedes-Benz GLS 580 4MATIC

PRICE RANGE .....	\$69,350 Genesis	>	\$125,770 Mercedes-Benz
POWER RANGE .....	HP... 282 HP INEOS	>	510 HP Mercedes-Benz
.....TORQUE.....	332 LBFT INEOS	>	538 LBFT Mercedes-Benz
TOW CAPACITY RANGE .....	3500 LB Genesis	>	8000 LB Lexus
COMB MPG RANGE .....	14 MPG INEOS	>	20 Genesis

### WINNER: 2024 Lexus GX 550 Overtrail

349 HP, 479 LBFT, 8000 LB towing, 17 MPG comb, \$71,270 as tested

Runner-up: 2024 Genesis GV70

**ANALYSIS:** While the price range is dramatic, three out of four run about \$70-85,000 (though the Mercedes-Benz is \$125,770). Japan's luxury brands have been with us for a long time now, but it still feels noteworthy when they conquer the Europeans in this category. The INEOS, new and somewhat rare and obscure, captivated everyone, but was not as well received by many on the paved portion of the event—largely due to an unusual steering feel, which they are reportedly aware of and are reengineering. The winning Genesis and runner-up Lexus are both about the same price (\$69k/71k), both with middle-of-the-pack power. One big difference is that while three out of four are large, with Lexus GX body styling creating a big, bold beast, the Genesis is small. Whether votes suggest a preference by size, runner-up Genesis GV70 does have higher fuel mileage (though the lowest tow capacity), and adds another trophy in its cabinet.







### (THREE) SUBSET CATEGORIES

#### ELECTRIFIED OUTDOOR UTILITY

These vehicles are from any of the four categories, as long as they had either a PHEV (plug-in hybrid) or full EV (a.k.a. BEV, battery electric) powertrain. There were three:

- Subaru Solterra (EV)\*
- Kia EV9 GT-Line AWD (EV)\*
- Mitsubishi Outlander PHEV SEL S-AWC (PHEV)\*

#### ▼ WINNER: 2024 Kia EV9 GT-Line AWD (EV)

379 HP, 516 LBFT, 5000 LB towing, 80 MPGe comb, \$78,430 as tested

#### Runner-up: 2024 Mitsubishi Outlander Plug-in Hybrid

**ANALYSIS:** Somewhat in line with the world at large, Kia EV9 has been winning a wide range of awards, Mitsubishi Outlander quite a few, and the Subaru is new and yet to rake them in. On the other hand, this event is where new things rake them in. Perhaps it's just that the Solterra is smaller and the bigger ones impressed more in the dirt.

#### EXTREME CAPABILITY

Last year, there were just four entered into this subgroup. This year, eleven—the entire pickup category plus five SUVs representing all three categories, including two luxury. These were all additionally evaluated on a more extreme course.

**PICKUPS (ALL SIX),** including midsize Colorado ZR2 Bison, Ranger Raptor, Ridgeline TrailSport, Frontier Pro-4X, Tacoma TRD Off-Road and the only full-size, the R 1500 Rebel.

**SUVs (FIVE):** Hyundai Santa Fe, INEOS Grenadier Trailmaster, Lexus GX, Wrangler 2-Door Rubicon, Crosstrek Wilderness.

#### ▼ WINNER: 2024 Jeep Wrangler 2-Door Rubicon X

270 HP, 295 LBFT, 3500 LB towing, 21 MPG comb, \$64,905 as tested

#### Runner-up: 2024 Chevrolet Colorado ZR2 Bison

**ANALYSIS:** This is arguably the original heart of this event, and having eleven out of 20 vehicles entered in it underscores that. A day out in the mountains and woods with your ten best friends and ALL of these would be anybody's dream. Does the win indicate a preference for SUVs over pickups? Doubtful; could be a fraction of a point difference. Note that the winner and runner-up were both the winners of their core categories.

#### BEST VALUE

This award is also a separate vote among all entries, based on that one very subjective attribute, value—in principle, a balance among price, performance and content.

#### ▼ WINNER: 2024 Subaru Crosstrek Wilderness

182 HP, 178 LBFT, 3500 LB towing, 27 MPG comb, \$35,560 as tested

#### Runner-up: 2024 Hyundai Kona Limited AWD

**ANALYSIS:** Despite the actual definition of value, which does NOT preclude pricier but high-content vehicles—and even “affordable” varies by individual wallets—the vote here often favors lower-priced choices, as was the case again this year.

### (AND JUST ONE) OVERALL TITLE WINNER

#### OUTDOOR ACTIVITY VEHICLE OF THE YEAR

Even moreso than the categories, voting for the event's top trophy can follow whatever careful statistical analysis or whatever gut response or whim each driver finds best informs their choice. (Bear in mind, even if it were a pure recalculation, our numbers are subjective in the first place.) This ultimate playoff is simply its own simple, separate vote—a choice for first and second—with all vehicles in the event equally in play.

#### ▼ WINNER: 2024 Lexus GX 550 Overtrail

221 HP, 332 LBFT, 1500 LB towing, 52 MPG or 64 MPGe comb, \$50,880 as tested

#### Runner-up: 2024 Kia EV9 GT AWD

**ANALYSIS:** The winner of the overall title does not have to have won any of the four individual primary categories (Pickup, 2-Row, 3-Row or Luxury SUV), nor any subcategory. This phase is a lot like anyone's personal buying experience, where, at the end of much analysis, often comes that moment alone with your thoughts, where you say, “All things considered, I just really liked that one.” Nonetheless, this year's title winner did win the Luxury SUV category—which could indicate an overall leaning toward luxury vehicles in this event this year. Or not. After all, it is not the most expensive. And the runner-up did win its 3-Row Family SUV category as well as the Electrified vote. As with the Extreme Capability subset, SUVs took the trophies, not pickups. Is there a connection here? Does this mean the event itself leans toward Extreme Capability, which is where its origins lie? Or is it just the inevitable result of applying essentially the same criteria and experiences? Perhaps notable is that an ICE vehicle still won over an EV.

Being a driver and judge at a vehicle comparo event is surely akin to being a good schoolteacher—you love all the kids, inevitably develop a few favorites, but only one gets to be the valedictorian. It can be partly due to pure statistics, partly to emotion, even partly due to the influence of others with their own favorites. As we review the winners here, we can think of one after another where another could have just as easily won. We had a truly stellar class this year. But only one can.

Special thanks go out to the hard-working fleet personnel, to our hosting venue The Ridge Motorsports Park, to the manufacturers who sent their most capable vehicles and the smiling faces to explain and support them, and to our friends and colleagues in NWAPA for one of the best-executed events in the business. ■





# RAV4 goes TRD Off-Road

BY JOE SAGE

The first Toyota RAV4 went into production in 1994 as a 1995 model and was an instant hit—well before the crossover term was coined or compact crossovers displaced sedans as the default vehicle in America. But surely it is one of the reasons those things happened.

RAV4's presence has never wavered, with each generation's popularity as durable as the vehicle itself—in just its fifth generation, it is completing its 30th year here. We received our first gen-five RAV4 in late 2018 with no particular expectations—and liked it so well, it went straight to our cover.

This current round of RAV4 has in fact proved so popular that it has been America's top seller in the red hot compact SUV category for six years running and last year became America's top-selling vehicle, period, other than the perennial full-size pickup. It's not just in the US, either—RAV4 is now built in five countries around the world to keep up with demand. (Ours was built in Ontario, Canada.)

In the US, there are currently a whopping 15 basic builds of Toyota RAV4—with six pure gasoline,

seven hybrid and two plug-in hybrid versions.

Already very capable, RAV4 has heard the call of the wild from its siblings—4Runner, Tacoma, Tundra, Sequoia, Land Cruiser and others—and now receives its first TRD Off-Road treatment.

We discovered the magic of the TRD Off-Road trim years ago—in short, a highly capable member of the TRD family at considerably lower cost than TRD Pro. As an example, the eleven-version Tacoma lineup starts at \$36,200 and tops out with TRD Pro at \$63,900, but Tacoma TRD Off-Road slots in at just \$41,800—well up the scale for off-roadiness, while still well down the scale on cost.

These were our wheels on the ground during the NVAPA Mudfest comparo (also in this issue), which did not mean taking it on the event's engineered off-road courses—those twain never meet. Rather, we used it to tackle the already rugged Pacific Northwest drive from Sea-Tac Airport, across the Tacoma Narrows, out into the lower Olympic Peninsula, back and forth between hotel and track, then returning via Washington State Ferry, through the compacted urban spaghetti of Seattle, back to Tacoma, then back up to Sea-Tac. No dirt, no rocks, but we tackled the sturdy steel ramps of the ferry, the tight maneuvers and parking of the cities, and rain—lots and lots of rain on our last day.

## 2024 TOYOTA RAV4 LINEUP

2.5L Dynamic Force 4-cyl, 203 hp, 8-spd auto		
	FWD	AWD
LE	\$28,475	\$29,875
XLE	29,985	31,385
XLE Premium	32,875	34,275
Limited	36,780	38,180
Adventure		34,670
TRD Off-Road		38,095

**+(7) Hybrids (no TRD):** 2.5L Dynamic Force 4-cyl, combined 219 hp, CVT, eAWD .....\$31,475-39,780

**+(2) PHEVs (no TRD):** 2.5L Dynamic Force 4-cyl, combined 302 hp, CVT, eAWD .....\$41,590-45,460

We don't use nav a lot, but did here, for reasons of tight event and boat timing, coupled with some big changes in the roads in recent years. It, too, was a delight, automatically diving into animated 3D at turnoffs and interchanges, then returning promptly to our favorite simple north-up map.

In short, this new RAV4 was a champ at all we threw at it, our trip notes calling it a fantastic vehicle, just reconfirming and continuing to multiply our pleasure with the Toyota RAV4 overall.

We would not be surprised if a RAV4 TRD Pro joins the lineup in the future—such patterns have happened before. When both are available, it can present a complex buying decision. But when just the TRD Off-Road is available, as now on RAV4, the decision is easy. ■



## SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Woodstock, Ontario, Canada
ENGINE	2.5L Dynamic Force 16v 4-cyl, DOHC, VVT-iE intake, VVT-8 exhaust
HP/TORQUE	203 hp / 184 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	13.0:1
TRANSMISSION	Direct Shift 8-spd auto, electronic w intelligence (ECT-i), sequential shift mode & Snow Mode (AWD only)
DRIVETRAIN	AWD, Multi-Terrain Select
SUSPENSION	F: TRD-tuned indep MacPherson strut, 25.5mm stblzr bar; R: multilink, 23.5mm stblzr bar, TRD unique shocks, struts, red coil springs, jounce bumpers
STEERING	elec pwr-assist rack & pinion
BRAKES	F: 12.0 vented; R: 11.1 solid
WHEELS	18-in six-spoke matte black TRD flow formed alloys w black lug nuts
TIRES	225/60R18
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	(TRD) 181.5 / 105.9 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	(TRD) 8.6 in
APPROACH / DEPART	19 / 21°
TURNING CIRCLE	(TRD) 37.4 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	37.7 / 39.5 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	41.0 / 37.8 in
CARGO CAPACITY	37.5 / 69.8 cu.ft
WEIGHT	3615 lb
TOW CAPACITY	(TRD) 3500 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	.87 oct reg unl / 14.5 gal
MPG	25/32/28 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	\$38,095
TRD OFF-ROAD TECH PKG	640
TRD OFF-ROAD WEATHER PKG	1015
DIGITAL REARVIEW MIRROR w Homelink Universal garage door opener	625
DESTINATION CHARGE	1350
TOTAL	\$41,725

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# Right-sized powerhouse

BY JOE SAGE

The Lexus SUV and crossover lineup has grown fairly complex, now including UX, NX, RX, TX, GX and LX, along with a fully electric RZ. GX and LX have always been easy to grasp, as equivalents of GS and LS sedans. (Making even that comparison trickier, though, the GS has been discontinued, while IS and ES sedans carry on, though there are not IX or EX crossover equivalents, while conversely, RX has been around for decades without an RS sedan equivalent. And the new TX brings another expansion of the Lexus alphabet.)

A shopper at the smaller end may likely spend some time puzzling among the UX, NX and RX. The smallest of those, the UX, is hybrid-only; the other two offer gasoline-only, hybrid and PHEV (plug-in

hybrid) versions (and that RZ EV).

In a lineup of fully 13 versions of just the NX, running from about \$40 grand to about \$60 grand (see chart in sidebar), our sample is the hybrid, the NX 350h, and at about \$45-50 grand (ours the top trim), this may be a good place for that shopper to start. The NX 250 has lower horsepower, the non-hybrid NX 350 has higher, and the plug-in hybrid NX 450+ higher still, for an overall spread of 203 to 304 hp. The hybrid, though weighing just over two tons, performs nicely at 240 hp. Only the base NX 250 offers front-wheel drive, and even on those, it's only \$1600 more for AWD. All have fuel mileage ratings in the neighborhood of 40 mpg.

We had a 2020 Lexus NX for a week in 2019, at

that time the 300h hybrid, with a combined horsepower of 194—and had headlined that review as “Numbers are only half the story,” noting that when needing to grab freeway lane opportunities, but not having expected to find any great power or speed, “the NX hybrid proved to be a bit of a rocket, all due to the immediate full dose of torque delivered by an electrified powertrain ... all on tap at normal cruising speeds.” And that has now been bumped up by another 24 percent in the 350h.

We commended its styling, which holds firm today, and its features, true to form for a premium-luxury brand. We had also noted that a great many of its features are optional add-ons, good ones, but bringing the price up another \$10 grand last time (or \$8 grand this time, still short of the 450+ PHEV's base price), and you can still add thousands of dollars' worth more. Not subject to option pricing are

its cargo capacity of 22.7 cubic feet while seating five, or 46.9 with rear seats down; 41 inches front legroom; and its 2,000-pound tow capacity—very solid attributes that are all built right in.

We had not looked at our prior piece before or during our time with this one, but once we did, we found we had noted all the same things this time. We again hadn't expected this to be a high performance vehicle, but heading up our first freeway ramp, we noted that “it feels generally powerful,” then, while needing to merge into and then across typically aggressive traffic, we cross-checked our blind spots behind, gave it some gas for precision maneuvers ahead, and updated it to being “*specifically* powerful,” readily accomplishing every move we were after. And we hadn't even put in sport mode yet. But then we did, easily via a control set on the center stack, and—while also reminding ourselves that we had been driving a powerful performance V8 much of that week—concluded that “this thing feels great!”

Heading back out after completing an errand, we realized it had reverted to normal mode while off, but had not noticed, as its performance was still satisfying. (This gave us an inverse appreciation for these systems resetting, which we often wish were not the case on sport-mode-dependent machines. But in this, it seems worthwhile to not potentially reduce fuel mileage in sport when normal mode performance is great, anyway.) Nonetheless, at the next red light before turning back onto another freeway ramp, we popped it back into sport. And when the light turned green, we not only kept up easily with other fast vehicles, but in fact even restrained ourselves just to be polite.

Despite its compact designation, the Lexus NX looks and feels substantial, with its high beltline and hood outside and generous cabin within. Its format and layout are spacious, strong and useful. All this applies to the full lineup, which we haven't driven back to back. But category by category and item by item, the NX 350h scored straight As. ■

The new Lexus NX is the luxury corporate and structural equivalent of the immensely capable, adaptable and popular Toyota RAV4—the best-selling compact SUV in America for six years running and currently the best-selling vehicle of any type in America other than always-top-sales full-size pickups—and that may be everything many buyers need to know.



## SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Cambridge, Ontario, Canada
ENGINE	(A25A-FXS) 2.5L 4-cyl, 16v DOHC, chain drive, EFI
HP	189 hp
COMPRESSION RATIO	14.1
HYBRID MOTOR AND BATTERY:	
HYBRID BATTERY PACK	
	lithium-ion battery, 259V, 70 cells
ELEC MOTOR GENERATORS:	
MG1	permanent magnet: generator, engine start, hybrid battery charge
MG2	permanent magnet: drives front wheels, regenerative during braking
MGR	drives rear wheels, regen braking
TOTAL SYSTEM POWER	240 hp (max 179 kW)
0-TO-60 / TOP SPEED	7.2 sec / 124 mph
TRANSMISSION	ECVT, planetary gear unit for gear reduction and power splitting, electronic AWD control system
DRIVETRAIN	full-time all-weather AWD
SUSPENSION	
	F: MacPherson strut type; R: trailing arm type dbl-wishbone
STEERING	
	electric pwr
BRAKES	
	F: vented 12.91 x 1.1; R: vented 12.48 x 0.71
WHEELS	(opt) 20-in 20-spoke alloy, silver fin
TIRES	(opt) 235/50 R20 SL
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	183.5 / 105.9 in
TURNING CIRCLE	38 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	(w pano rf) 37.1 / 37.4 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	41.0 / 36.1 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	7.7 in
APPROACH/DEPARTURE	16 / 25°
CARGO CAPACITY	22.7 / 46.9 cu.ft
WEIGHT	4080 lb
TOW CAPACITY	2000 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	91+ prem unl / 14.53 gal
MPG	41/37/39 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	\$48,795
PREMIUM PAINT: Cadmium Orange	575
DIGITAL REARVIEW MIRROR	200
20-IN WHEELS	1310
POWER FOLD HEATED REAR SEATS	1030
HEADLAMPS: premium triple beam LED w washers and cornering lamps	850
PANORAMA MOONROOF	500
(TECH BUNDLE): panoramic view monitor, lane change assist, front cross traffic alert	1070
ADVANCED PARK	480
(TECH BUNDLE): wireless phone charger, digital key (requires subscrip), (4G network)	450
CARPET CARGO MAT	140
DOOR EDGE GUARD	155
REAR BUMPER PROTECTOR	130
DESTINATION CHARGE	1150
TOTAL	\$56,855
2024 prices have increased; see below. 2025 pricing is up again, varying, about \$1100-\$2200.	

## 2024 LEXUS NX LINEUP

	FWD	AWD
NX 250	\$40,605	42,205
NX 250 Premium/+	43,655	45,255
NX 350		44,365
NX 350 Premium/+		47,415
NX 350 F SPORT		49,465
NX 350 Luxury		50,505
NX 350h		44,615
NX 350h Premium		47,665
NX 350h Luxury		50,755
NX 450h+ Luxury		59,905
NX 450h+ F SPORT		61,155



Mercedes-Benz is well known for heavy duty commercial and cargo vehicles worldwide, from urban utility to cross-country semi to military grade off-road. In the US, their work duty presence is represented by their Sprinter and smaller Metris van lineups, vehicles available globally for 30 years and introduced here just over 20 years ago.

Dig into our past issues, and you'll see we've been pretty intimate with the vans, from multiple tours of their assembly plants in South Carolina, to meeting with their recreational upfitters and more.

Mercedes is also currently red hot on the path toward a 100 percent battery electric product line.

Put it all together, and the new eSprinter van is

an inevitable result. The refinement for this evolution of an already versatile vehicle is quite straightforward—and very effective.

While the 4-cylinder diesel Sprinter has four body versions—140-inch wheelbase with either a standard or high roof; and 174-inch wheelbase with a high roof and either standard or extended rear body length—the eSprinter launches with just one, the longer wheelbase with its high roof, in its standard body length. The larger size is a win on many levels—accommodating a larger battery pack with considerable range; showing off its lower center of gravity; and its large cargo volume adding to a bragworthy overall formula. Other body

formats are sure to follow as assembly lines and customer response fall into place.

The eSprinter does offer two power outputs, our sample bearing the larger. While the internal combustion Sprinter starts at \$49,900, this body format at \$56,500, the eSprinter starts at \$71,886. From there, you can watch its energy-efficient powertrain earn back that \$15 grand, while also enjoying its power and silent operation benefits.

The eSprinter is a rear-driver with 488 cu.ft of cargo volume and a GVWR of 9,370 lb. Range is a bragging point, estimated at up to 273 miles standard (European) cycle or 329 miles city cycle. The feature list is a mile long—from engineering and

convenience details, to Mercedes me connect services with business task-oriented Efficient Fleet Management & Data Interfaces (trial).

A program of eXpertUpfitter solutions, such as shelving systems, workbenches and heavy-duty wood floors for heavy loads offers further customization options for outfitting as a mobile workshop or a more specialized delivery van.

We put our eSprinter through a day of light but typical duty, loading it with heavy boxes of magazines and business records to take from the office to storage. The van generally handles much as you would expect on the freeway and is surprisingly manageable and maneuverable on local streets and for warehouse access and parking. With more load or less (our sample had a tied-down cube of sample cargo, even before our own load, and we

don't know its weight), it belies its size with the smooth acceleration and braking of the electric powertrain and with precise handling. For backing up, it is indeed long. (We have not had recent side-by-side comparison with other formats.)

Though long overall, the driver's seat was tight with limited range in ours, which had a dividing wall between seats and cargo. Ergonomics including the inside door handle and a very thin grab bar at the inside rear could be easily improved. A step completely inside the door is a bit awkward.

This is a great application of EV technology, as most will be used for local fleet or other daytime operations, basically unchanged except for quick, secure shut-offs and restarts. The van can be easily recharged at home base overnight, or even during lunch (42 minutes with DC fast charge). ■

# Strictly business

EFFICIENCY, RANGE AND  
LOAD CAPACITY  
BY JOE SAGE



## SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY .....	Charleston, SC
MOTOR.....	single motor (high output) 150kW (standard output 100kW)
BATTERY .....	lithium iron phosphate (LFP) 113 kWh
HP/TORQUE .....	(high output) 204 hp / 295 lb-ft (standard output 136 hp / 295 lb-ft)
TRANSMISSION .....	single-speed
DRIVETRAIN .....	RWD
TOP SPEED .....	75 mph
BRAKES.....	hydraulic
LENGTH / WHEELBASE.....	274 in / 170 in
WIDTH.....	(w/mirrors) 92.3 in; (w/o mirrors) 79.5 in
HEIGHT .....	107.1 in
CARGO CAPACITY .....	488 cu.ft
INTERIOR CARGO HEIGHT .....	79.1 in
PAYLOAD MAX .....	2624 lb
GVWR / GCWR .....	9370 / 11,023 lb
TOW CAPACITY .....	4100 lb
CHARGING TIME .....	wallbox 240V/32A 9.6 kW: ±12.5 hrs DC fast charge 50 kW: ±42 min
RANGE.....	(prelim) 273 miles
MPGe.....	na
BASE PRICE .....	Standard Output <b>\$71,886</b> High Output <b>\$75,316</b>



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**SPECIAL EVENT : BARRETT-JACKSON PALM BEACH AUCTION 2024 : RESULTS**



**Barrett-Jackson  
Barrett-Jackson Palm Beach 2024  
Thursday-Saturday April 18-20 2024**

South Florida Fairgrounds, 9067 Southern Blvd, West Palm Beach FL 33441

**BARRETT-JACKSON** accelerated the passion and excitement for collectible vehicles during this year's annual Palm Beach Auction, April 18-20, 2024, at the South Florida Fairgrounds. In total, 614 vehicles were sold, all with No Reserve, for \$45.7 million. Additionally, Barrett-Jackson sold 348 pieces of authentic automobilia for over \$967,000, bringing total auction sales to \$46.6 million with a 100-percent sell-through rate.

The top vehicles sold during the 2024 Palm Beach Auction included:

1. 2022 Ford GT Alan Mann Heritage Edition.....Lot #742.....\$1,292,500
2. 2022 Ferrari SF90 Spider.....Lot#732.....\$1,100,000
3. 2021 Ford GT Carbon Series .....Lot #721.....\$1,001,000
4. 2019 Ford GT.....Lot #764.....\$902,000
5. 2020 Lamborghini Aventador SVJ .....Lot #740.....\$698,500
6. 2005 Ford GT.....Lot #725.....\$451,000
7. 2005 Ford GT Heffner Performance Twin-Turbo .....Lot #745.....\$374,000
8. 1946 Dodge Power Wagon Custom Pickup.....Lot #746.....\$363,000
9. 1966 Chevrolet Corvette Custom Convertible .....Lot #716.....\$335,500
10. 1933 Pierce-Arrow Twelve Convertible Sedan.....Lot #723.....\$330,000
10. 2024 Jeep Gladiator Custom Demon 170 Pickup.....Lot #748.....\$330,000
10. 1969 Dodge Charger "Joe Dirt Daytona" Movie Car.....Lot #749.1.....\$330,000

The diversity of this year's Palm Beach Auction docket was showcased by seven pri-

vate collections. Eleven collectible vehicles were featured from renowned collector and philanthropist John Staluppi's Cars of Dreams Collection, including a 1954 Buick Skylark (Lot #684.2), which sold for \$148,500 and a 1958 Buick Special Convertible (Lot #376) at \$126,500. The Washer Collection included a 1969 Dodge Charger "Joe Dirt Daytona" movie car (Lot #749.1), which sold for \$330,000, while a 1970 Plymouth Superbird (Lot #730) from the Prestige Collection brought in \$220,000.

"Our bidders responded overwhelmingly with numerous six-figure sales on both Friday and Saturday," says Barrett-Jackson president Steve Davis. "From our top-selling Ford GTs to a whimsical 1964 Amphicar (Lot #376.1) and Burt Reynolds' 1977 Firebird (Lot #707), we delivered something for everyone."

Entertainers, business leaders and other industry titans who attended this year's Palm Beach Auction included Daymond John, businessman and investor from the TV reality series "Shark Tank"; American actor and rapper Vanilla Ice; American motor racing personality Linda Vaughn; Captain Lee Rosbach from the TV reality show "Below Deck"; and UFC competitor Vicente Luque.

Each day kicked off with the Automobilia Auction, featuring 348 items that sold for over \$967,000 total. The top automobilia pieces sold were:

1. Texaco Oil neon porcelain sign with animated neon .....Lot #8296.....\$36,800
2. 1951 Mobil Oil porcelain Pegasus sign w animated neon ..Lot #8299.1.....\$33,350
3. 1928 Polly Gasoline Wayne Model 615 visible gas pump...Lot #8287.....\$34,500
4. Late-1950s Polly Oil fuel island w two Wayne 505 pumps ..Lot #8283.....\$31,050
5. 1940s-50s American Gasoline porcelain with neon sign.....Lot #8297.1.....\$29,900

Next up for Barrett-Jackson is a new Scottsdale Fall Auction, October 10-13, 2024, at WestWorld of Scottsdale. For information, tickets, to consign or register to bid, visit:

▼ [www.barrett-jackson.com](http://www.barrett-jackson.com) ■





# Transition afoot

BY JOE SAGE

Mercedes has announced a complete change-over to EVs, half by 2025 and all by 2030, closing in on us fast. For now, the E-Class Sedan—a model with us since 1994—soldiers on in two trims, while there are three EQE EV sedans. The only AMG E-Class Sedan is an EV. For an AMG gasoline sedan, the only model now is the C-Class.

Further simplifying the lineup—or isolating the sedan—for the sixth generation, the longstanding E-Class Coupe and Cabriolet models have moved to a new CLE class, also covering the prior C-Class Coupe and Cabriolet, following suit to the CLA.

The E 350 4MATIC bears the lower of two pow-

ertrains, its Pinnacle level now an option package rather than a separate trim. Built in Germany with a 255-horsepower 2.0-liter turbo-four, it now adds Mercedes-Benz's 48V mild hybrid system, enhancing both power and fuel economy, together good for zero-to-60 in 6.1 seconds, with 33 MPG highway. A \$62,300 base price hits the executive-luxury slot well, though ours was almost \$84,000 out the door. The formula is solid, with its turbo-four delivering about two-thirds the power and twice the fuel mileage of a typical performance V8 from 15 years ago, along with a healthy soundtrack.

Just \$5,800 more is the E 450 4MATIC Sedan, 375 horsepower from a 3.0-liter inline-6 turbo, also with 48V mild hybrid and 4MATIC, for zero-to-60 in 4.4 seconds with fuel mileage dropping just two points. If you were to trade off our E 350's Pinnacle Package (\$3,400 on either) for the power of an E 450

without Pinnacle, the price gap is just \$2,400. We could be enticed by the E 450's 47 percent higher horsepower at just nine percent more cost (or just 3.6 percent if dropping Pinnacle from the 450). But while we could live without such touches as Active Ambient Lighting with Sound Visualization, the Pinnacle package does include Burmester 4D Surround Sound, and that's pretty much a must.

Driving is generally as potent and pleasant as expected, given fairly traditional power to weight. At first, steering felt lighter and livelier in lane changes than we might expect from a rear-based all-wheel-driver. But if you opt for AIRMATIC suspension, as on ours, then rear-axle steering is also added. Mercedes has been implementing this increasingly, a benefit, it seems, of its addition to the big EVs with long battery-accommodating wheel-bases. This system has two tricks. At speeds up to

37 mph, the rear wheels turn up to 4.5 degrees opposite the front—describing a circle—for tighter parking (or U-turns at lower speeds). But above 37 mph, they angle the other way, in the same direction as the fronts—describing four parallel lines—up to 2.5 degrees. This may well be what felt different to us at first, but in fact provides unusually sure-footed lane changes. (No turning circle specification is yet given, perhaps itself variable.)

Light restyling this year adds a black surround tying together the grille and headlights. Increases are boasted for headroom and legroom (not yet specified), as well its near-20-cubic-foot trunk. To us, the driver's seat had fairly tight range, and our elbow frequently popped open the clamshell console bin lid. You'll want to try it on for size.

While some Mercedes models currently have separate metal switches for controls (seats, mirrors, items on the wheel) we're increasingly seeing the black plasticky membrane-covered multiple switches this has, which we find can trigger a

neighboring function. (Examples include trying to nudge a side mirror, but instead folding them in traffic, or trying to set seat-mirror memory and instead invoking old settings and wiping out your efforts, or turning on heated seats without realizing.)

Five years or less of life left before all-EVs may seem plenty, but it feels different when they are the last years. We found ourselves contemplating how much of gen-six brings breakthroughs versus bearing a role as a stop-gap placeholder.

Put it all together, and it's an interesting time to shop. From mild styling updates to significant EV development bonuses like that four-wheel steering, details may be carrying across from past, future or sibling vehicles simply as available, as the commitment to gasoline models grows faint.

They're not alone on this. And you may find it motivating—grab while you still can. On the other hand, the EV revolution is currently hitting measurable resistance. It will be interesting to see how changes progress in this lineup in coming years. ■



## SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	.....Sindelfingen, Germany
ENGINE/TRANS BUILD	.....Poland / Germany
PARTS CONTENT	.....Germany 35% / US/Can 0%
ENGINE	.....2.0L inline-4 turbo
+MILD HYBRID	.....48-volt system, integrated starter/generator, up to 23 hp / 148 lb-ft
HP/TORQUE	.....255 hp / 295 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	.....9G-TRONIC 9-spd auto
DRIVETRAIN	.....4MATIC AWD
0-TO-60 / TOP SPEED	.....6.1 sec / 130 mph (lim)
SUSPENSION	.....optional AIRMATIC w air springs, adaptive ADS+ dampers, sensors set according to quality of road
STEERING	.....rear-axle: below 37 mph up to 4.5° against front angle when parking; above 37 mph up to 2.5° same dir as front
BRAKES	.....(no specs)
WHEELS	.....8.0x18 five-spoke
TIRES	.....225/55R18 a/s ext mobility
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....194.9 / 116.6 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....(no specs)
TURNING CIRCLE	.....(no specs)
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....tba / tba in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....41.5 / tba in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....19.1 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....4189 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....prem unl / 17.4 gal
MPG	.....24/33/27 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	.....\$62,300
PINNACLE TRIM	.....3,400
PAINT: Manufaktur Alpine Grey	.....1,750
WHEELS: 21-in AMG multispoke w black accents	.....3,050
INTERIOR: Tonka Brown Nappa leather	.....2,990
CONSOLE: Silver Metallic mixed fabric	.....150
(CREDIT): missing garage door opener	.....(280)
MBUX SUPERSCREEN PKG	.....1,500
DRIVER ASSISTANCE PKG	.....1,950
DIGITAL LIGHT PKG	.....990
WINTER PKG	.....450
LEATHER PKG	.....800
AIRMATIC SUSPENSION PKG	.....3,200
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1,150
TOTAL	.....\$83,400

## 2024 E-CLASS LINEUP

		.....AWD
E 350 4MATIC Sedan	.....\$62,300	
E 350 Pinnacle Trim	.....65,700	
E 450 4MATIC Sedan	.....68,100	
E 450 Pinnacle Trim	.....71,500	

## 2024 EQE / AMG EQE LINEUP

	.....RWD	.....AWD
EQE Sedan	.....74,900	.....77,900-85,900
AMG EQE Sedan		.....106,900





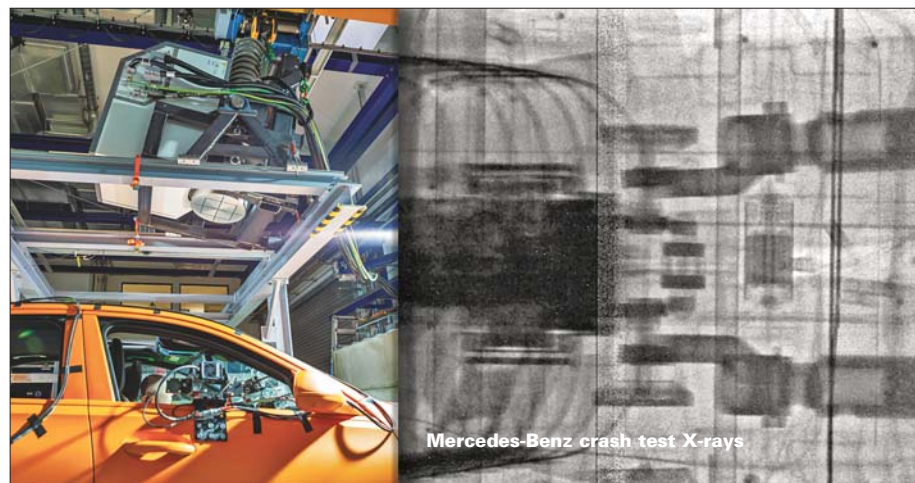
## THE INSIDE TRACK: BRIEFS & RUMORS



**Rolls-Royce**  
historic gravity racers  
RR-0.01 and RR-0.02

▼ **Rolls-Royce** Motor Cars has restored the first vehicles ever commissioned in their Goodwood era, two hand-built gravity racers that ran in the Soapbox Challenges at the Goodwood Festival of Speed—a grueling downhill race for gravity powered vehicles—in 2001 and 2002, before the company had officially relaunched. (Contrary to popular belief, the first new Phantom handed over to its client at 00:01 on January 1, 2003, was not the site's first production.) The four-wheeled motorless Rolls-Royce Close Coupled Drophead Gravity Racers, codenamed RR-0.01 and RR-0.02, were true one-of-one commissions, built by the same skilled hands that would soon relaunch the brand in the West Sussex countryside. Retired from racing, then displayed in Rolls-Royce Motor Cars headquarters, the apprentices worked tirelessly more than two decades later to restore the priceless artifacts to their former glory. Racer RR-0.01 had offered styling clues for the upcoming first Goodwood Phantom. Built from carbon and glass fiber, composite honeycomb plates and precision aluminum components, its monocoque shell bore a striking resemblance to Phantom VII, winning the award for best design at the 2001 Festival of Speed. It was adorned with a one-off March Hare mascot on its bonnet; the redesigned Spirit of Ecstasy would not make its debut on Phantom until the new Goodwood site officially opened in 2003. In the 2001 Soapbox Challenge, RR-0.01

was driven by Ian Cameron, Rolls-Royce's first design director of the modern era, who overtook a Bentley racer on the final corner. RR-0.02 was inspired by the Silver Ghost—winner of the 1911 London to Edinburgh Trial and the 1913 Alpine Trial, cementing Rolls-Royce as creators of the “best car in the world.” Like that illustrious original, RR-0.02 was built with speed



**Mercedes-Benz** crash test X-rays

in mind, with formula racing-style steering racks along with slick tubular tires to minimize rolling resistance. Made from aluminum and carbon fiber, with a painted wood aft deck and leather trim, it bore a double-question-mark monogram above its pantheon grille. The two had their racing swansong in the fifth and final Soapbox Challenge in 2013, with RR-0.02 reaching a top speed of 72 mph. The racers' recent

full-body and mechanical restoration included a complex repair to RR-0.01's grille and a handmade front-screen replacement veneer on RR-0.02, both having been damaged during their original racing exploits.

▼ **Mercedes-Benz** can boast “maximum transparency,” as the world's first car manufacturer to X-ray a crash test. Their recent technology demonstration, a joint project with the Fraunhofer Society, made all processes in vehicle structures and dummies visible for the first time, as the apparatus's linear accelerator, serving as a X-ray camera, creates up to 1,000 razor-sharp images per second. The test, at the EMI research facility in Freiburg, begins at 60 km/h, as a crash barrier device rams full-on into the side of a C-Class sedan. On board was one SID II dummy, on the left-hand side facing the impact, a test specimen with a female anatomy, specially designed for side impact tests. The high-speed X-ray technology is housed in a frame above the vehicle. The demonstration confirms that the technology can be used to visualize and precisely analyze previously invisible, highly

dynamic internal deformation processes. The session followed several years of research by the Mercedes-Benz research division, with colleagues from EMI. The decisive factor for the breakthrough was use of a linear accelerator with 1 kHz technology—far more powerful than X-ray flashes previously used in trials—as the radiation source. Its photon energy, up to nine mega-electron volts, allows all materials com-

monly used in vehicle construction to be screened. The duration of the X-ray pulse is only a few microseconds, recording deformation in a continuous stream of up to 1,000 images per second, without motion



**Kalmar and Forterra**  
autonomous terminal tractor

blur. Beams shine through the bodywork and dummies from above, as a flat detector under the test vehicle is a digital image receiver. About 100 still images are recorded in the milliseconds of actual impact, then combined into a video. This level of information makes it possible to see in detail how the thorax of a dummy is pressed in or how a component is deformed. Significantly, the X-ray crash does not affect any other analysis tools—even the interior cameras record without any disturbance. EMI developed comprehensive protection for the facility and processes—dosimeters to ensure employees are not exposed to radiation, an additional 16-inch-thick concrete wall around the building, and a protection door weighing around 50 US tons.

▼ **Kalmar**, part of Cargotec, and **Forterra** (formerly RRAI) have signed a joint development agreement for autonomous terminal tractor solutions. Kalmar will be responsible for developing the automation-ready terminal tractor—including drive-by-wire solution integration—as well as the Kalmar One fleet management system to manage operation of automated terminal tractor fleets. Forterra is a leading provider of autonomous systems for ground-based movement in the working world and among the earliest innovators in driverless technology. The company has provided autonomous solutions for the US Department of Defense and commercial applications, and its AutoDrive system is one of the leading driverless systems for complex

conditions including ports and logistics centers. Forterra will be responsible for integration of their AutoDrive platform for autonomous operations with the Kalmar terminal tractor. Kalmar automation busi-

ness line VP Juuso Kanner says, “We believe that automated operations will eventually become the standard in the container-handling industry, and there is huge potential in automating terminal tractors in terms of safety and productivity.” The new agreement follows a successful Kalmar RoboTractor pilot done in Norway. Kalmar now aims to leverage their extensive experience in straddle carrier automation, as adopted by a number of leading container



**GM Defense LLC**  
Infantry Squad Vehicle (ISV)

terminals around the world. Forterra CEO Josh Araujo adds, “This agreement brings together our vast experience in developing world-class autonomous systems and Kalmar's extensive experience in port and terminal automation with their market-leading terminal tractor product. We believe AutoDrive is the best platform to create a compelling new offering for the container and trailer-handling market.”

▼ **GM Defense LLC**, a subsidiary of General Motors, has announced its Infantry Squad Vehicle (ISV) completed the 2023 UAE Armed Forces Summer Trials hosted by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) General Maintenance Corps. Held over several days, these evaluate whether vehicles can meet the technical and tactical needs of UAE's and other regional countries' armed forces. The ISV received certification of completion, having successfully passed both off- and on-road phases of evaluation, which included traveling nearly 2,000 kilometers across highways, sand dunes, soft sand tracks and rocky walls. The phases, which include continuous driving at maximum payload capacities, are designed to test vehicle capability in rugged combat conditions, including extreme climate and diverse terrain. In addition to the mobility trials, the ISV completed the Maintenance Trial, which included two days of field repairs testing, and maintenance and recovery evaluation to help potential customers assess ease of repairs and sustainability. The completion of UAE Summer Trials follows GM Defense's announcement of a signed cooperative agreement with Tawazun Council at the International Defense Exhibition and Conference in February 2023. The agreement facilitates business

with the shared objective of delivering efficient and advanced solutions to military, security and government customers from the UAE and across the region in key technology areas of integrated vehicles; power and propulsion, including fuel cell and power generation; and autonomy and connectivity. The UAE will continue its evaluation, post-vehicle exercise, to officially recognize completion status. ■



## UPCOMING FEATURES

Mercedes-AMG SL 43



Kia EV9 GT-Line



Ford Ranger Raptor



Barrett-Jackson inaugural Scottsdale Fall Auction



Sally McNulty - Arizona racer and race car builder



Land Rover Defender



Alfa Romeo Giulia



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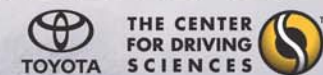
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