# Town, country and all around

### MEET THE ALL-NEW CHRYSLER PACIFICA BY JOE SAGE

inivans carry a certain panache and also a purpose. Though thoroughly useful for painters and florists, or taxis and hotels, they are forever connected to family first. There are certain commonalities with utility vehicles and some commercial vans, but the minivan is often first recognized by its big sliding side doors. These are not only handy as heck for the family who owns one, but kids love minivans, and they're so exuberant by the time they exit, the sliders may be welcome by anyone parked next to one.

Chrysler is in an especially good position to create an all new wan for the new millennium,

as they are indeed the inventor of the minivan

in the first place. When the Chrysler Town &

Country and Dodge Caravan were introduced for 1984, they were an immediate hit—and have remained so ever since. Till then, hauling a larger family in one vehicle meant a very crowded station wagon, a large commercial van built with windows and seats, or the underpowered original VW Microbus. It's the comparison with big commercial vans that gave the new breed the "mini" prefix.

Chrysler had created a segment that exploded to include the other domestic makers and most import brands. Asia and Europe had long made tiny cargo and passenger vans, but none had entered our market. The ones that joined the fray in the US copied the Chrysler/Dodge formula.

Chrysler has had plenty of time to get to know the family. From the tail end of Generation X, through the millennials and now beyond, the Chrysler minivan is often the first set of wheels any American experiences, as they are brought home from the hospital. It becomes an extension of the home, as families spend more time on the go than at the dinner table—from school sports, to vacations, then finally off to college.

For 2017, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) reinvents their venerable niche. The new vehicle is so different—as are the lifestyles of its buyers—it has been renamed. Gone is the Chrysler Town & Country name. Meet the all-new Chrysler Pacifica. That name had

been used before, for a large crossover utility vehicle about a decade earlier, but it's such a refreshing name, it immediately takes on a new life of its own, as does the new van.

As with everything, the landscape has changed a bit over three decades, as SUVs and crossovers have picked up considerable market share. Chrysler has held its lead position in minivans, holding off 17 competitors till now there are just a handful. But they committed, telling us nothing else is as efficient and effective, and noting that we expect an additional four million kids by 2025.

To appeal to customers both new and prior, Chrysler has tackled this project from several angles: safety, comfort and convenience, efficiency, and technology.

Over 100 new safety features or improvements include 360-degree top view cameras, ultrasonic parallel and perpendicular park assist, stop-and-hold adaptive cruise control, forward collision warning with brake application and driver assistance, and lane departure warning with stages of alert and assistance.

Stow 'n Go seats are the segment's only such for both second and third row, have assist and easy-tilt access to the third row, and now let you leave a child seat installed while using them. Front seats can be tilted forward using a button in the second row. Sliding doors and liftgate can operate handsfree, and a tri-pane panoramic sunroof keeps everyone happy, even normally claustrophobic third-row folks. A standout available feature is the integrated tough-duty Stow 'n Vac RIDGID vacuum cleaner, mounted in the second row (always the dirtiest) with tools right at hand and a 14-foot hose long enough and nimble enough to reach every corner of the van, plus handle a few chores within decent reach outside—even your other vehicle. This is sure to be a can't-live-without accessory.

Chrysler Pacifica with a Pentastar V6 gasoline engine is rated at 28 MPG highway, the highest figure in the segment (it ties Honda but beats all the others, and Pacifica has 40



#### **2017 CHRYSLER PACIFICA**

ENGINE	3.6L Pentastar V6
DRIVETRAIN	FWD
HORSEPOWER/TORQU	E287 hp / 262 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	9-spd Torqueflite auto
<b>SEATING</b> 7- or 8-p	bassenger (2/2/3 or 2/3/3
WEIGHT	4330 lb
TOWING	3600 lb
MPG	18/28/22 city/hwy/comb

#### **2017 CHRYSLER PACIFICA HYBRID**

ENGINE	3.6L Pentastar V6 Hybrid	
	FWD	
HORSEPOWER/TORQUE	248 hp / 230 lb-ft	
TRANSMISSION	Electrically variable with	
dual-motor EV drive capability.		
CEATING	7 naggangar 12/2/21	

addi motor LV dilvo di	
SEATING	7-passenger (2/2/3)
WEIGHT	4943 lb
TOWING	[ not recommended ]
MPG	tbd

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BASE PRICE (masoline)	\$28 59
TURNING CIRCLE	39.7
GROUND CLEARANCE	5.1 i
LIFTUVER HEIGHT	24.9 1

BASE PRICE (hybrid)







Five models of the new Chrysler Pacifica with 287-hp 3.6L Pentastar gasoline V6 (below) will be joined in the second half of the year by a 248-hp Hybrid model (far right). Chrysler engineers say "the platform could handle" all-wheel-drive models. The grille and headlights suggest a Möbius Strip, all part of a softer sculptural athleticism, reflected below that in the front fascia's grille and fog light housings. Side rear view "pedestal" mirrors allow larger side windows and a small new one.

more horsepower than Honda). A hybrid version arriving later in the year is expected to deliver 80 MPGe (MPG equivalent) in the city.

Technology is threaded throughout—including the array of safety, convenience and powertrain features just mentioned, and also including two versions of Uconnect with 8.4-inch touchscreen interface, premium audio by Alpine and Harman Kardon with up to 20 speakers and 760 watts, and an all-new Uconnect Theater rear seat entertainment center with two 10-inch screens, wireless headphones, even 115-volt auxiliary power.

Chrysler was able to make every change it dreamed of, as the new Pacifica is built on an all-new platform, a clean-sheet, ground-up project—"an engineer's dream," says Brandon Faroute, head of Chrysler Design. The new van has its beltline, windshield and side glass moved up, the roof stylishly and aerodynamically tapered (its Cd of 0.3 is an industry best, "unheard of for a minivan"), and a wider track, longer wheelbase and larger wheels—up to 20 inches—for a strong stance.

The Pacifica's interior is also entirely new, developed with an eye for surfaces, shapes, contrast and spaciousness, with the functions of a front stack spread wide above and below a "waterline," and open space above

the forward console.

A seven-inch screen in the gauge cluster has rich blue graphics with detail and depth expected to please any watch aficionado.

The van's smooth and economical 9-speed automatic transmission is controlled through a rotary shifter on the streamlined center stack—knurled and taller to distinguish it.

Family usefulness rules throughout, with cupholders, map pockets, even seatback grocery bag hooks. And as a bonus to the Stow 'n Go seating, there is significant storage available below the floor.

Pacifica's interiors follow the Jeep Grand Cherokee theme of using desirable destination place names to anchor five choices: Santa Monica (cognac/alloy with liquid titanium accents and toffee stitching); Soho NY (black/alloy with mineral shiitake accents and sepia stitching); Sonoma County (black/alloy with cranberry wine accents, stitching and piping); and Santa Fe (black/deep mocha with liquid titanium accents and diesel grey stitching/piping). The hybrid will have its own Juneau, Alaska theme (black/alloy with anodized ice cave accents, ice blue stitching and black piping).

Occupants benefit from all those features, but also from increased quietness and

smoother ride and handling. One key innovation delivering this has to do within turning a traditional structural weakness of a vehicle with huge side doors on its ear. The structural tubs for those below-floor storage units, integrated with the Stow 'n Go seating engineering, became the stiff and strong center structure of the whole platform, doubling the vehicle's stiffness, a big handling benefit, too.

Advanced materials—including a number of industry firsts with aluminum and magnesium—shaved an impressive 250 pounds of weight off the upper body.

SUVs will still sell. But the combination of extensive family-friendly features and unmatched rear accessibility provided by sliding doors keeps Chrysler Pacifica at the forefront of its prime directive, as the ultimate family vehicle.

Pacifica pricing ranges from \$28,595 to \$42,495, each model feature-rich and successively richer. (The prior Dodge Grand Caravan is still available starting at \$22,595.)

Pacifica's 28 MPG highway rating comes with a 3600-pound towing capacity, 6005-pound GVWR, 5.1 inches of ground clearance, approach and departure angles of 14.0 and 18.8, and a 19-gallon gas tank. (Hybrid specs will vary.) Oh, the places you'll go.







