

THREE TONS OF SERENITY BY JOE SAGE

We quickly learned that the general public is hard pressed to discuss this car without touching on its price, and hard pressed to complete their sentence without including the word “house.”

Everything about the Rolls-Royce Ghost is substantial—its image, its road presence, its price, and whereas it does not literally quite hit a full three tons, its weight (5556 pounds, thus passing that threshold when its sumptuous seats are occupied).

These are all good things. The Rolls-Royce mystique needs no introduction.

Substantial road presence makes for a great

image but also a great ride. And you know what they say about price: if you have to ask, you can’t afford it. Truth is, those who can afford it are perfectly happy to have something most people cannot.

With Phantom prices starting at about \$400,000 (and passing half a million with options), Rolls-Royce does know who its customers are. But the Ghost is an entry level vehicle in the super-luxury segment, at a starting price of roughly \$250,000.

Also in the relative budget segment is the Rolls-Royce Wraith, a two-door (rear-hinged) fastback coupe intended to take on the Bentley Continental GT, more likely to be owned as a true driver’s car. We drove it last year and found it to be a bit

of a handful on city streets, but smooth and dreamy on open two-lane highways.

With the Ghost Series II, Rolls-Royce brings a sedan to market at about \$25,000 less than the Wraith. As a four-door, with both regular and long-wheelbase models, it can even make the option of chauffeur-driven decadence more affordable.

We enter the realm. Newly engineered seats have electronically adjustable thigh supports in front and lounge seats in the rear, which along with a wide range of motion also pivot toward each other, all the better to conduct intimate business. Seats are heated; massage is an option. Natural grain leather, chrome, brushed metals and exotic wood veneers abound. (Note that in the bright Arizona sun, some chrome, glass, brushed aluminum and even dark but high-gloss wood elements seemed

aimed at the driver, blinding us at times.)

Within its English grace, the Ghost includes high technology: one-touch calling and voice-activated navigation (with suggestions and recommendations from the system), onboard WiFi and email, video-conferencing, TV news and more. Functions are accessible via a rotary controller or a huge 10-1/4" high-definition screen.

The Britishness comes through even under BMW’s German ownership. We had fun sharing traffic with a MINI, also a British-blooded BMW product now, certainly a different flavor from this.

The serenity factor is more than just a marketing pitch—it’s pretty much guaranteed to work. With this Rolls-Royce’s 565-hp V12 under our feet and at our fingertips, the mood overtakes the driver—the kind where being king of the road does not require you to be Atilla the Hun (as many other road kings seem to play the game). The luxury this car provides automatically supplies the mood. We found ourselves surprisingly relaxed, whether at top highway speeds or stuck in maximum rush hour crush.

These luxurious feelings may even trump reality. For example, our logbook at one point noted an “incredibly tight turning circle” (a subjective notation, not an actual measurement). In point of fact,

the Ghost’s turning circle is 44 feet (SWB, or 45.9 feet LWB)—about the same as a big Sprinter Van and about eight feet more than a seven-passenger Dodge Durango. But if perceived experience is better than reality in today’s hectic world, that may not be all bad.

Handling put us on cloud nine. The car feels solid—a magic carpet ride not so much cushy and fluffy, as just smooth and effortless. The car feels strong and substantial, as well it should. Its steering stood out from the masses—“95 percent good,” per our notes—which can be attributed to new steering gear and adjusted dampers, delivering very little quirkiness, but instead accurate results through graceful or aggressive sweeping turns.

If your correspondent were a Silicon Valley titan of tech, with all the money in the world, and this were our car, and we took a second look at it as we left it in the parking lot, would we be glad we owned it? Of course we would. You might wonder how anyone could justify this expense on one car. But once you cross that threshold, it’s not hard to see how such a car could quickly become a part of you. If not life-changing, it would certainly be life-affirming and life-confirming. It’s easy to see how someone could get quite attached to their own Rolls-Royce. ■



As we gaze out across the long, tall, broad hood of the Rolls-Royce Ghost, we see the Spirit of Ecstasy poised at its tip. This legendary mascot has graced the brand for a century. Ecstasy is an appropriate mood, given the price of entry, but serenity is the one we keep coming back to.



The handsome and sporty red natural grain leather interior of our Rolls-Royce Ghost Series II, despite the car’s appropriateness for a luxurious chauffeur-driven rear seat experience, says “drive me.” And we did.

The car’s 17.3-cu-ft trunk looks huge, but is actually only eight-tenths of a cubic foot larger than that in the Dodge Charger elsewhere in this issue. Nonetheless, you are unlikely to ever feel cramped in this car.

Though a Monroney sticker with pricing details was not provided for this car, we did have complete information on the two-door Rolls-Royce Wraith fastback coupe we drove last year. With a base price of \$284,900, that one had quickly run up to a total of \$370,850. We would expect much the same with this.

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE.....6.6L 48-valve twin turbo V12
 TRANSMISSIONsatellite-aided 8-spd auto
 DRIVETRAIN.....RWD
 POWER/TORQUE563 hp / 575 lb-ft
 WHEELSstandard 19-in, optional 21-in
 LENGTH.....(SWB) 17 ft 9 in / (LWB) 18 ft 3 in
 TURNING CIRCLE...(SWB) 44 ft / (LWB) 45.9 ft
 WEIGHT.....(SWB) 5445 lb / (LWB) 5556 lb
 MPG13/20 (city/hwy)

INCLUDED: Each feature of the car could warrant its own dedicated brochure. Two examples:

AUDIO: Eighteen individually-tuned speakers, with both theater and studio settings, are conceived to deliver a pure “larger than life” sensation. Two bass speakers located in the trunk complement seven speakers meticulously placed throughout the cabin. Two “exciter” speakers in the roof-lining bring the sound to occupants’ ear level, promising a completely unique listening sensation.

SATELLITE AIDED TRANSMISSION utilizes GPS data to allow the car to see beyond what the driver sees, anticipating your next move based on location and driving style. It uses this information to select the most appropriate gear from the Ghost Series II’s 8-speed ZF gearbox to ensure the driver is able to appropriately exploit the power from the Rolls-Royce 6.6 liter twin-turbo V12, ensuring an effortless and seamless drive experience. For example, when approaching a sweeping bend, the car will predict how you wish to drive through it. When the driver lifts the accelerator, it will hold the lower gear to ensure maximum power is available on accelerating through the exit of a corner.

BASE PRICE.....± \$250,000-265,000
OPTIONS/DEST/TOTAL.....info not provided

ROLLS-ROYCE SALES RECORDS

- 4,063 Rolls-Royce cars in 2014 (+12%)
- Fifth consecutive record year
- Highest sales in marque’s 111-year history
- North America is tops, ahead of the Middle East, Europe and China
- US is biggest individual market
- 200 new jobs over the past two years

