

The core of the Mercedes-Benz sedan lineup we know today has roots spanning decades, from the first S-Class in 1972, to the creation of C-Class and E-Class in 1993, to the arrival of the A-Class on our shores in 2018. Each in turn replaced or evolved longstanding pure-numeric models, in sequence with a trend from the largest to the smallest.

The big S-Class has always sold well, generally from about 15,000 to about 30,000 units in the US, but of course has always been far pricier. C-Class and E-Class seem they would appeal to far more buyers by virtue of price, though people do flock to a luxury brand for its high end, creating many paradoxes in comparisons, varying considerably from year to year, especially over these past two highly volatile years.

Over a decade or two, though, C-Class has moved from sales roughly equal to E-Class, to

becoming the number one best-selling Mercedes-Benz sedan by a margin of about 50 percent. (A-Class is harder to read, as two of its three years have been the pandemic era, though it launched with solid sales.)

This is in line with industry trends. Largely gone are the days of full-size/midsize/compact papa-mama-baby-bear sizing, evolving into more sizes with more overlap and more flexible definitions. And sales of the smaller sizes are picking up dramatically with the masses. While E-Class stands for Executive (their midsize) and C-Class for compact, Mercedes is less likely to call the A-Class—which is front-drive-based, unusual for the brand—a subcompact and more likely to call it entry level, the turf formerly occupied by C-Class.

Introduced in 2021, the 2022 C-Class Sedan is an all-new fifth-generation build. (The pricier Coupe and Cabriolet still ride atop gen-four

bones till next year.) Styling evolutions are relatively subtle. Headlights and front intakes are slightly different and a prominent crease is removed for more of a slab side. The tail-light treatment, though, is changed considerably (and is less distinctive than it was).

Cabin space is increased, with elbow room up by almost an inch and headroom by half an inch, while rear passengers receive almost an inch and a half of increased kneeroom, a generous and meaningful gain.

C-Class gains a version of display and interface from the big S-Class, with driver-centric orientation and high levels of personalization available via a deep dive into settings.

Auto start-stop defeat (a must in our book) is now in the same bezel as the engine start button, eliminating the more typical need to hunt for it (though this is all behind the wheel, so be careful reaching for it while driving).

Power to weight is above average, while steering feel, in any drive mode, took a little getting used to. On the tech side, we had an alarming surprise when the car came to an abrupt dead stop while backing into a space. A desperate glance, as traffic bore down on us, showed “speed severely restricted; tap here to remove restriction.” Quite unusual.

They say it’s better to buy a less expensive house in a high-end neighborhood than to buy the fanciest house in a less expensive neighborhood—you can buy a small condo in Beverly Hills and enjoy the same atmosphere and amenities as someone in a mansion, and it holds its value far better than a bigger, newer house in the cheap end of town. It seems the same could be said in a vehicle lineup (see sedan base prices, lower right). As the best-seller in the Mercedes-Benz sedan lineup by far, the C-Class Sedan is a case in point.

Yesterday’s entry level car has easily and handsomely become today’s feature- and finish-laden mainstream model. ■



One style-over-engineering trend we would send back for further development are the shiny black membranes covering switches for many key functions. There is little or nothing to distinguish, by touch, what could be buttons, necessitating eyes-off-road at critical times. Even when parked and staring right at it, pressing M for memory would instead turn on the heated seats as often as not.

Globally, the C-Class has been Mercedes-Benz’s best-selling vehicle of any type for the past decade.

advanced entry

by Joe Sage



SPECIFICATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| ASSEMBLY | Bremen, Germany |
| ENGINE | 2.0L inline-4 turbo with 48-volt mild hybrid system, diecast alloy block and head |
| HP/TORQUE | 255 hp / 295 lb-ft |
| + EQ BOOST | up to 20 hp / 148 lb-ft |
| COMPRESSION RATIO | 10.0:1 |
| 0-TO-60 / TOP SPEED | est 6.0 sec / 130 mph |
| TRANSMISSION | 9G-TRONIC 9-sp auto |
| DRIVETRAIN | RWD |
| SUSPENSION | 4-wheel independent: F: 4-link; R: 5-arm multilink |
| STEERING | electromech pwr rack & pinion |
| BRAKES | na |
| WHEELS | 18-in multispoke, staggered: F: 7.5x18; R: 8.5x18 |
| TIRES | F: 225/45R18; R: 245/40R18 all-season extended mobility |
| LENGTH / WHEELBASE | 187.0 / 112.8 in |
| GROUND CLEARANCE | na |
| TURNING CIRCLE | 36.3 ft |
| HEADROOM (F/R) | 37.2 / 37.5 in |
| LEGROOM (F/R) | 41.7 / 36.0 in |
| CARGO CAPACITY | 12.6 cu.ft |
| WEIGHT | 3825 lb |
| FUEL / CAPACITY | premium unl / 17.4 gal |
| MPG | 25/35/29 (city/hwy/comb) |
| BASE PRICE | \$43,550 |
| PINNACLE TRIM | n/c |
| ILLUM SILL PANELS | 150 |
| SIRIUSXM (w trial period) | 350 |
| ACOUSTIC GLASS | 150 |
| ENHANCED AMBIENT LIGHTING | 250 |
| INDUCTIVE WIRELESS CHARGING | 200 |
| MULTIMEDIA PKG: MB nav w augmented video, heads-up display | 1700 |
| SOUND PKG: Burmester 3D surround sound system, online music streaming, sounds personalization | 650 |
| DA3 PKG: parking pilot, Parktronic w active parking assist, surround view system | 950 |
| DESTINATION CHARGE | 1050 |
| TOTAL | \$49,000 |

2022 C-CLASS LINEUP

| | | |
|------------------|-------------|----------|
| C 300 Sedan | RWD | \$43,550 |
| | 4MATIC | 45,550 |
| C 300 Coupe | RWD | 47,850 |
| | 4MATIC | 49,850 |
| C 300 Cabriolet | RWD | 55,400 |
| | 4MATIC | 57,400 |
| AMG C 43 Coupe | perf 4MATIC | 60,500 |
| C 43 Cabriolet | perf 4MATIC | 67,000 |
| AMG C 63 S Coupe | RWD | 79,200 |
| C 43 S Cabriolet | RWD | 87,100 |

2022 SEDAN BASE PRICES

| | |
|--------------------------|----------|
| A-Class | \$33,950 |
| C-Class | ▼ 43,550 |
| E-Class | 54,950 |
| S-Class | 111,100 |
| Mercedes-Maybach S-Class | 184,900 |
| Mercedes-EQ EQS electric | 102,310 |