

Alfa Romeo Tonale has three versions, two of which share the top spot. In fact, all three are close. The very few differences between our Veloce and the same-price Sport Speciale include wheels (19s on ours vs 20s on Sport Speciale) and leather on Veloce (black or, as on ours, new red) vs black-and-white Alcantara on Sport Speciale.

More significantly and more surprisingly, they have different suspensions, with an adaptive dual-stage valve system on the Veloce. That suspension, however, is available on Sport Speciale for just \$350. We're guessing it may be done this way to make up for the difference in wheel cost, as by that point perhaps their product planners, too, had become intrigued with matching the prices, so people could choose almost purely by flavor.

Differences in the base Sprint trim (just \$4,500 less) are also few—forgoing that suspension even as an option, a cloth interior, 18-inch wheels (with no option for 19s or 20s), and a couple of details

available only in packages (e.g. ambient interior lighting or hands-free power liftgate).

All have the same 268-hp 2.0-liter turbo-four, 9-speed automatic and AWD, all hit zero-to-60 in 6.5 seconds, and all are rated 21/29/24 mpg.

Now that we have you looking at prices, you see the most significant thing of all—this distinctively sexy Italian compact SUV is surprisingly affordable across the board. (Tonale shares its stable in the US with Alfa Romeo Stelvio, a bit larger, pricier and more powerful, while also delivering high value.)

Tonale has standout styling, in the very definition of the term—it stands out from the crowd, its sporty Alfa cues go back way into their particular history, and it comes together very distinctively.

Despite its compact size designation, the interior is roomy, with solid headroom (almost 39 inches up front, almost as much in the rear) and ditto legroom (almost 42 inches up front, 38 in the rear).

Best of all, we had a great time driving it.

We're sort of funny about modes, with a general philosophy that anything should be, well, perfect out of the box, no need for a variant. Factors such as fuel economy, or town versus open road, however, are grounds for their existence. While we often skip them, or just try them for the sake of a complete experience, the Alfa Tonale has such a sporty visual personality, we couldn't help but feel we actually wanted to get into modes, figuring this one was likely to have some additional characteristics we would enjoy unlocking.

And that was a solid idea. Unlike many, there are just two—D or N (no, not for Drive and Neutral, as familiar from shifters, but for Dynamic and Normal)—accessed by a prominent and convenient DNA dial. Best of all, characteristics are great both ways. (The A in DNA turns out to be a feature we'd been looking for in more conventional spots, auto start-stop defeat. The dial also has a center indicator for adaptive suspension status.)

Whichever mode we were in, it's quick enough, not inappropriately racy among our fellow travelers, a quick kick in the pants when the light turns green, and bears a humble little growl that's about the same whether accelerating or just driving (not the type that adds something artificially overdone).

Steering makes a 90-degree turn accurate and enjoyable, including from a dead start at the same such light. Any suspension is vital for two major roles—cushioning and steering geometry—and this generally did quite well with both.

D=Dynamic mode basically took us from feeling we could probably pretty well keep up with anything else on our highly pedigreed streets, to being certain of it. And the more we used it, the better it felt, especially launching onto the quickest streets or competitive freeways—delivering power, control, quickness and agility, along with acoustics.

As usual, we had specific comments on features, a handful of interface decisions we would have done differently. Of note were "smart" selection of the wrong media and its volume upon restart; mirrors that do not dip in reverse; headlight

high beams accessible only certain ways, no matter how urgent; certain driver assist features we hate to turn off but that were overdone or sometimes mistaken (fighting freeway ramp merges, for example); a rear wiper we had to park to turn off; basically a list of things like these. Some can be seen as personality tradeoffs—huge shift paddles blocking the stalks, or its engine start-stop button, cool and purposeful in style, prominently within the steering wheel, but due to rotation, likely not to be where you need it when you need it.

That DNA dial turned out to be a focal point. It can make everything just subtly tighter (enough so that we wished we had track conditions for a more specific back-to-back). But everything feels really precise in Dynamic mode.

Given the lovefest we felt while out and about, we started calling it our PDA dial. P could be performance or precision, D regular drive, and A as is. It could stand for performance drive alternatives, public display of affection, or both. A fun idea, but either way, Alfa Romeo Tonale's distinctive style will turn heads and put a smile on your face. ■



**SPECIFICATIONS**

ASSEMBLY .....	Pomigliano, Italy
SEATING CAPACITY .....	five
ENGINE/TRANS BUILD .....	Italy / USA
PARTS CONTENT .....	Italy 46% / US/Can 16%
ENGINE .....	2.0L inline-4 turbo
HP/TORQUE .....	268 hp / 295 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO .....	na
TRANSMISSION .....	9-spd auto / paddles
DRIVETRAIN .....	AWD
0-TO-60 / TOP SPEED .....	6.5 sec / 140 mph
SUSPENSION .....	F: MacPherson strut; R: Chapman strut
STEERING .....	elec power
BRAKES .....	Brembo: F: 13.53; R: 12.08
WHEELS .....	19x7.5 black aluminum
TIRES .....	235/45R19 99V M+S (ours: Falken ZIEX CT60 a/s)
GROUND CLEARANCE .....	6.1 in
TURNING CIRCLE .....	37.95 ft
LENGTH / WHEELBASE .....	178.0 / 103.8 in
HEADROOM (F/R) .....	38.8 / 38.2 in
LEGROOM (F/R) .....	41.7 / 38.0 in
CARGO CAPACITY .....	27.0 / 54.7 cu.ft
WEIGHT .....	3715 lb
TOW CAPACITY .....	(1500 kg) 3307 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY .....	.91 oct prem unl / 13.5 gal
MPG .....	24/29/21 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE .....	<b>\$36,995</b>
CUSTOMER PREFERRED PKG 23H (VELOCE): ambient lighting pkg, veloce alum door sills, pwr liftgate, Veloce dark fender badge, Tonale dark badge, glass-black window moldings, dual mode active suspension, 19x7.5 black alum wheels, alum paddle shifters, gloss red brake calipers w white script, hands-free power liftgate .....	4500
ACTIVE ASSIST PKG: auto-dim side mirror, active driving assist system, surround-view cameras, front/rear/side ParkSense .....	1250
POWER MOONROOF .....	1500
BLACK ROOF .....	.95
PREMIUM AUDIO: Harman Kardon .....	750
DESTINATION CHARGE .....	3250
<b>TOTAL .....</b>	<b>\$48,430</b>

**2026 ALFA ROMEO TONALE LINEUP**

Sprint .....	\$36,995
Veloce .....	▼ 41,495
Sport Speciale .....	41,495

# PDA in its DNA

## Love flows wherever it goes.

BY JOE SAGE

