

**W**e've had quality time in the E-Class before, from the launch of this generation's coupe—including the 4MATIC all-wheel-drive version—in the Canadian Rockies two years ago, back to the introduction of the 2011 E-Class Cabriolet in 2010, with some Arizona wheel-time weeks in between. This time, we had a new combination—the top-performance AMG version with a 429-hp AMG-enhanced V6 and AMG Performance 4MATIC+ AWD.

There's something new brought to the game each time—for 2019, a new steering wheel with new touch controls; upgraded safety and driver assistance features; and new trim details and paints.

There's also increased engine power across the E-Class lineup, but this AMG offers significantly more at its core: it's among the first of a new AMG 53 series with a powertrain including an EQ Boost integrated starter generator (ISG). Using hybrid or electrified drivetrain technology in clever new ways, this smooth inline ring unit negates the need for either starter

or alternator, is beltless for no parasitic loss, powers the car's 48-volt system, and generates up to 21 additional horsepower and 84 lb-ft of torque, for immediate acceleration that is not just *fully* potent from zero, like an EV, but even *more* potent. This instant power also provides quick, seamless shifts through its AMG nine-speed transmission, while the whole package delivers all that power and grace with 26 mpg highway.

The cabin experience rates high, from relatively intuitive screen and controls, to Designo Nappa leather seats, quilted as is a current trend, yet not overdone (plus black in our car), for a luxurious but sporty look and feel, not the stuffy Victorian sitting room style found in some quilted interiors.

Options are priced fairly, and we'd go for most, though we could skip a couple. Or we might add a couple, such as a \$1750 carbon fiber exterior package. You can't go wrong even in the base model, already with Burmeister Surround Sound.

In the E-Class Cabriolet, you get chill-fighting drop-top technologies you don't find elsewhere—the Aircap (a wing rising above the windshield frame to deflect air beyond the open cabin), the Airscarf (a system

that wafts warm air around your neck from the base of the headrests), a wind block behind the rear seats, luxury seats that are both heated and cooled, and a heated steering wheel.

We seem to always drive the E-Class Cabriolet when there is indeed a chill. The original launch drive ran across the Great Smoky Mountains from Tennessee to North Carolina in springtime, with freezing temperatures at the summit and beyond.

And every time we've had it in Arizona for a week, it has also been winter. This year was no exception, with it having snowed in the north Valley just the week before (rare at all, but happening twice this year). It had warmed to above freezing, but was still cold and rainy most of our time with the E53 Cabriolet—lows in the 20s or 30s, highs in the 40s or 50s (it was 47° in our photo below and 30° for the icy parked shot at upper right).

No worries. We had our Aircap, Airscarf, wind block, heated seats and heated steering wheel to keep us warm. (Bonus: the wheel is heated all around except the very bottom, unlike some makes we've driven that are about half cold plastic—a huge difference.)

Top-down season in much of Arizona is of course upside-down to

**SPECIFICATIONS**

<b>BUILD</b> .....	steel unibody; aluminum & steel sheet metal
<b>ENGINE</b> .....	AMG-enhanced 3.0L inline-6 turbo, EQ boost
<b>HP/TORQUE</b> .....	429 hp / 384 lb-ft
<b>COMPRESSION RATIO</b> .....	10.5:1
<b>TRANSMISSION</b> .....	AMG SpeedShift TCT 9G-TRONIC
<b>DRIVETRAIN</b> .....	AMG Performance 4MATIC+ all-wheel drive w variable torque distribution
<b>0-60 / TOP / 1/4-MILE</b> .....	4.4 sec / 130 mph (elect lim)
<b>SUSPENSION</b> .....	<b>F:</b> indep multi-link w air springs <b>R:</b> indep multi-link w air springs
<b>STEERING</b> .....	speed-dependent electro-mech rack & pinion
<b>BRAKES</b> .....	<b>F:</b> 14.6" / <b>R:</b> 14.2"
<b>WHEELS</b> .....	(standard) <b>F:</b> 19x8 / <b>R:</b> 19x9
<b>TIRES</b> .....	(standard) <b>F:</b> 245/40ZR19 / <b>R:</b> 275/35ZR19 (wheels & tires on our upgraded to 20")
<b>LENGTH / WHEELBASE</b> .....	190.6 / 113.1 in
<b>TURNING CIRCLE</b> .....	39.7 ft
<b>GROUND CLEARANCE</b> .....	4.7 in
<b>SEATING</b> .....	four
<b>LUGGAGE CAPACITY</b> .....	9.5 cu.ft
<b>HEADROOM F/R</b> .....	(non-AMG spec) 40.7 / 36.4 in
<b>LEGROOM F/R</b> .....	(non-AMG spec) 41.8 / 34.1 in
<b>WEIGHT</b> .....	(no info; est 4300 lb)
<b>FUEL CAPACITY</b> .....	17.4 gal
<b>MPG</b> .....	20/26/23 (city/hwy/comb)

the rest of the world. While most drop their tops in summer, we leave ours up, and vice versa in winter. Our E53 Cabriolet also has cooled seats (not as ubiquitous a feature as heated), and we're confident those would be a treat in summer. But could some of the other systems fight off the Arizona heat? Certainly not the hot-air headrest Airscarf, but perhaps the Aircap would deflect blast furnace effects, and the wind block would probably aid with that, too. We are definitely curious to sometime put this to the test. ■

**PRICING**

<b>BASE PRICE</b> .....	<b>\$80,350</b>
<b>LUNAR BLUE METALLIC PAINT</b> .....	720
<b>DARK BROWN SOFT TOP</b> .....	nc
<b>DESIGNO INTERIOR:</b> Designo black Nappa leather, diamond quilt, black/titanium grey piping, designo badge on seats, mats, black headliner, upper dash, doors, console....	4200
<b>TRIM:</b> metal weave trim .....	600
<b>WHEELS:</b> 20" AMG twin 5-spoke wheels .....	750
<b>OPTIONS:</b> AMG illuminated door sills (350); AMG performance exhaust (1250); AMG track pace application (250); active multi-contour front seats w massage (1320); heated/vented front seats (450); heads-up display (990); soft close doors (550); park assist package (1290).....	6450
<b>DRIVER ASSISTANCE PKG:</b> active lane change assist, route-based speed adapt, Distronic active distance assist, Pre-Safe Plus rear end collision protection, active steering assist, active brake assist w cross traffic function, speed limit assist, auto speed takeover, active emergency stop assist, evasive steering assist, active blind spot assist, active lane keep assist, extended stop-&-go restart up to 30 sec.....	2250
<b>EXTERIOR LIGHTING PKG:</b> intelligent LED light system, adaptive highbeam assist .....	800
<b>WARMTH/COMFORT PKG:</b> heated steering wheel, rapid heating front seats, heated armrest .....	1050
<b>ENERGIZING COMFORT PKG:</b> Air Balance cabin air purification & fragrance system, Energizing comfort system....	800
<b>DESTINATION CHARGE</b> .....	995
<b>TOTAL</b> .....	<b>\$98,965</b>

# Powerful weather beater

Convertible with innovative new powertrain also extends top-down season

by Joe Sage

