

ARIZONA DRIVER

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Toyota 86
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VEHICLES • EQUIPMENT • TECHNOLOGY • PEOPLE • EVENTS • DESTINATIONS • ATTRACTIONS

WELL, THAT WAS FUN!

TOYOTA 86 IS MORE THAN JUST A NUMBER

BY JOE SAGE

This little sports car has come a long way since it was the Scion FR-S. (Actually, it was always the Toyota 86 in Japan; the whole Scion brand was just a transitional marketing project in the US. An "86" badge was on the car all along, even here; many people just never realized it.)

Our Toyota 86 arrived not long after a week with the new-last-year GR Supra (see our March/April 2020 issue), itself a followup for us to an interview with Toyota executive VP Bob Carter at Supra's unveiling at Barrett-Jackson in January 2019, a one-day track event in Arizona, and a three-day open road comparo in Oregon and Washington.

Carter had told us the GR Supra 3.0 straight-six, starting at about \$50,000, would compete with Asian sports cars up to \$50G and Europeans up to \$60G (Porsche Cayman, Audi TT, BMW M2 and

such). Within Japan, he squares it off against not Nissan 370Z, but 370Z NISMO. We also think of Nissan GT-R at times, then recall that Supra is half the price. So where does all this leave the Toyota 86, at about half again the price of the Supra?

Named after Japan's bucket-list Hakone Turnpike, this one-year special edition features Hakone Green paint, 17-inch twisted-spoke bronze wheels and black spoiler outside, tan and black alcantara seats and trim inside, even embroidered-86-logo trunk carpeting. Based on the 86 GT, the 86 Hakone Edition comes with either 6-speed manual or automatic and a 205-hp (or 200 if automatic) 2.0L horizontally-opposed 4-cylinder aluminum boxer engine. Other GT-based features include projector-beam LED headlights, LED fogs, color-keyed power mirrors, chrome-tip dual exhaust, front fender vortex generators, steering wheel audio and display controls, dual-zone climate, heated seats, alarm, cruise, keyless entry-start and more.

All this actually costs less than the 86 GT itself (\$330 or \$650 less, manual/automatic). One reason at a glance is that the Hakone has 17-inch instead of 18-inch wheels—more sidewall for track day and savings for you, a win-win.

We usually start with a deep dive into controls and interfaces. With this one, the pure basics won



us over immediately. It's a manual, it's a sports car, it's affordable, and we just wanted to drive it. Hit those two pedals and go. Let's just have some fun!

The Toyota 86 Hakone quickly turns heads, including those of people driving cars specifically stated as competitors for the twice-the-price GR Supra. We suspect its paint job—together with its rich interior, kind of a richer 21st century deep metallic upgrade version of classic British Racing Green over tan—was a big part of its draw.

It's always interesting to see which vehicles react to what we're driving, as it varies so much and we have no dog in the race. The little 86 sparked aggressive behavior from serious performance cars, pricey electric sedans and large luxury SUVs the whole time we had it. Unassuming as we might expect it to be at just \$30,000, the Toyota 86 clearly exudes a powerful personality. We suspect it may also telegraph a freewheeling freedom not found in those others at three times the price.

At 205 hp and about 2800 pounds, the 86 is not wicked fast, but will satisfy you in an incredible

range of driving situations, just by virtue of its general quickness and nimble handling. In the Valley, we squirted through surface street and freeway lane opportunities readily, thanks to a well-spaced transmission, well executed suspension and handling, and of course its small size.

While Supra aims for those pricey Euro performance coupes, Toyota 86 may compare with the always highly-praised Mazda Miata—similar in purity, simplicity, reliability and affordability factors that add to its formula of just plain simple fun, but in this case a hardtop.

The Toyota 86 is a dang nice little sports car for \$30,000, and we knew we'd hate to see it go. On its last day here, we wanted one more good open road run—twisty for the basic sports car experience, but perhaps the Beeline Highway for some open highway at higher speeds and the feel of a longer drive. Those are probably not as often its primary mission, so we headed out to Bartlett Lake Road—plenty of twists, turns and elevation changes, great for general sportiness, with high horsepower always useful but not highway grade.

Elevation gains a thousand feet or more on the way up, too, and this little guy remained a champ at grabbing the best spot among a tremendous variety of vehicles and speeds, all while climbing. We found ourselves mostly using just 4th and 5th gears on this stretch—5th about as high as you need on surface streets, 4th about as low, other than stops—just enough shifting to have a good time while enjoying its maneuverability.

Bartlett Lake Road allows for more shifting, at your own pace, and the car gets very high marks. You could drive it back and forth on a road like that all day long, all weekend long, all week long and have a ball—time well spent.

At 61 percent the horsepower of a Supra (about the same as a first-gen Boxster) yet half the Supra's price, Toyota 86 is as fast as you'd expect, which is pretty great unless your expectations are unrealistic. Comparing the grins the two provide? That's more subjective, but this car's story actually is not all about the Supra. Toyota 86 predates the newest Supra by years, and while comparisons are compelling, it's more of a partnership. We suspect each will sell well in this expanded Toyota sports stable. Also, as noted in our last issue, the six-cylinder GR Supra 3.0 is upping its power from 335 to 382 horses next year, adding a 430-hp GT4 track model, and introducing a 255-hp 4-cylinder Supra 2.0 model, closing the power gap with Toyota 86—expansion that together can only generate more interest across the full range.

As our week ended, we could only say, "Wasn't that fun?!" Well-established, well-packaged, appropriately powered and nicely priced, Toyota 86 is guaranteed to put a smile on your face. ■



SPECIFICATIONS

SEATING	.....four
ENGINE	.....2.0L horizontally-opposed D-4S dual-injection 4-cyl boxer
HP/TORQUE	.....(manual) 205 hp / 156 lb-ft (w auto) 200 hp / 151 lb-ft
DRIVETRAIN	.....RWD
TRANSMISSION	.....6-spd manual (avail: 6-auto elect control w ECT-i [TX6A])
REAR DIFFERENTIAL	.....Torsen limited slip manual 4.30 / (auto 4.10)
SUSPENSION	.....F: sport-tuned indep MacPherson strut w strut tower bars, 18mm stblzr bar; R: sport-tuned indep multi-link, 12mm stblzr bar
STEERING	.....sport-calibrated elec pwr rack & pinion
BRAKES	.....pwr-assist vent disc: F: 11.6; R: 11.4
WHEELS	.....17x7.0 bronze alloy 5x100mm bolt pattern, 48mm inset
TIRES	.....215/4517 (87V AS or 87W summer)
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....166.7 / 101.2 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....36.1 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....4.9 in
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....37.1 / 35.0 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....41.9 / 29.9 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....not stated
WEIGHT	.....Hakone M/T 2799 lb (Hakone A/T 2841 lb)
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....premium unl / 13.2 gal
MPG	.....manual 21/28/24 (city/hwy/comb) (w auto 24/32/27 city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	.....\$29,870
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....955
TOTAL	.....\$30,825

2020 TOYOTA 86 LINEUP

86	.....6 MT	.....\$27,060
	.....6 ECTi auto	.....\$27,780
86 GT	.....6 MT	.....\$30,190
	.....6 ECTi auto	.....\$29,910
86 Hakone Edition	.....6 MT	.....\$29,870
	.....6 ECTi auto	.....\$30,590