

# ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

VOLUME 18 NUMBER 3

MAY-JUNE 2019

2020  
Jeep  
Gladiator



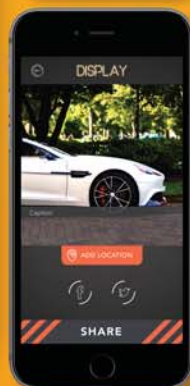
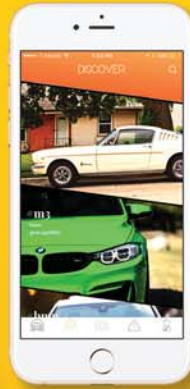
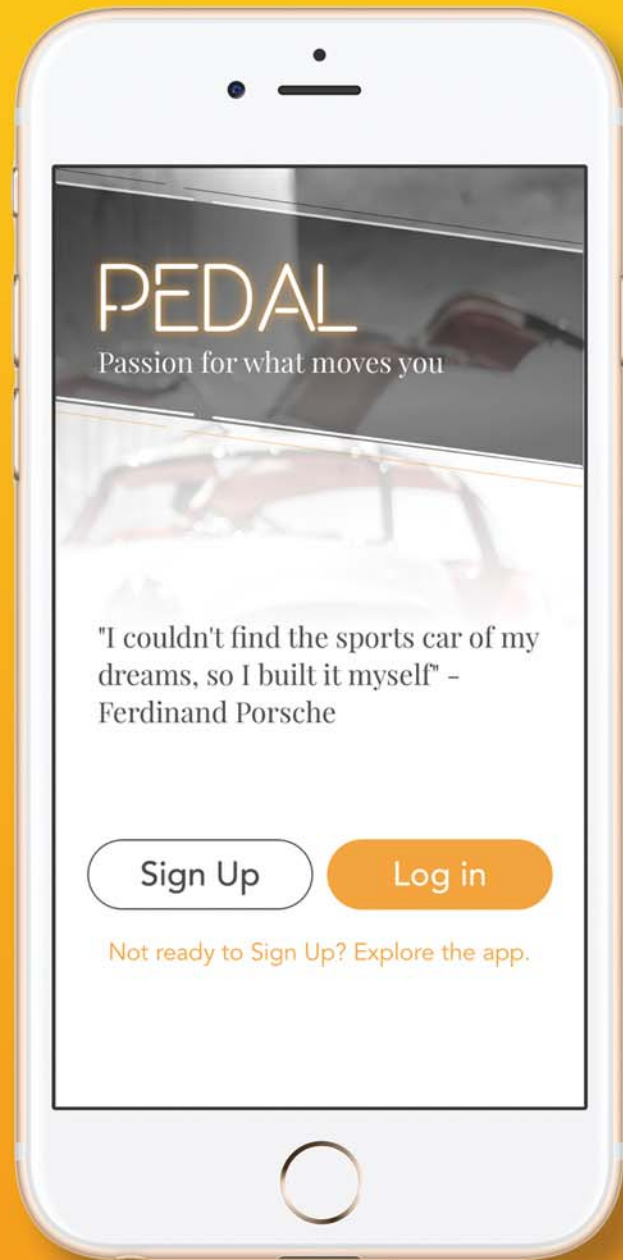
**NEW JEEP PICKUP  
AMG 53 EQ BOOST LINEUP  
NIKOLA MOTOR LANDS IN ARIZONA  
GMC-INFINITI-KIA-LEXUS-MAZDA-SUBARU-TOYOTA-VW  
WAVE CAVE ROAD TRIP / NASCAR RECAP / AND MUCH MORE**

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# ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

## news & features May-June 2019

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**COVER:** Billed as 100 percent truck, 100 percent Jeep, the new 2020 Jeep Gladiator marks FCA's re-entry into the expanding midsize pickup realm with a truck that promises to appeal to multiple avid vehicle ownership groups.



Tyson Hugie

## START YOUR ENGINES : FROM THE PUBLISHER

Change is good, they say (they generalize a lot). Some change is evolutionary, some revolutionary, some surely a bit of both. There is always evolutionary change in people's vehicle preferences, some cyclical, some tied more to fashion than function—even when function becomes the fashion, as it largely is right now, with compact and midsize crossovers and SUVs dominating sales (they say if you want proof this is the new norm, just ask a four-year-old to draw a car), along with perennially top-selling pickup trucks.

This is represented in this issue with pickups and utilities large, medium and small, countered by sexy coupes and sedans, as well as convertibles large and small (themselves proof of both cyclical change and consistency, as there was a time when a convertible was hard to find, till the Mazda Miata—one of the droptops in this issue—came along).

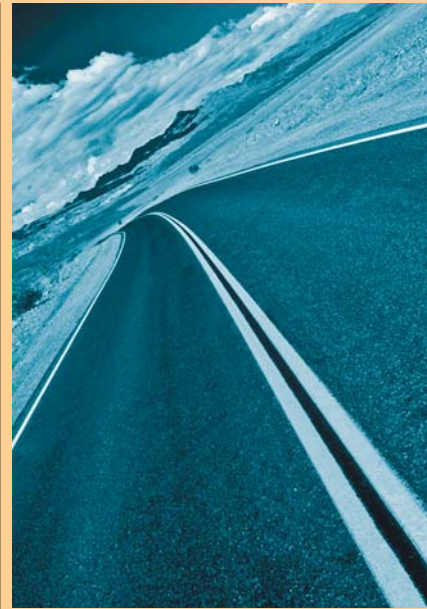
Evolutionary and cyclical change are both represented by our cover vehicle, the new Jeep Gladiator, as midsize pickup choices grow exponentially, while Jeep pickups themselves mark a return from a long and storied past. Technical change arrives in sometimes subtle ways, sometimes dramatic, with varying degrees of surface visibility. The remarkable EQ Boost powerplants in the series of Mercedes-AMG 53 vehicles in this issue mark breakthrough technology beneath the skin, which most people may never see, while Nikola Motor Company's hydrogen-electric and EV semi-trucks and powersports craft will make a very visible splash wherever they go (by both their style and notably their silent running). Nikola particularly brings change to Arizona, as it locates its clean manufacturing facility and hydrogen fuel operations here, anchoring an expanding industrial area.

While you might say the ocean changes continually but is also constant—the tide goes in and out, waves form and crash, but it'll do it all again tomorrow—**Tyson Hugie** takes us on a day road trip into the Superstition Mountains, hiking to a spot where the waves are made of rock, an ocean even more durable than the wet one: the Wave Cave.

Enjoy the ride!

**Joe Sage** - Publisher/ Executive Editor

# ARIZONA DRIVER MAGAZINE



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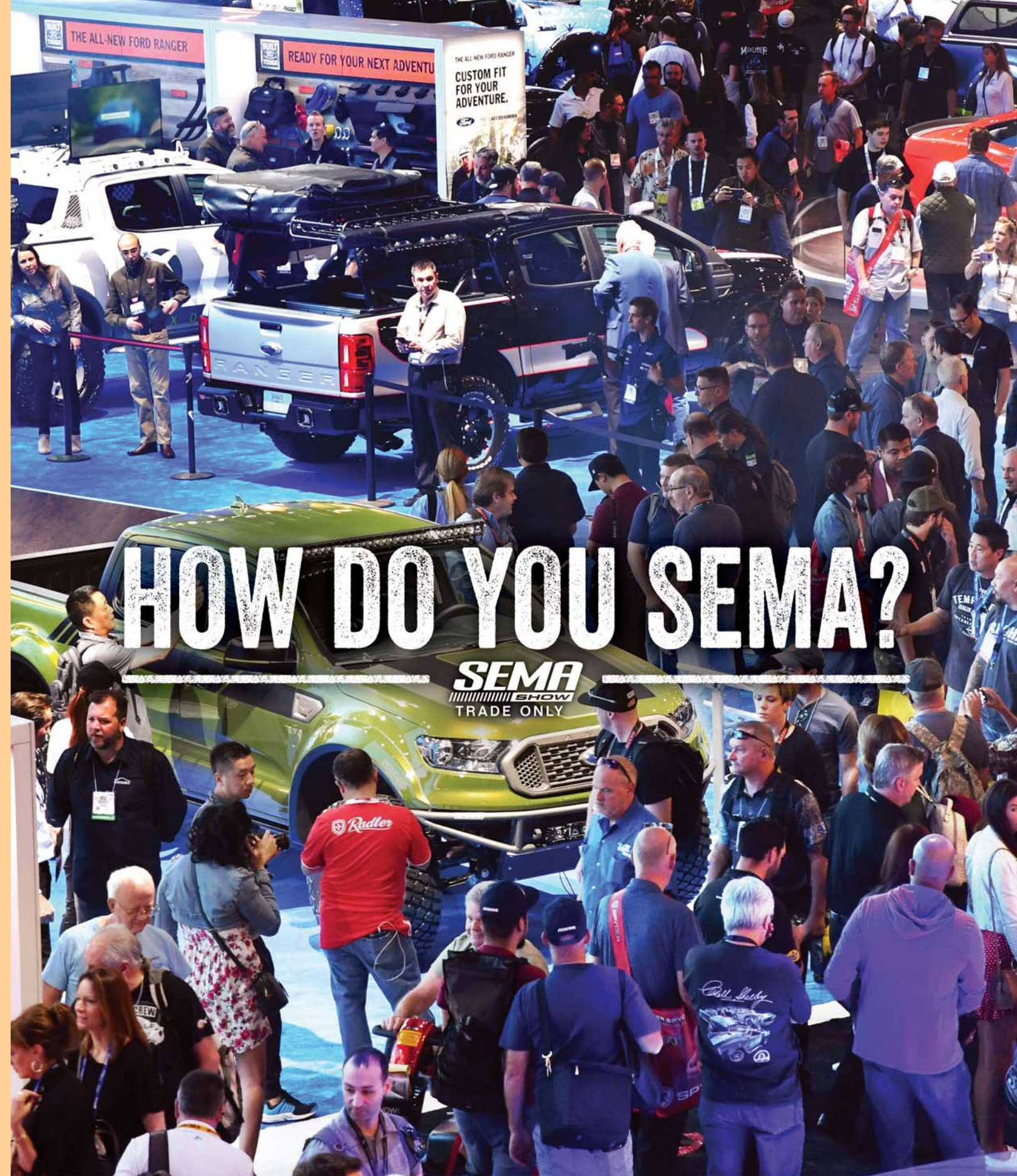
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# Torva

## Fine Art of Fine Automobiles



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2019 Corvette Grand Sport Indianapolis 500 Pace Car



▼ The 2019 **Corvette** Grand Sport will serve as the Official Pace Car for the 2019 Indianapolis 500 presented by Gainbridge, leading 33 drivers to the green flag on May 26 for the 103rd running of the legendary race. It marks the 16th time a Corvette has served as the Pace Car, starting in 1978, and the 30th time a Chevrolet has led the field dating back to 1948, when a 1948 Fleetmaster Six convertible paced the race. No other brand or model has served as the 500 Pace Car more than Chevrolet and Corvette, respectively. Indianapolis 500 fans also will see 33 2019 Corvette Stingrays on the roads of central Indiana and in the IPL 500 Festival Parade on May 25 in downtown Indianapolis, as the cars are provided to regional business leaders and dignitaries, serving a promotional role for the race (as well as for Chevrolet and Corvette). This will be the first time since 2007 that matching Corvettes are serving as the 500 Pace Car and festival cars. The 2019 Corvette Grand Sport Pace Car features Long Beach Red Metallic Tintcoat with unique GM Design Indy 500 decal package; full-length Blade Silver dual racing stripes; LT1 6.2L V8 DI aluminum engine with 460 hp and 465 lb-ft of torque; 8-speed paddle-shift automatic; dry-sump oil system; performance suspension with Magnetic Ride Control; Brembo carbon ceramic brakes; Grand Sport aluminum wheels (19-inch front, 20-inch rear); Carbon Flash painted carbon fiber ground effects package; competition sport bucket seats; and performance data recorder. The

Corvette Grand Sport Pace Car can accelerate from 0-60 mph in 3.6 seconds and offers an available cornering capability of 1.2 g with Z06 advanced aerodynamic components. Chevrolet has a storied history with Indianapolis Motor Speedway, as the brand was founded in 1911, the same year as the inaugural 500-mile race, and company co-founder Louis Chevrolet, along with brothers Arthur and Gaston, competed in early Indy 500 races, with



World Surf League (WSL) Jeep brand ambassadors

Arthur competed in the first race and Gaston winning in 1920. Eight drivers with Chevrolet engines have collectively won the Indy 500 ten times: Rick Mears, Emerson Fittipaldi, Arie Luyendyk, Al Unser Jr, Helio Castroneves, Tony Kanaan, Juan Pablo Montoya and Will Power. Power drove the No. 12 Verizon Team Penske Chevrolet to victory in the INDYCAR Grand Prix and the 102nd Indianapolis 500 presented by

Gainbridge last May, the first time a driver has swept both events in the same year. Chevrolet also was on the pole for both races, with Power leading the way in the INDYCAR Grand Prix and Ed Carpenter taking the top spot for the Indy 500. Team Chevy also has won the NTT IndyCar Series manufacturer championship in six of the last seven seasons.

▼ World Surf League (WSL) athletes Filipe Toledo and Nikki Van Dijk join Jordy Smith and Malia Manuel as **Jeep®** brand ambassadors, supporting a Jeep-WSL partnership for the 2019 competition season, as Jeep continues in its role as official and exclusive global automotive partner of the WSL Championship Tour and naming rights partner to the Jeep Leader Program for the Men's and Women's Championship Tour. Content in the partnership includes the "Make A Wave" initiative, in which each athlete ambassador has partnered with Jeep and a unique organization that each is passionate about, donating their time and resources to help make a difference in their communities. Posts across Facebook

and Instagram will follow the four Olympic WSL-hopeful athletes' adventures in the water and on the road. Jeep is the first-ever exclusive automotive partner of the WSL. The partnership, first announced in May 2015, has been renewed as part of a multi-year deal, running through 2020, the year surfing will make its debut on the world stage at the Olympic Games in Tokyo. On-site activations throughout the

year will showcase Jeep brand as "the ultimate surf vehicles," supporting WSL event operations, as well as engaging fans on the beach and those watching around the world during Championship Tour events.



Abarth 70th Anniversary

Jeep will also highlight its product portfolio globally via WSL's geo-targeted digital and linear media solutions.

▼ 2019 is an important milestone for the Italian brand with the scorpion badge, as it turns 70. When **Abarth & C** was founded by Carlo Abarth and racing driver Guido Scagliarini on March 31, 1949, in Bologna, Italy, Carlo's astrological sign, Scorpio, was chosen as the new company logo, and the legend of the scorpion was born. Carlo Abarth's career started with motorcycles, at the age of twenty, quickly racking up wins and soon building his first custom bike under the Abarth brand. An accident forced him off two-wheeled competition, so he moved to sidecars, which he made famous in exploits such as winning a race against the Orient Express, until a second accident in 1939 forced him to abandon racing completely. But four wheels beckoned. In 1949, the first vehicle produced was the 204 A Roadster, based on the Fiat 1100, which won the 1100 Sport Italian championship and Formula 2 racing title. To supplement racing, he began production of his now famous tuning kits to increase power, speed and acceleration in mass-produced cars, with customers including Alfa Romeo, BMW, Ford, Jaguar, Lancia, Mercedes-Benz, Porsche and Volvo. The exhausts in those kits became an Abarth hallmark, and by 1962, with a staff of 375, Abarth & C made 257,000 exhausts, 65 percent for export markets. In 1956, the Fiat Abarth 750 designed by

Bertone broke the 24-hour endurance and speed record at Monza, then racked up more records, spawning two Zagato versions: the Fiat Abarth 750 Zagato and 750 GT Zagato. In 1958, Abarth transformed

the new little Fiat 500 to maximum performance, leading to a partnership with Fiat, who committed to rewarding Abarth financially based on the number of victories and records the team achieved. This challenge led to more than 10,000 track victories, with 10 world records and 133 international records, and the relationship continued for decades. The Abarth badge appeared on a small number of Fiat special editions in the 1980s and '90s, includ-



Arkonik DECADE Defender D110

ing the Strada and Stilo. In 2008 the brand was relaunched with a new motorsports enthusiast lineup: Abarth Grande Punto, Abarth 500, and tuning kits for both, as well as racing versions. New editions have continued since then. Abarth's fan base includes some 110,000 members registered to the Abarth Scorpionship community in Europe. In 2018, over 1,000 owners and fans gathered at Rockingham for the an-

nual Abarth Day. In honor of the brand's 70th anniversary, all Abarth 595s produced starting April 2019 will be identified by a special 70th Anniversary badge. The 595 Competizione's standard seats will also be embroidered with a 70th Anniversary logo. And making its return in 2019 is the Abarth 595 Esseesse, which made its debut at the Geneva Motor Show and will be on sale in the UK soon.

▼ With over 200 vehicles exported to North America, **Arkonik** balances authentic restoration with modern day comforts. To celebrate their ten-year anniversary in 2017, the team conceived DECADE. Fast forward eighteen months, and they are unveiling this completely restored and reimaged one-of-a-kind Defender, with gold accents (including hinges, KBX Signature mesh grille and wing-top air intakes) atop custom gold fleck Santorini Black bodywork, and hand-painted pinstripes along the flanks and under a bulging Puma hood. The theme continues inside with luxurious Ruskin Inside Supersoft black leather with gold fluting and stitching on Recaro Cross Sportster CS heated seats. Built from a 1991 Defender, the vehicle has a 3.5-liter gasoline V8, 5-speed manual transmission, gold-lip Kahn 1945 18-inch alloys with BFGoodrich T/A KO2 tires,

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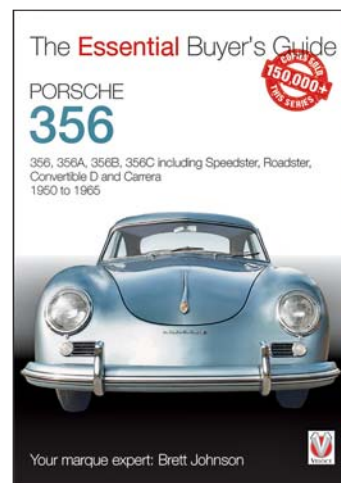
▼ **Aston Martin** confirmed 23 drivers participating in the 2019 Aston Martin Racing (AMR) Driver Academy, a season-long initiative launched last September to fast-



track talent and stimulate healthy competition within the AMR customer network. Since its announcement, the AMR Driver Academy received a large number of applications from drivers around the world, age 17 to 25, signed to customer teams racing Aston Martin Vantage GT3 or GT4s this season. From among these, a panel including three-time Le Mans 24 Hours winner Darren Turner (GB), works FIA World Endurance Championship drivers Jonny Adam (GB) and Maxime Martin (BEL), as well as Aston Martin Racing team principal Paul Howarth, selected those who will compete for an Aston Martin Racing Junior contract in 2020. The process included comprehensive interviews with the judges at Aston Martin Racing's headquarters in Banbury, near Oxford. The candidates were put through stringent exams, including simulator tests at Base Performance and a fitness assessment with Boomerang Pro Fitness. The result is a highly competitive field of drivers with representation from 12 countries including Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, India, Luxembourg, Monaco, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. The Academy drivers will continue to be assessed through the year, based on on-track performance in their chosen GT3 and GT4 championships, as well as off-track assessments. They will also attend seminars that focus on driver performance, simulator work, engineering and technical analysis and marketing and PR. Each driver will have access to nominated

mentors, including Aston Martin's newly-promoted Junior drivers Charlie Eastwood and Andrew Watson, also both on the judging panel. At season's close, the judges will decide on a winner based on pace, consistency, technical feedback, teamwork, strategy, fitness, PR and commercial awareness, and their overall approach.

▼ Advances in **battery technologies**—capacity increased by over 50kWh across all plug-in hybrid/battery electric vehicles (PHEVs/BEVs), and 150+ kW batteries now with fast-charging capabilities—are creating a parallel need for a battery thermal management system (BTMS) to ensure high-



er mile range, longer life and superior battery performance. While passive thermal management, such as air-cooled systems, will be the key technology for HEVs, liquid cooling and active thermal management will be popular among PHEVs and BEVs. Frost & Sullivan's recent analysis, *Global Analysis of Electric Battery Market and Battery Thermal Management System for Electric and Hybrid Vehicles*, Forecast to

2025, provides in-depth analyses of BTMS and highlights the current and future products of manufacturers. The study covers the markets of Europe (Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom); China, South Korea, Japan; and North America (specifically the US).

▼ Dr Brett Johnson of Indiana spent twelve years in the Porsche parts business and seven years practicing veterinary medicine. Now a writer, he has published several notable books on Porsches including *The 911 & 912 Porsche, a Restorer's Guide to Authenticity* and *The 356 Porsche, A Restorer's Guide to Authenticity*, which has sold over 45,000 copies worldwide. If you'd love to buy an original **Porsche 356**, but need more expertise, his *356 Porsche* book is the complete guide to finding the best example available of the classic rear-engined Porsche 356 for a price you can afford. Insight from real ownership experience is coupled with technical knowledge, resulting in the first dedicated guidebook for potential buyers of the Porsche 356, including an inspection checklist that buyers can use when viewing a car, photos of key areas to check and known issues for each model with an overview of key specifications and potential upgrades. Market

and value data are also supplied. The author aims to arm a prospective buyer with enough knowledge and insight to be able to assess any Porsche 356 and quickly conclude whether to make a purchase. Paperback, 7.67 x 5.47 inches 64 pages, 79 pictures ISBN: 978-1-787112-96-4 UPC: 6-36847-01296-0 \$25.00 (US), \$32.99 (CAN) ■

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# CAPABILITY AND VERSATILITY

## OPEN AIR CLOSED CABIN DESERT RUNNING ROCK CHALLENGING MUD TACKLING LOAD HAULING NEW MIDSIZE JEEP PICKUP

BY JOE SAGE

The midsize pickup market has exploded seemingly overnight from just a couple to a crowd. We easily might have thought Ram would be next. But Fiat Chrysler has instead come up with an end run, by making their first contemporary midsize pickup entry a Jeep.

We're big fans of end runs, an element of surprise as they join the party, and a way to stand out from the crowd. The new Jeep Gladiator inherently stands out—a midsize pickup in its own right, with that distinctive gotta-have-it Jeep character.

Midsize pickups haven't always just sprung from full-size trucks. Nor have 4x4 pickups. Decades ago—but in the modern era that developed nuclear technology, the first supercomputers, and sent men to the moon—a 4x4 pickup was a rare thing. But farmers and ranchers, uranium prospectors, building contractors and outdoor sportsmen needed just such a beast in the mud and rough country. And Jeep was there, way ahead of the curve. All those computers and spaceships were post-World War II civilian dividends, and so was the first Jeep 4x4 pickup, in 1947. Then, as now, it was all about utility—which was easily adapted to flat-out fun.

Jeep, with its deep well of rugged platforms and top-capability 4x4 drivetrains, has in fact had many

a pickup over the years—that first truck, Willys Forward-Control models, an earlier Gladiator/J-Series, the Scrambler and the Comanche, sometimes with multiple trucks overlapping—through 1992.

A Jeep Gladiator pickup concept was revealed on the auto show circuit in late 2004 and early 2005, not slated for production but generating high hopes and lots of anticipation. The concept had a cab-and-a-half build, but its Wrangler styling, open top and removable doors were among features that gave solid hints of the future. Early buzz took a different turn at Moab during Easter Jeep Safari Week in 2012, where a Wrangler-chassis J-12 with styling cues based on the '60s-70s Gladiator/J-Series was among the concepts.

At the 2018 LA Auto Show last November, the wraps came off the final 2020 Jeep Gladiator.

With anticipation now running red hot among Jeep fans and truck fans, we hopped a flight to Sacramento for a deep dive and serious hands-on time before the truck's public release.

Jeep is all about that juncture between fun and utility. The Jeep development team takes your fun extremely seriously, with "authenticity" their guiding light. They won't apply their badge to a new product unless it totally fits that vision. They also

know trucks—both from Jeep's heritage and from being cousins to the Ram Trucks division—so it wouldn't suit the mission to just add a pickup box to a Wrangler. The new Gladiator is a clean-sheet design and build. Styling is certainly reminiscent of Wrangler (though the truck's grille is larger, and there are two cameras up front). It's an unmistakable nod to brand and heritage, but it's an all-new vehicle, top to bottom, inside and out, and stem to stern. Thus their slogan for the new Jeep Gladiator: it's 100 percent truck and 100 percent Jeep.

If you're a full-size pickup shopper, especially in the 150-1500 and related class, you already know two things have become nearly impossible to find: an 8-foot bed or a manual transmission.

Great news—Gladiator offers your choice of an 8-speed automatic or 6-speed manual transmission (both with overdrive) across the current full lineup. (A 3.0L EcoDiesel arrives in 2020, automatic-only.)

Evolving consumer tastes have also brought crew cabs to a majority of pickups, with the 8-foot bed relegated to a couple of full-size single cab trucks, or the biggest heavy duties, often duallies. Midsize pickup bed length varies, but all are shorter than that. On the Gladiator, a crew cab, the bed is 60.3 inches long (five feet plus a hair), which

When it comes to pickups, this is not Jeep's first rodeo. Gladiator's many forebears include this 1960 Willys Jeep Pickup (1947-65), 1957 Willys Jeep Forward Control FC-150 (FC-150/170, 1957-65), 1968 Jeep Gladiator/J-Series (Gladiator 1963-71, J-Series 1971-87), 1982 Jeep CJ-8 Scrambler (1981-85) and 1986 Jeep Comanche (MJ, 1986-92), at right top to bottom.

suits its typical purpose as an outdoor recreation tool—perfect for camping, climbing, ski or fishing gear, or two dirt bikes (see cover photo). There was much discussion during the truck's development about the best build material for the bed—aluminum? composite?—but they stuck with steel. It has extra utility touches throughout—from swivel-flat (non-snagging) tie-downs, to bed lights, to a versatile three-position damped tailgate, to an optional 120-volt power source, to a roll-up tonneau cover. The team also addressed an issue that has generated negative feedback on other trucks: someone of reasonable height (even sub-six-feet) can reach over the side of the box to the base of the bed from ground level to grab low-lying contents.

Connectivity and functionality carry through up front, varying among four trim levels from 3.5- to 7-inch LED binnacle display and 5- to 7-inch or available 8.4-inch top-center touchscreen with gen-four Uconnect. Details of the instrument panel are derived from key elements of prior vehicles, set up with emphasis across the wide upper area for an open sweep. Controls include glove- and bumpy-trail-friendly physical knobs for audio and climate, and a sturdy shift-on-the-fly transfer case lever. Finishes include real metal and rubberized surfaces for touch-and-grab spots.

The cab's construction is of key importance to

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### SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY PLANT.....	Toledo, Ohio;
ENGINE.....	Saltillo South, Coahuila, Mexico
VEHICLE CLASS / SEATS.....	midsize pickup / 2/3
BUILD.....	longitudinal front engine, 4WD, ladder frame, open steel/aluminum body
ENGINE.....	24v 3.6L Pentastar V6, chain DOHC, sequential multiport electronic FI, aluminum deep-skirt block, alum alloy heads
HP/TORQUE.....	285 hp / 260 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO.....	11.3:1
ALTERNATOR.....	180A standard; 220A (prem audio pkg); 240A (HD, off-road)
BATTERY.....	650 CCA standard; 700 CCA (HD)
TRANSMISSION.....	850RE 8-spd auto overdrive; 6-spd manul w overdrive; multi-rail system
TRANSFER CASE.....	2 high, 4 high, neutral, 4 lo; Sport, Overland: low range 2.72:1; Rubicon: 4.0:1
AXLE RATIO.....	Sport, Overland: 3.73; Sport, Overland (Sport Max Tow): 4.10; Rubicon: 4.10
AXLES.....	3rd gen Dana heavy-duty; F: Sport, Overland: open diff; Rubicon: Tru-Lok electronic locking
R: Sport, Overland: open w avail Trac-Lok	
Rubicon: Tru-Lok electronic locking	
SUSPENSION ..F/R: solid axle, link coil, leading arms, track bar, coil springs, stblzr bar;	
Rubicon: electronic sway-bar disconnect;	
SHOCKS: Sport, Overland: gas monotube shocks w multi-tuned valve (MTV) tech;	
Rubicon: high-pressure gas Fox alum monotube w front hydraulic rebound stop;	
STEERING.....	electro-hydraulic power; 13.3:1 3.24 turns lock-to-lock
BRAKES.....	F: 12.9x.86 vented, 2 twin-piston floating caliper; R: 13.6x.86 vented, 2 single-piston floating caliper
LENGTH / WHEELBASE.....	218.0 / 137.3 in
HEADROOM (F/R).....	soft top: 42.8 / 42.8 in hard top: 40.8 / 40.8 in
LEGROOM (F/R).....	41.2 / 38.3 in
BOX LENGTH.....	60.3 in / tailgate open 81.3 in
CARGO WIDTH...lift gate 56.8 / btw whls 44.8 in	
BOX HEIGHT.....	lift gate: 33.9 in liftover height: 29.7 in load floor height-axle: 33.3 in open tailgate to ground: 34.8 in
WHEELS.....	Sport: low gloss black 17x7.5 Sport S: cast alum high gloss silver 17x7.5 Overland: alum high gloss granite 18x7.5 Rubicon: alum high gloss granite 17x7.5
TIRES.....	Sport: 245/75R17 Overland: 255/70R18 Rubicon: LT285/70R17
TURNING CIRCLE.....	44.5 ft, Rubicon 44.8 ft
APPROACH / BREAKOVER / DEPARTURE:	
Sport, Overland: 40.8 / 18.4 / 25°	
Rubicon: 43.4 / 20.3 / 26°	
GROUND CLEARANCE.....	10 in / Rubicon 11.1 in
WATER FORDING ..(carpet removbl) up to 30 in	
WEIGHT.....	Sport, Sport S auto: 4672 lb Sport, Sport S manual: 4650 lb Overland auto: 4742 lb Overland manual: 4720 lb Rubicon auto: 5072 lb Rubicon manual: 5050 lb
TOW CAPACITY.....	Sport: 4000-7650 lb Overland: 4000-6000 lb Rubicon: 4500-7000 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY.....	87 oct reg unl / 22 gal
MPG.....	auto 17/22/19 (city/hwy/comb) manual 16/23/19 (city/hwy/comb)
PRICING.....	Sport.....\$33,545 Sport S.....36,745 Overland.....40,395 Rubicon.....43,545

both its character and functionality—foldable windshield and removable doors (with tools included to make both easy), and standard Sunrider folding soft top (with sunroof) with three other soft or hard tops available. The soft top can be configured multiple ways—folded back with the windshield down, sides removed but top in place for a “safari roof,” or removed completely. Yes, its Jeep character leans heavily toward Wrangler, reinforcing its distinctive spot among the midsize pickups.

The cab is steel, with aluminum for the fenders, hood, doors and windshield frame. Storage behind and under the rear seats totals 33 cu.ft. (a best-in-class claim), with optional lockable bins available—adaptable from five smaller bins to space for long items—for those who park in the middle of nowhere with open roof and no doors, or removable to bring gear into camp. Eight-speaker audio is standard, with a 552-watt nine-speaker Alpine system with all-weather subwoofer available, as well as a removable Bluetooth speaker.

For our drives between downtown Sacramento and an off-road course in the Sierra foothills—a typical combination of city streets, urban freeways, Interstate and considerable two-lane blue highways, all with notable elevation changes, all in all much like Arizona—we took the Gladiator Overland one way and the Sport S the other. The experience is similar to that in the new Wrangler JL, in that they’ve built an extreme off-roader that also has nice, modern highway manners. Gladiator’s sophisticated suspension—picking up elements from the Ram 1500—is optimized and adaptable for top performance on- and off-road, both. Gladiator has

the added advantage of a wheelbase about 19 inches longer than a Wrangler Four-Door and 23 inches longer than Grand Cherokee.

Our off-road sessions were all in the Gladiator Rubicon. Jeep had commandeered a huge ranch in the foothills for this, where they can blend a custom-engineered course into natural surroundings, ensuring everything from the vehicle’s maximum extreme approach, breakover and departure angles to the minimum width clearance of the Rubicon Trail itself, with gravel, dirt, mud and rocky climbs all incorporated. Wild spring storms had delivered plenty of mud on even the tamer stretches. Prepping for our drive is an enormous undertaking, creating an equal to the challenging Lyman Trail at FCA’s Chelsea (Michigan) Proving Grounds but in a new location—vital because, as they’ve reminded us, this pickup is 100 percent Jeep.

(In case you wondered, they will return it all to its pristine state when we’re done, unless, as was the case here for some of the trails, the rancher prefers to keep some of it in place for new permanent access to their own Back 90.)

Rubicon is the tour de force Gladiator for off-roaders—or anyone. It includes stock 33-inch OD tires below fenders lifted by two inches, Tru-Lok electronic remote locking differentials front and rear, electronically-controlled front sway bar disconnect, Fox shocks, and a heavy winch-capable metal front bumper with removable end caps,

The general challenges presented on our off-road course are as tough as those on a dedicated Wrangler course, though the specs accommodated are a little different—approach angles are al-

most identical for the Gladiator, while breakover is about two degrees less on Gladiator than on the Wrangler Four-Door, and departure angles are notably different (about 36 degrees on a Wrangler Four-Door and 25-26 on the Gladiator, the natural result of motorcycle-capable bed length. Ground clearance, on the other hand, is three-tenths of an inch more on the Gladiator, up to 11.1 inches on the Rubicon. Gladiator Rubicon also has a 30-inch water fording depth, with removable carpet and sealed electronics to keep it penalty-free.

One feature that will spoil even the most jaded off-roader is Gladiator’s front-facing off-road camera, an option on Rubicon only. No longer need you wonder how your best buddy or significant other is doing, standing in the middle of a rocky trail way down below, waving you forward but blocked from your view. And it’s all the handier if you’re out there on your own. The camera view is accessed through Off-Road Pages in the main display.

We also broke away from the off-road course for some tow time—with sizable boats and Air-stream trailers to try out (see photo below)—back on the main two-lane roads. The Gladiator’s longer wheelbase is also a plus here, delivering smooth, stable behavior at highway speeds. Its tow capacity ranges as high as 7650 pounds (another best-in-class, as is its 1600-pound 4x4 payload). This is also best within the Jeep lineup, with only the Grand Cherokee coming close (at 7200 pounds 4x4 or 7400 pounds for a rear-drive diesel, while the Wrangler Four-Door tows 3500 pounds).

We drove preproduction builds in California, but the new 2020 Jeep Gladiator will be rolling off the



assembly line and arriving at dealerships by the time you read this. Expect to see them in traffic (or at the lake or on the trail) at any time.

Jeep always brings intriguing concepts to the Moab Easter Jeep Safari, and this year, they concentrated on dream variants of the new Gladiator (see the next feature in this issue).

There are a couple of vehicle comparos coming up that the Jeep Gladiator is likely to be entered in: “Mudfest,” the NWAPA Outdoor Activity Vehicle of the Year Awards on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State, which we’ll be participating in; and an Off-Road Invitational with the new Texas Motor Press Association (which we may or may not be participating in). We have a hunch the new Jeep Gladiator may do well in both. Stay tuned!

Gladiator brings a double whammy to the marketplace, appealing to two of the most loyal groups in the vehicle landscape: Jeep owners and pickup owners. Its success seems assured. ■



# Archaeology meets crystal ball

JEEP AND MOPAR ROLL HERITAGE INTO CONCEPTS BASED ON THE NEW JEEP GLADIATOR PICKUP

(Top row, left to right)  
Jeep Gladiator Gravity,  
Jeep Wayout, Jeep Flatbill.

(Front row, left to right)  
Jeep JT Scrambler,  
Jeep Five-Quarter, Jeep J6.



It doesn't take long for engineers, outfitters and enthusiasts to start thinking about what they could do with a new vehicle—and Jeep has plenty of all of the above right in-house. The team always brings special builds to Moab Easter Jeep Safari each spring; this year's batch of six were based on the all-new Jeep Gladiator midsize pickup.

**Jeep® Wayout** is an overland concept utilizing Gladiator's best-in-class payload to accommodate a full rooftop tent with integrated ladder and 270-degree custom canopy, with amber LED lighting for after-dark setup. Its body-armored exterior is in stock Gator Green paint. A 12,000-lb winch, two auxiliary fuel tanks, an ARB onboard air system and a two-inch lift kit get you off the grid.



Jeep® Wayout

**Jeep Flatbill** is a nod to desert motocross culture, a great toy-hauler with vented carbon hood, high-clearance flares, and a skid plate and shortened front bumper for an extreme approach angle. The tailgate has been removed and dedicated slide-out wheel ramps installed, making it easy to access and load an included pair of MX bikes. The floor inside is bedliner-finished.



Jeep Flatbill

**Jeep Five-Quarter** (a nod to past one-and-a-quarter-ton Jeep trucks) is a resto-mod incorporating a 1968 Jeep M-715 military vehicle, a vintage/modern showpiece atop a modern chassis and 4x4 drivetrain. Front sheet metal was replaced with carbon fiber, and a 6-foot aluminum bed has water-jet-cut panels and wood slats. The soft top is dropped 3.5", and rocker panels are replaced by body-length rock rails. The engine is an over-700hp 6.2L supercharged Hellcrate HEMI® V8.



Jeep Five-Quarter

**Jeep J6**, in custom Metallic Brilliant Blue paint evoking the 1978 Jeep Honcho, is a single-cab two-door with 6-foot bed (a foot longer than standard) and the wheelbase of a Wrangler 4-Door. J6 is a showpiece for prototypes—body-color spray-in bedliner, 2.25" steel sport/roll bar with four 4800-lumen LED lights, 37-inch spare carrier, 2-inch stinger bar for the Rubicon front bumper, and more.



Jeep J6

**Jeep JT Scrambler** is a retro remix of Jeep Performance Parts and 1980s CJ8 Scrambler style, down to its Punk'N Metallic Orange and Nacho stripes, vintage amber freedom top, bronze 17-inch slot wheels and Katzkin Amaretto Brown leather interior with orange stitching. The engine adds a Mopar cold-air intake and cat-back exhaust.



Jeep JT Scrambler

**Jeep Gladiator Gravity**, in Punk'N Metallic Orange, is a rock-climber built with ready-to-order-at-launch Jeep Performance Parts from Mopar—bed-mounted cross rails and cargo carrier basket to store rock-climbing ropes, carabiners, helmets and shoes, plus a Mopar/Decked bed storage system with lockable cargo space through dual sliding drawers, still allowing for storage on top in the bed area. Gladiator's open-air potential is optimized with 2" steel tube doors, a mesh sunbonnet and windshield tie-downs. ■



Jeep Gladiator Gravity

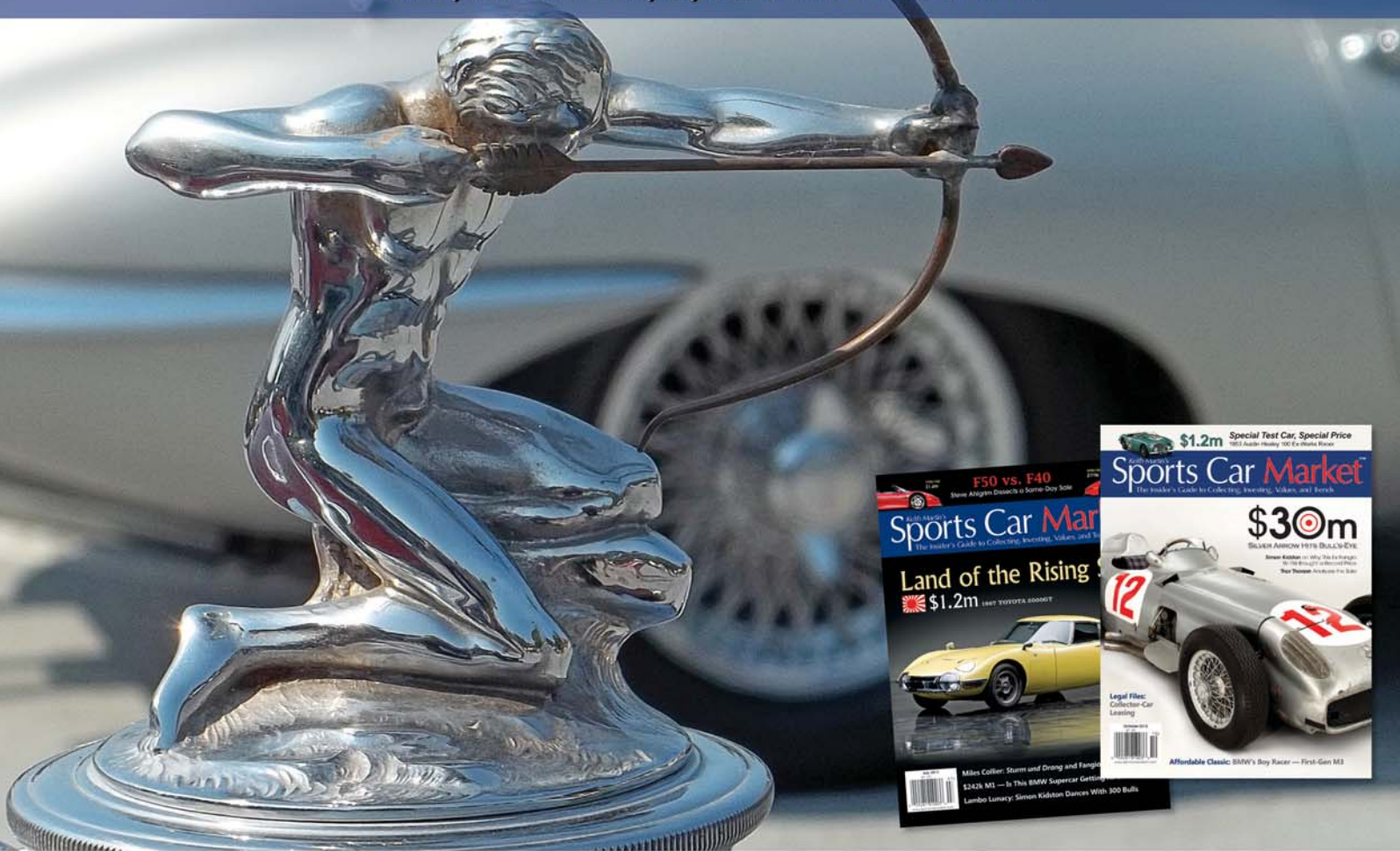


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## A WEEK WITH : 2019 VOLKSWAGEN GOLF GTI 2.0T RABBIT EDITION

### Connected with the road and with its heritage

By Joe Sage

Just as every Volkswagen fan is finally clear on the distinctions and timelines of various badging of Rabbit, Golf, GTI (and for that matter even Jetta), as well as global variants, along comes a new iteration: the VW Golf GTI Rabbit Edition.

Here's a basic orientation. Not counting the electric e-Golf, there are three Golf models: the basic 147-hp Golf from \$21,845; the 228-hp Golf GTI from \$27,595; and the 288-hp Golf R from \$41,290. All are available with your choice of 6-speed manual or 7-speed Tiptronic automatic transmission. All are front-drivers, except the Golf R with 4MOTION all-wheel drive. All this year are four-doors, something that has forced apples-and-oranges decisions among models in certain years prior, notably with the R32, which preceded the Golf R.

Last year, there was a top-dollar Autobahn special edition of the Golf GTI (reportedly still available, at \$35,070). This year's Rabbit Edition falls more toward the affordable end, as did the original VW Rabbit of the 1970s and '80s, itself somewhat picking up the spot the original Beetle had vacated. Thus the new Rabbit Edition is built upon the base Golf GTI S trim, bumping its price by just \$1300. (Note that our sample's Monroney sticker base of \$29,995 differs from the price on the consumer website, which is currently \$28,895.)

The extra bucks bring you black highlights (18-inch gloss alloy wheels, Vmax rear spoiler, side

mirrors), heritage Clark Plaid cloth seats, and low-key Rabbit Edition accents inside and out (seat accents, red-stitched floor mats, and a tastefully tiny exterior badge).

The car is available in four colors: white or black pearl (both available throughout the Golf lineup), our sample's Urano Gray (available only on the GTI Rabbit Edition or the e-Golf) and a bright Cornflower Blue unique (at least among Golfs) to the Rabbit Edition—not even the Golf R, available in a whopping 45 different colors, offers this blue. Since its performance is the same as other GTI models, and its style points are its differentiators, we'd therefore likely choose Cornflower Blue, the most pure expression (and perhaps most future-collectible) of the GTI Rabbit Edition.

We got into our week with this GTI straight out of a 577-hp, \$137,000 performance SUV, so whereas the VW didn't feel like a rocket immediately, we did note that it felt particularly solid and connected from the get-go, especially nice since ours had the automatic (it's an end-to-end, metal-mated-to-metal feel we usually expect to find only in a manual drivetrain). We also reminded ourselves that we could buy four and a half GTI Rabbit Editions for the price of that performance SUV.

We'd always welcome the power of the Type R, but its 26.3 percent more horses than GTI come at a 49.6 percent higher price. And whereas we love the Type R's 4MOTION all-wheel-drive, we noted superb handling and no front-drive torquiness in the GTI, itself an admir-

#### SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	2.0L inline-4, 16v, turbo/intercooled
DRIVETRAIN	FWD
HP/TORQUE	228 hp / 258 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	9.6:1
TRANSMISSION	7-spd DSG auto/Tiptronic
SUSPENSION	F: strut-type w lower control arms, coils, telescopic dampers, 24mm stblzr bar; R: multi-link w coils, telescopic dampers, 20mm stblzr bar
STEERING	rack & pinion, electric power assist
BRAKES	F: 13.4x1.2 vented; R: 12.2x0.9 vented
WHEELS / TIRES	18x7.5J alum alloy / 225/40R18
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	168.0 / 103.6 in
TURNING CIRCLE	35.8 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	5.1 in
SEATING	five
HEADROOM (F/R)	38.4 / 38.1 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	41.2 / 35.6 in
CARGO CAPACITY	22.8 / 52.7 cu.ft
WEIGHT	3256 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	reg (hp/lbft stated w prem) / 13.2 gal
MPG	25/31/27 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	\$29,995
RABBIT EDITION INCLUDES:	18" gloss black alloy wheels, black Vmax rear spoiler, black side mirror caps, Clark Plaid cloth seats w Rabbit Edition accents, Rabbit Edition red-stitched floor mats front & rear.
DESTINATION CHARGE	895
TOTAL	\$30,890

able achievement too few can match. The magic of the GTI Rabbit Edition formula is that it is not only well connected to the road, but also connected to decades of brand heritage.

Compared with both that 577-hp SUV and with the more potent Golf Type R, it's almost as though you can feel what each of the GTI Rabbit Edition's 228 horses is doing, through your fingertips, as surely as if they were a real living, breathing harnessed team. And that provides its own thrill. ■



# SURFIN' ARIZONA

**HOURLY-OR-SO DRIVE WELL WORTH IT FOR THIS 4-MILE HIKE**

BY TYSON HUGIE



**M**om was a victim of her first cactus attack on this trip. The cholla, or “jumping,” cactus is famous for its ability to seemingly jump out and cling to passersby. Worse, it’s tough to pull out and only wants to latch on to anything (or anyone) that attempts to remove it. The solution? Just ask Chris, the seasoned hiker who joined us for this excursion. He whipped out a hair comb and was able to extract the needles safely without putting anyone else at risk—a clever survival tip for the desert Southwest.

All of this came about from our decision to hike to one of the Superstition mountain range’s most unique geologic features: a sandstone rock in the shape of a large wave.

See me surfing up there? The cave’s remoteness and difficulty have kept some hikers away, but we tackled the four-miler with confidence and enjoyed basking in some of Arizona’s prime spring weather for a few hours on a Saturday morning.

Reaching the Peralta Trailhead took about an hour from Central Phoenix, and while I would have been perfectly fine subjecting either my Acura ILX or SLX to a few miles of dirt, we decided to take Chris’s Jeep Cherokee.

Our first stop was the drive-thru at Starbucks. You can’t go out into the wilderness unprepared, after all. Frappuccinos in hand, we were ready to conquer nature.

The trail itself seemed to intensify in difficulty as we worked our way up the 800 or so feet in elevation. Though the cave itself was visible from the trailhead, it required scrambling up a few stretches of jagged rocks, with patches of loose gravel, all flanked by prickly cacti—definitely the type of environment where adequate and stable footing is a necessity.

The view was worth it. From the interior of the cave itself, we were able to gaze across the landscape for many miles in the distance. With temperatures in the high 60s and a light breeze, conditions were optimal to hang out and enjoy the scenery before beginning our descent. Round-trip travel time was about three hours, and we rewarded ourselves for a job well done by having lunch at Costa Vida. ■



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## Packaging pays off

BY JOE SAGE

**A**mong full-size pickups—America's biggest-selling vehicle category—it's simultaneously easy to develop favorites or to love 'em all.

Toyota Tundra has a built-in comparative disadvantage against other full-size pickups, coming in nominal half-ton capacity only (comparable to the Americans' 1500 or 150 trucks or the non-XD Nissan Titan). There is no Tundra 2500 or up model. It's possible this can lead to Toyota being overlooked in certain mindsets and/or in some truck comparo and awards events where HD trucks are also included.

On the other hand, the Toyota Tacoma has long rocked the midsize segment (one that has just become exceptionally active and well-stocked), coming in fourth behind the Americans in sales (though at half the volume of number three). This gives us another way to look at Tundra in the Toyota lineup, apart from (or in addition to) its position in the greater full-size pickup market.

In particular, we thought about midsize Tacoma TRD Sport, TRD Off-Road and TRD Pro models (they currently offer all three) as we drove this full-size Tundra TRD Sport (an option package on the second-up SR5 trim).

In addition to the advanced suspension of the Tundra SR5's TRD Sport Package, you gain style points that make a huge difference in the truck's persona—20-inch wheels (as on top-dollar Limited, Platinum and 1794 Edition trucks), body-color-keyed grille surround (as on those and TRD Pro), and black chain-link grille. We've had manufactur-

ers tell us their focus groups always ask for more chrome, but they never asked us. We had no doubt that our red Tundra's non-chrome face was a huge factor in its overall appeal.

Similarly to how the midsize Sport or Off-Road Tacoma TRDs cost five or nine grand more than an SR5, without running 15 grand more for a TRD Pro, the full-size Tundra SR5's TRD Sport Package adds just \$3275, versus 15 grand more for a full-blown TRD Pro. Compare the two in detail, and you're still likely to agree this is a sweet spot. Compare with the 50-thousand-plus luxe models, and (depending upon your taste, budget and purpose) you are likely to find the same. We also find great value in its SR5 Upgrade Package, with everything from a 38-gallon tank to power lumbar bucket seats for \$945.

We do wish we had had keyless entry and start, as well as power tilt-telescope wheel, but these don't appear to be available at these trim levels (we dug deep, but you might want to dig deeper).

The Entune audio system (a dollar value, including touchscreen, nav and Bluetooth) is pretty basic on settings, but benefits from way above average speaker positioning and channel separation.

Note that TRD Pro has 18-inch wheels, so this package's 20s are a trade-off, off-road; however, there is also a TRD Off-Road Package for the SR5, with 18-inchers. One other thing worth noting: you can get a Tundra SR5 with Double Cab (as opposed to the Crew Cab here) with that rarest of things, an 8.1-foot bed. Not available with the TRD Sport Package, it is available with a TRD Off-Road Package. All together (and setting aside the lack of a manual transmission option on any), this is a solid range of possibilities. ■

### SPECIFICATIONS

<b>ENGINE</b> .....5.7L iForce V8 DOHC 32v w dual indep VVT-i	<b>HP/TORQUE</b> .....381 hp / 401 lb-ft
<b>TRANSMISSION</b> .....6-speed electronic auto w sequential shift mode, uphill/downhill logic, tow/haul mode	
<b>DRIVETRAIN</b> .....4x4: 4WDemand part-time 4WD w electronically controlled transfer case, active traction control (A-TRAC) & automatic limited slip diff	
<b>SUSPENSION</b> .....F: indep high-mount dbl-wishbone w stblzr bar & low-pressure nitrogen shocks; R: live axle w trapezoid multi-leaf springs, outboard-mounted low-pressure nitrogen shocks.	
<b>STEERING</b> .....rack & pinion hydraulic w/fluid cooler	
<b>BRAKES</b> .....F/R: 13.9" opposed 4-piston, vented disc 78.4 sq.in per side, total 156.8" per rotor	
<b>WHEELS</b> .....(std) 18" styled steel / (ours) 20" TRD Sport	
<b>TIRES</b> .....(std) P255/70R18 / (ours) P275/55R20	
<b>LENGTH / WHEELBASE</b> .....228.9 / 145.7 in	
<b>TURNING CIRCLE</b> .....44.0 ft	
<b>GROUND CLEARANCE</b> .....10.4 in	
<b>APPROACH / DEPART</b> .....26° / 17°	
<b>SEATING CAPACITY</b> .....6 or 5 (front bench or buckets)	
<b>HEADROOM (F/R)</b> .....39.7 / 38.9 in	
<b>LEGROOM (F/R)</b> .....42.5 / 42.3 in	
<b>WEIGHT</b> .....5640 lb	
<b>BED LENGTH</b> .....66.7 in ( 5.5 ft+)	
<b>PAYLOAD / TOW CAPACITY</b> .....1440-1560 / 9800 lb	
<b>FUEL / CAPACITY</b> .....87 reg or higher (E85 ok) / 38 gal	
<b>MPG</b> .....13/17/14 (city/hwy/comb)	
<b>BASE PRICE</b> .....	<b>\$40,145</b>
<b>ENTUNE PREMIUM AUDIO</b> : integrated nav & app suite, 7.0" touchscreen w backup camera, AM/FM/CD, hands-free Bluetooth phone/music, Siri eyes free, SiriusXM.....525	
<b>TRD SPORT PKG</b> : 20" 8-spoke TRD Sport alloy wheels, sport-tuned Bilstein shocks, TRD front/rear anti-sway bars, color-keyed accents (grille surround, mirrors, bumpers), LED headlights & fogs, TRD Sport floor mats, TRD shift knob, bedside TRD Sport decals, hood scoop.....3275	
<b>SR5 UPGRADE PKG</b> : 38-gallon tank upsize, front bucket seats w power driver incl power lumbar, front center console w floor-mount shift lever & knob, tilt-telescope wheel, 3 front cup holders, alarm & engine immobilizer.....945	
<b>TRD SPORT CONVENIENCE PKG</b> : front & rear park assist sonar, blind spot monitor, rear cross traffic alert.....1000	
<b>SPRAY-IN BEDLINER</b> .....579	
<b>DESTINATION CHARGE</b> .....1395	
<b>TOTAL</b> .....	<b>\$47,864</b>



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## Perennially popular

BY JOE SAGE

To paraphrase classic Sara Lee baked goods advertising, everybody doesn't like something, but nobody doesn't like the Mazda MX-5 Miata. Since its arrival on the scene in 1989—30 years ago, in a time when the simple two-seat droptop sports car seemed gone forever—its simple formula of affordable fun and lightweight performance has generated endless smiles and positive reviews.

A classic two-seat, front-engined, rear-drive open car, its appeal has always been immediate. It no longer stands alone in the segment, but with many of its competitors pricey German models, its value remains solid (starting at just \$25,730).

The soft-top model already has a nice weight distribution (52:48 manual, 53:47 automatic), maintained over time through materials lightweighting overall, even as engines have grown. The RF (Retractable Fastback) was introduced in 2017 (see our Sept/Oct 2017 cover feature), replacing a prior hardtop convertible (which mimicked the soft-top's shape) with a new coupe-styled profile (but more of a T-top open experience than full convertible). One thing we sunk our teeth into in 2017 was that the manual RF's weight distribution was a perfect 50:50 (while the automatic's was 51:49). Flash forward to today, and the newest model sits at 51:49 with either transmission.

That removes an (admittedly almost imperceptible) advantage of the manual in the RF, but we would still prefer that transmission, not only for our own fundamental preferences, but because we experienced quite a bit of surging in this automatic, even unexpected shifts while at constant speed on straight freeways (we had similar experiences in normal or sport modes). Of course, if automatic is your preference, there's always the manumatic mode, and again, now with weight distribution as good as the manual's.

We noted a few nitpicks during our week with the car—it was a rainy stretch, and the backup camera is very susceptible to image-blocking globs of water; an audio device continues to play when you think you've turned it off (but have only muted it, a one-button affair, while turning it off requires a screen dive); some shortcomings in interior storage space, even for a small roadster; that odd shift behavior; and a trunk that's small, as expected, but sort of bucket-shaped, not too handy for quite a few certain loads, like our clean shirts.

Our Grand Touring is the top trim (above Sport and Club), priced at \$30,780 for the soft top model, versus Club at \$29,590. All trims are well outfitted with keyless entry/start, power windows and many other details. Club has Recaro seats, Grand Touring full leather. Sport has AM-FM audio, while Club and Grand Touring have a decent 9-speaker Bose system. Automatic climate control kicks in at the Grand Touring level. All have Bluetooth.

Whether to kick in for the RF model may be a

### SPECIFICATIONS

<b>CONSTRUCTION</b> ...	monocoque unibody w backbone frame
<b>ENGINE</b> ...	SKYACTIV-G alum 2.0L DOHC 16v 4-cyl w VVT, chain-driven DOHC, 4v/cyl, variable intake valve timing
<b>DRIVETRAIN</b> .....	RWD
<b>HP/TORQUE</b> .....	181 hp / 151 lb-ft
<b>TRANSMISSION</b> .....	6-spd auto w paddles (6-spd short throw manual avail)
<b>SUSPENSION</b> .....	F: double-wishbone; R: multi-link; gas-filled monotube shocks front/rear
<b>STEERING</b> .....	double-pinion electric power assist
<b>BRAKES</b> .....	pwr-assist vented front / solid rear discs
<b>WHEELS</b> .....	17x7 alum alloy dark silver
<b>TIRES</b> .....	205/45R17; puncture repair kit
<b>LENGTH / WB</b> .....	154.1 / 90.9 in
<b>TURNING CIRCLE</b> .....	curb-to-curb 30.8 ft
<b>GROUND CLEARANCE</b> .....	5.3 in
<b>HEADROOM / LEGROOM</b> .....	37.4 / 43.1 in
<b>CARGO CAPACITY</b> .....	4.48 cu.ft (soft top 4.59)
<b>WEIGHT</b> .....	2892 lb (note: soft top M/T 2745 lb)
<b>FUEL / CAPACITY</b> .....	reg 87 ok, prem 91 recmd / 11.9 gal
<b>MPG</b> .....	26/35/30 (city/hwy/comb)

**INCLUSIONS:** advanced keyless entry, Bose 9-speaker audio w headrest speakers, Bluetooth phone and audio streaming, adaptive front lighting system.

**RF INCLUDES:** Retractable Fastback power convertible hardtop (13 seconds to open or close), 4.6-in color TFT display (Club and Grand Touring models only).

**NEW FOR 2019:** standard tilt-telescope steering column, standard rear camera, metallic black wheels (RF Club trim only), new traffic sign recognition and available Smart City Brake (RF Grand Touring only).

<b>BASE PRICE</b> .....	<b>\$34,410</b>
<b>INTERIOR PKG FOR A/T:</b> alloy pedals, red engine oil cap w MX-5 logo, stainless steel door sill trim plates .....	425
<b>DESTINATION CHARGE</b> .....	895
<b>TOTAL</b> .....	<b>\$35,730</b>

factor of budget, but even beyond that will factor in your preferences in styling and perhaps your desire for the additional security of a hard top. ■



# What lies beneath

*New AMG 53 lineup bears remarkable new advanced engine and power management technology at its core*

BY JOE SAGE

German engineering has long been “a thing,” and when you want to see the latest in German automotive engineer, AMG has long been a great place to start. Once an independent firm, though always heavily intertwined with Mercedes-Benz parent company Daimler AG, Mercedes-AMG GmbH came in-house as a fully owned subsidiary about a decade and a half ago. For the past several years, a handful of Mercedes-Benz AMG vehicles have morphed into “Mercedes-AMG”-badged vehicles—and no shortage of them.

Whatever your favorite niche in the Mercedes lineup, you can now certainly find an AMG version of it—or, looked at from the point of view of Mercedes-AMG, you can find any type of vehicle you’d like within the AMG lineup, currently boasting fully 47 different models and variants. You may think you need

a scorecard, but you really just need a favorite—or two or three, from compact roadsters up to the mighty G-Class. “This many AMGs is a good thing, trust me,” says Mercedes-Benz USA director of communications Rob Moran. AMG sales were already up by 27 percent in the US as of the first quarter, and there are more new models in the pipeline for this year.

The magic has not stopped with model expansion. As powertrains evolve, becoming ever more powerful, while also becoming smaller, lighter, cleaner and thriftier, AMG has been well ahead of the curve.

As with many other brands, as displacement drops but model lineups once based on cc’s are well established, AMG has evolved a numeric system that is now part heritage and part new. AMG 65 models are still V12-powered, 63 models still V8. In 2013 (for model year 2014), the new CLA45 AMG (a prior alphanumeric scheme) bore the first four-cylinder AMG engine, then and still the most powerful four-cylinder in the world (355 hp). AMG 45 and also 35 2.0L models continue to this day, but were joined two years ago by three-liter models—both inline-6 turbo and V6 biturbo engines, with power higher than the 35 and 45, but nonetheless badged as AMG 43.

## Meet the first AMG 53 models

There is no replacement for displacement, motor-heads have long said. But “we are replacing displacement with intelligence,” says Moran. Less than 20 years ago, it took a V8 to achieve 369 hp. Always busy, the clever engineers at AMG have now introduced a 53 lineup, powered by a new inline-6 turbo with more output still, 429 hp.

(Still busy, the AMG team will soon introduce a 1000-hp engine of just 1.6 liters, Moran tells us.)

We flew to Northern California to try out the 53 lineup’s first applications, in the full AMG E-Class (sedan, coupe and cabriolet), as well as the CLS, the original “four-door coupe,” which shares many of its bones with the E-Class Sedan (while the E Coupe and Sedan share a slightly shorter wheel-base). All have the same engine. Their weights range by over 200 pounds, and their aerodynamics vary (though all are maximized), but they all hit zero-to-60 in the same 4.4 seconds (except the E Coupe, which is one tenth quicker), while their fuel mileage is all within a point or two.

The Cabriolet is the heaviest, as convertibles always are: it takes a lot of frame strength to make up for the structural rigidity of a lighter-weight roof, but no-one who likes to drop the top would quibble with that. A little may be attributed to its weather-beating features—AirCap, AirSarf and wind block—which significantly extend convertible season, and no-one who likes to drop the top would quibble with that, either.

As fate would have it—whether in Tennessee and North Carolina (for those features’ original

launch drive), in Arizona (where we’ve had the Cabriolet a few times) and now in Napa Wine Country (where when it wasn’t raining, it was likely to start again at any moment)—we have always had the E Class Cabriolet in chilly, wet weather. For some, that might seem like bum luck, but you really couldn’t have planned it better.

As fate would have it, our most recent in Arizona was the new E 53 Cabriolet, also for a wet and chilly week, a general shakedown drive even before learning all the finer points of its clever new powertrain from the engineers themselves.

But we rounded that out in Napa.

## The heart of the AMG 53

An inline-six, the new AMG-enhanced three-liter turbo weighs less than a V6 and inherently runs more smoothly, but length would normally preclude its use in cars this size—were it not for the engine’s beltless construction. In a vehicle lineup full of high tech and neat tricks, meet the neatest trick of all: the EQ Boost Integrated Starter Generator (ISG), utilizing the cars’ 48-volt system for an element that also defines the AMG 53 lineup as having electrified drivetrains.

This component—not a turbo, not a super-charger, but an electric auxiliary compressor—adds up to 21 hp and up to 84 lb-ft of torque the moment you step on the pedal, for the immediate kick in the pants provided by an electric motor, whether at startup or other points of quick de-

KEEP RIGHT >>

At left, the Mercedes-AMG CLS 53 Coupe, recognizable by its combination of coupe-like roofline and four door handles. Below, the masterpiece at the heart of the 53 lineup—the Integrated Starter Generator (ISG).



## SPECIFICATIONS

**Mercedes-AMG E 53 Sedan**  
**Mercedes-AMG E 53 Coupe**  
**Mercedes-AMG E 53 Cabriolet**  
**Mercedes-AMG CLS 53 4-Door Coupe**

ENGINE	AMG-enhanced 3.0L alum alloy DOHC 24v inline-6 turbo
COMPRESSION RATIO	10.5:1
HP/TORQUE	429 hp / 384 lb-ft
EQ BOOST	Integrated Starter Generator, up to 21 hp addtl
ENGINE REDLINE	6800 rpm
TRANSMISSION	AMG Speedshift TCT 9G-TRONIC w wheel-mtd shift paddles
DRIVETRAIN	AMG Performance 4MATIC AWD w variable torque distribution
0-60 / TOP	E 53 Sedan ..... 4.4 sec / 130 lim
	E 53 Coupe ..... 4.3 sec / 130 lim
	E 53 Cabriolet ..... 4.4 sec / 130 lim
	CLS 53 Coupe ..... 4.4 sec / 130 lim
SUSPENSION	E 53 (F/R): independent multi-link w air springs
	CLS 53 (F/R): indep multi-link w coil, single-tube shocks, torsion bar
STEERING	speed-dependent electro-mechanical rack & pinion
BRAKES	E 53 Sdn,Cpe,Cabr ... F: 14.6, R: 14.2
	CLS 53 Coupe ..... F: 14.2, R: 14.2
WHEELS / TIRES	E 53: F: 8.0x19, R: 9.0x19
	F: 245/40ZR19, R: 275/35ZR19
	CLS 53: F: 8.0x18, R: 9.0x18
	F: 245/45R18, R: 275/40R18
CHASSIS	Steel unibody, aluminum and steel outer sheet metal
DOORS/SEATS	E 53 Sedan ..... 4/5
	E 53 Coupe, Cabriolet ..... 2/4
	CLS 53 Coupe ..... 4/5
LENGTH / WB	E 53 Sedan ..... 195.2 / 115.7 in
	E 53 Coupe ..... 190.0 / 113.1 in
	E 53 Cabriolet ..... 190.6 / 113.1 in
	CLS 53 Coupe ..... 196.9 / 115.7 in
HEADRM (F/R)	E 53 Sedan ..... 37.3 / 38.2 in
	E 53 Coupe ..... 37.8 / 36.4 in
	E 53 Cabriolet ..... 38.7 / 36.4 in
	CLS 53 Coupe ..... TBA / TBA
LEGRM (F/R)	E 53 Sedan ..... 41.7 / 36.2 in
	E 53 Cpe,Cabr ..... 41.8 / 34.1 in
	CLS 53 Coupe ..... TBA / TBA
TURN CIRC	E 53 Sedan .... (wall-to-wall) 41.0 ft
	E 53 Cpe,Cabr ..... (") 39.7 ft
	CLS 53 Coupe ..... (") 41.0 ft
GRND CLRNCE	E 53 Sedan ..... 4.5 in
	E 53 Cpe,Cabr ..... 4.7 in
	CLS 53 Coupe ..... 4.7 in
CARGO VOL	E 53 Sedan ..... 13.1 cu.ft
	E 53 Coupe ..... 10.1 cu.ft
	E 53 Cabriolet ..... (est) 9.5 cu.ft
	CLS 53 Coupe ..... 11.9 cu.ft
WEIGHT	E 53 Sedan ..... 4341 lb
	E 53 Coupe ..... 4429 lb
	E 53 Cabriolet ..... 4566 lb
	CLS 53 Coupe ..... 4447 lb
FUEL CAPAC	E 53 Sedan ..... 21.1 gal
	E 53 Cpe,Cabr ..... 17.4 gal
	CLS 53 Coupe ..... 21.1 gal
MPG	E 53 Sedan ..... 21/28/24
	E 53 Coupe ..... 21/28/23
	E 53 Cabriolet ..... 20/26/23
	CLS 53 Coupe ..... 21/27/23 (city/hwy/comb)

**BASE PRICE: AMG E 53 SEDAN ..... \$72,550**  
**AMG E 53 COUPE ..... 73,700**  
**AMG E 53 CABRIOLET ..... 80,350**  
**AMG CLS 53 COUPE ..... 79,900**

mand. Power can be available without the gasoline engine even fired up, and the system provides recuperative energy back to the battery (for fuel savings that were previously the domain of high-voltage hybrid technology).

The EQ Boost ISG is non-parasitic, meaning it does not tap power from the engine as turbos or superchargers do. It also eliminates the need for a starter, while being faster and smoother.

Its smoothness comes not only from its precision engineering, but from uniform distribution of its charge around the circumference, rather than a more common three-pole solution.

### Inside and underneath the AMG 53

The interior is defined by a pair of horizontal 12.3-inch screens comprising digital instruments and infotainment beneath a continuous sheet of glass—reimagining the common traditional combination of horizontal dash, vertical center stack and various binnacle shapes as one clean horizontal stretch that redefines the style, function, and overall look and feel of the entire cabin. Burmeister surround sound audio is standard, as are a sport-oriented flat-bottomed steering wheel and firmly but comfortably bolstered seats.

Underpinning the drive experience is AMG Ride Control + (Plus), a body-control sport air suspension system engineered for smooth road feel, neu-

tral cornering and optimum traction. The multi-chamber system applies continuously adjustable damping in response to powertrain parameters and road conditions. All of the above can be tailored through five AMG Dynamic Select drive modes (eco, comfort, sport, sport+ or your individualized combination of various elements thereof).

These are drivers' vehicles, but even some driver-drivers desire assistance tech (and all may benefit from its safety aspects). The AMG 53 cars include a full range of latest-gen Advanced Driver Assistance (enhanced intelligent hands-off detection) on a par with formerly just the line-topping Mercedes-Benz S-Class—including distance assist DISTRONIC, active steering assist, emergency stop assist; active lane keep, lane change, speed limit, evasive steering, blind spot and brake assist (with cross-traffic function); even route-based speed adaptation based on deep data on road oddities, toll booths, exits and the like.

All this wisdom hits the pavement through the showpiece AMG 9G-Tronic transmission feeding an up-spec'd AMG Performance 4MATIC+ all-wheel-drive system ranging from full rear-wheel drive to a 50/50 front/rear allocation of power.

One more safety feature, in case the car senses the worst seems imminent, is Pre-Safe Sound, which emits a quick interference signal that triggers a human response protective against the ear-

damaging noise of a crash.

But the focus is the engine.

### Our AMG 53 cars and drives

We were already in Sacramento for another program and scheduled for a simple hop to arrive at San Francisco airport by midmorning, but record heavy rains had turned our 40-minute flight into about a six-hour adventure. Nonetheless, our first car—or choice of first car—was patiently waiting.

With four models to ultimately check out, we selected the AMG CLS 53 (4-door) Coupe as our first, the only CLS model, developing a plan to experience its particular attributes on leg one, then various E Class models in succession. The CLS has many fundamentals similar to the E 53 Sedan (door count, passenger count, wheelbase, turning circle and such), but different wheels, brakes, suspension (compare specifications on prior page), as well as certainly its overall style and character.

Our flight delays had delivered us into Bay Area rush hour traffic. There were two of us in the car, but three occupants are required in order to use HOV lanes in much of the region. We made our way up US 101 to the Bay Bridge (notable as the western end of transcontinental I-80), crossed San Francisco Bay to Oakland, took the freeway (also I-80) north on the East Bay side through Richmond and Vallejo, then a succession of four- and two-

lane highways and country roads to our Napa Valley operations base—about 80 miles total.

We were running tight, but had just enough headroom on the clock before dinner to take a spin through wine country. There had been four well-planned drive loops in the original plan—three about 90 minutes each, one about an hour long—with five hours allocated to enjoy several of them. For those of us affected by weather-related air travel delays, our hosts had already scoped out a plan, recommending one route about a third of the way up, incorporating a set of the most scenic and challenging twists and climbs through local woods and vineyards, maybe 40 or 50 miles total.

For this, we chose the E 53 Cabriolet, a car we had already been among the first to drive, for a week in Arizona (see our March/April issue). In that sense it was a repeat, but this was a great time to choose it out of the four—the rain had let up, for who knows how long, the sun was setting soon, and it was cooling off fast—a chance to utilize its chill-beating AirCap, AirScarf and windblock features. (As noted earlier, despite living in the Valley of the Sun, we seem to consistently experience these clever drop-tops during cool and/or wet weather, a great demo, though someday we hope to satisfy our curiosity as to what some of the features might do to mitigate really hot weather.)

The next day provided our longest time behind

the wheel, about three and a half hours of driving, plus photo and snack breaks. We would be heading back to the San Francisco airport through the best of what Napa, Sonoma and Marin Counties, the coastal hills and Highway One have to offer. For this, we chose an E 53 Sedan.

Speaking of cool and/or wet weather, we had intense stretches of rain this day. The comfy cabin (with the added plus of cranking that Burmeister surround sound) and 4MATIC all-wheel drive made it a driver's dream, both engaging and a breeze.

Rather than the Golden Gate, we took the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge back to the East Bay side, then the Bay Bridge into San Francisco for a lunch stop before it was time to head to the airport.

Our world class two-lane routes suited the cars' power, handling and creature comforts perfectly, and assist features are well matched to the freeway stretches. The E 53 Coupe, which itself has a lot in common with the Cabriolet (also see specs on the prior page), was left undriven for now.

If you want to keep track of your accomplishments, an optional AMG Track Pace COMAND App lets you record a range of vehicle and performance data, so you can review and improve. Or you can just press the pedal and drive, confident at the end that this drivetrain package has aced the day.

All four of the new AMG 53 models we drove in California are on sale in Arizona now. ■

Red, white and blue, not necessarily in that order—left to right, the Mercedes-AMG E 53 Cabriolet, Coupe and Sedan. Having driven the CLS the day before, and one of us the E 53 Coupe, the other the Cabriolet the night before, we took the E 53 Sedan for our longest leg, not only to round out the set, but also to gobble up all our luggage in its larger trunk, along with the video gear of our co-driver, Andre Smirnov of *TFLcar.com*. The weather could go either way, but we had 4MATIC AWD.



**A WEEK WITH: 2019 MERCEDES-AMG E 53 CABRIOLET**

**Powerful weather beater**  
Convertible with innovative new powertrain also extends top-down season

**SPECIFICATIONS**

CLASS	Midsize convertible
PRICE	\$72,550 (base)
MPG	23 city/32 hwy
0-60	4.9 sec
TOP SPEED	155 mph
WARRANTY	4 yr/50,000 mi
RESIDUAL VALUE	70% (3 yr)

**BASE PRICE** \$72,550

**EXTRAS** \$10,000

**TESTING** \$1,000

**OPTIONAL** \$1,000

**PACKAGES**

- Sun Protection Pkg (800)
- Exterior Lighting Pkg (800)
- Warmth & Comfort Pkg (1050)
- AMG Night Pkg (650)
- Parking Assistance Pkg (1290)
- Driver Assistance Pkg (2250)
- plus destination (995).....TOTAL: \$97,590

### OPTIONS & PRICING AS TESTED

#### AMG CLS 53 COUPE .....BASE: \$79,900

OPTIONS: Obsidian Black Metallic (720), AMG 2-tone Nappa leather (2990), metal weave (600), AMG Nappa/Dinamica Performance steering wheel (500), 20" AMG twin 5-spoke wheels (750), AMG Performance exhaust (1250), 115v AC power outlet (115), AMG Track Pace app (250), heated/vented front seats (450), active multicontour front seats w massage (1320), heads-up display (990), power rear window shade (440), 3-zone climate (760), Dinamica headliner (1600), Burmeister 3D surround sound (4550), heated rear seats (580), soft-close doors (550); PACKAGES: • AMG Exterior Carbon Fiber Pkg (1750) • Acoustic Comfort Pkg (1100) • Exterior Lighting Pkg (900) • Warmth & Comfort Pkg (1050) • Energizing (air) Comfort Pkg (550) • AMG Night Pkg (650) • Parking Assistance Pkg (500) • Driver Assistance Pkg (2250); plus destination (995).....TOTAL: \$108,060

#### AMG E 53 CABRIOLET .....BASE: \$80,350

OPTIONS: Iridium Silver Metallic (720), dark blue soft top (nc), metal weave (600), AMG Nappa/Dinamica Performance steering wheel (500), 20" AMG twin 5-spoke wheels (750), AMG illum doorsills (350), AMG Performance exhaust (1250), AMG Track Pace app (250), multicontour front seats w massage (950), heated/vented front seats (450), heads-up display (990), soft-close doors (550); PACKAGES: • AMG Exterior Carbon Fiber Pkg (1750) • Design Black/Titanium Grey Pearl Nappa Leather Interior Pkg (4200) • Exterior Lighting Package (800) • Warmth & Comfort Pkg (1050) • Energizing (air) Comfort Pkg (550) • Parking Assistance Pkg (1290) • Driver Assistance Pkg (2250); plus destination (995).....TOTAL: \$100,595

#### AMG E 53 SEDAN .....BASE: \$72,550

OPTIONS: Polar White (nc), AMG Nut Brown Nappa Leather (2990), natural grain black ash wood (nc), Air Balance cabin air purification and fragrance system (350), 20" AMG twin 5-spoke wheels (750), AMG illum doorsills (350), AMG Performance exhaust (1250), 115v AC power outlet (115), AMG Track Pace app (250), heated/vented front seats (450), panorama sunroof (1000), active multicontour front seats w massage (1320), Dinamica headliner (1600), Burmeister 3D surround sound (4550), heated rear seats (580), soft-close doors (550); PACKAGES: • Acoustic Comfort Pkg (1100) • Sun Protection Pkg (800) • Exterior Lighting Pkg (800) • Warmth & Comfort Pkg (1050) • AMG Night Pkg (650) • Parking Assistance Pkg (1290) • Driver Assistance Pkg (2250); plus destination (995).....TOTAL: \$97,590

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**A WEEK WITH : 2019 TOYOTA LAND CRUISER**

**Toyota  
royalty** BY JOE SAGE

Here's a new idea. Or it seems that way to us, as it turns out that in almost 20 years of doing this, we've never had a Land Cruiser in the fleet before. Amazing. But it has been around for some time, of course: various flavors of Land Cruiser (and there are still multiple flavors worldwide) are Toyota's longest-standing badge and have collectively sold 6.5 million copies. They've had time to get it right. Today's Land Cruiser has bloodlines back to the first model in 1951 (which more directly begat the well-known J40 short-wheelbase sport off-roader), but descends more directly from the long-body FJ55 born in 1967.

Our Land Cruiser's Monroney sticker, where models and trim levels are generally spelled out, says simply "4WD SUV V8," the only way its comes. And it works fine like that. In fact, in this case it simplifies a complex challenge. As with any vehicle to a degree, and this vehicle in particular, they must position it within the rest of the Toyota SUV and crossover lineup (itself comprising 13 of Toyota's 37 US models); against the competition; and against its Lexus luxury equivalent. Having just one Land Cruiser trim and drivetrain simplifies things, avoiding overlap and providing clarity. It also

suits the vehicle's core persona. Fundamental. Solid. Established. No muss, no fuss. Just getting the job done. And it suits it in style and finish, too (to a degree), as this leaves headroom for the \$86,080-and-up Lexus LX 570.

You know how some vehicles have a cool option that you know will always put a smile on your face, if you fork out some extra cash? On the Land Cruiser, if it was a good idea, it's already included—such as a cooler box in the console, providing you with an ever-ready chilled beverage on a hot Arizona day.

As for fundamentals, suspension and handling that are equally comfortable on- or off-road, an advanced 4WD system, 8100-pound tow capacity, almost 9 inches of ground clearance, and even an especially tight turning circle of 38.7 feet are an impressive combination.

If you like the perennially popular 4Runner, you'll like the Land Cruiser. It's not just meat and potatoes—Land Cruiser does have premium touches along with its deep layers of capability—but it has that same sort of function-first feel with user-friendly controls and interface (for the most part).

If you've asked yourself what kind of Toyota you can get for almost 90 grand, here's your answer. The audio could be a little better, USB ports could be in a better location, and we wish we could turn off the tilt-away steering wheel. Its interior styling is a little plainer than its price, but that may well be the point.

**SPECIFICATIONS**

ENGINE	.....5.7L V8 DOHC 32v w/dual indep VVT-i, EFI, aluminum block w aluminum alloy head
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....10.2:1
DRIVETRAIN	.....full-time 4WD
HP/TORQUE	.....381 hp / 401 lb-ft
TRANS	.....8-spd electronically controlled automatic with intelligence (ECT-i)
TRANSFER CASE / 4WD	.....high 1.000 / low 2.618, A-TRAC and Torsen locking limited-slip center diff; multi-terrain select, hill-start assist, crawl control w off-road turn assist
SUSPENSION	.....F: Kinetic Dynamic Suspension System (KDSS), indep double-wishbone w coils, 1.68" stblzr bar; R: 4-link w coils, 0.98" stblzr bar
STEERING	.....vehicle speed-sensing, variable ratio, power-assisted rack & pinion
BRAKES	.....F: 13.9" vented disc / R: 13.6" vented disc, center-mounted hand brake
WHEELS / TIRES	.....18x8.0 alloy / P285/60 R18, full-size spare
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....194.9 / 112.2 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....38.7 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....8.9 in
APPROACH / DEPART	.....32 / 24°
SEATING CAPACITY	.....three-row, eight-passenger
HEADROOM (F/2/3)	.....38.3 / 38.9 / 35.8 in
LEGROOM (F/2/3)	.....42.9 / 34.4 / 28.3 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....16.1 / 43.0 / 81.7 cu.ft
WEIGHT / GVWR	.....5815 / 7385 lb
PAYLOAD / TOW CAPACITY	.....1320 / 8100 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	......87 oct regular / 24.6 gal
MPG	.....13/18/15 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	..... <b>\$84,765</b>
REAR SEAT ENTERTAINMENT	.....DVD system w two indiv 11.6" displays, RCA jacks, HDMI input, remote and two wireless headsets
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1295
TOTAL	..... <b>\$88,280</b>

For purity of purpose, Toyota Land Cruiser represents a mission accomplished. ■



# TRAVEL SITES TO BE SEEN



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## SPRING NASCAR MARCH 8-9-10, 2019

Last fall marked the Grand Opening of ISM Raceway, following its dramatic \$178 million redevelopment. Fans this spring settled into all the new patterns and availabilities, enjoying unprecedented access to garages, drivers and teams, and of course a wide range of new dining, beverage, activity and seating facilities.

Responding to fan input from families, the track added infield junior pricing, as well as a kid-friendly new Junior Activity Zone with giant coloring boards, inflatable games, face painting and other youth activities.

Also news was the inaugural eNASCAR Heat Pro League Draft in Gatorade Victory Lane on Sunday morning, prior to the TicketGuardian 500. Fourteen major NASCAR teams participated in the draft, represented by the most recognizable personalities in the sport.

**FRIDAY:** Ryan Blaney captured the pole position on Friday afternoon for Sunday's Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series TicketGuardian 500, his second career pole at ISM Raceway and sixth career pole overall, with a lap of 141.287 mph. Blaney would be joined on the front row by Chase Elliott, also searching for his first Phoenix win.

**SATURDAY:** Kyle Busch—who won last November's Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series Can-Am 500—held off challenges from NASCAR Xfinity Series stars in the iK9 Service Dog 200 for his second win in a row at ISM Raceway, a record 11th win in the Xfinity Series here and his 15th NASCAR national series win here. Busch's Joe Gibbs Racing teammate Christopher Bell earned the pole and led 69 laps, but was passed by Busch for the final time on lap 100. Ryan Truex finished second, his career-best finish at ISM Raceway.

**SUNDAY:** Two drivers in the Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series TicketGuardian 500 field with local ties, Glendale native Michael McDowell and Tucson native Alex Bowman, both had issues that took them out of the race. Kyle Busch became even more familiar with the new Gatorade Victory Lane, returning to it on Sunday following his victory in the Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series TicketGuardian 500, his second win in as many days. ■

## FALL NASCAR NOVEMBER 8-9-10, 2019

The schedule as of now is as follows:

### LUCAS OIL 150

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 6:30 PM**

Lucas Oil 150, NASCAR Gander Outdoors Truck Series Semi-Final Race under the lights. Prior to the Lucas Oil 150, don't miss practice sessions for both the Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series and NASCAR Xfinity Series before the starting line-up is set for the NASCAR Semi-Final Race during Gatorade Qualifying.

### DESERT DIAMOND WEST VALLEY CASINO 200

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1:30 PM**

Watch the future stars of NASCAR battle during the Desert Diamond West Valley Casino 200, NASCAR Xfinity Series Semi-Final Race on Saturday, November 9.

### NASCAR K&N PRO SERIES WEST RACE

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 4:00 PM**

NASCAR K&N Pro Series West returns to the Valley for the series' championship event. The 100-lap championship race in NASCAR's top developmental series will take place later in the day, following the conclusion of the Desert Diamond West Valley Casino 200.

### NASCAR SEMI-FINAL RACE

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 12:30 PM**

Experience the intensity of the Playoffs – NASCAR style – at the Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series Semi-Final Race, November 10. Watch 8 Drivers battle for a Championship 4 spot.

## BIG NEWS FOR 2020

After years of hosting the penultimate race of NASCAR season, leading up to Homestead-Miami, ISM Raceway will host the final NASCAR Championship Weekend in fall of next year for the first time in the sport's history, on the weekend of November 6-7-8, 2020.

**TICKETS** are available at [ISMRaceway.com](http://ISMRaceway.com); by calling 1-866-408-RACE (7223); or in person at the ISM Raceway ticket office, 125 S Avondale Blvd, Suite 200, Avondale AZ 85323 (Monday-Friday, 8am to 5pm).

TicketGuardian insurance is available, in case you think your plans could change. ■

## SEGWAY TOURS THROUGH MAY 19, 2019

An ISM Raceway Segway tour, hosted by iLean Ride Co., will take guests for an exciting lap on the one-mile oval as well as a VIP tour of the entire facility.

In addition to the lap along the track's apron and its infamous dogleg, the two-hour tour will take guests throughout the facility, highlighting unique areas at ISM Raceway. Guests will have their picture taken crossing the start/finish line before venturing down pit road and cruising through the Monster Energy NASCAR Cup garages. Guests will also visit Gatorade Victory Lane for a celebratory photo, just like a NASCAR driver during a post-race trophy presentation.

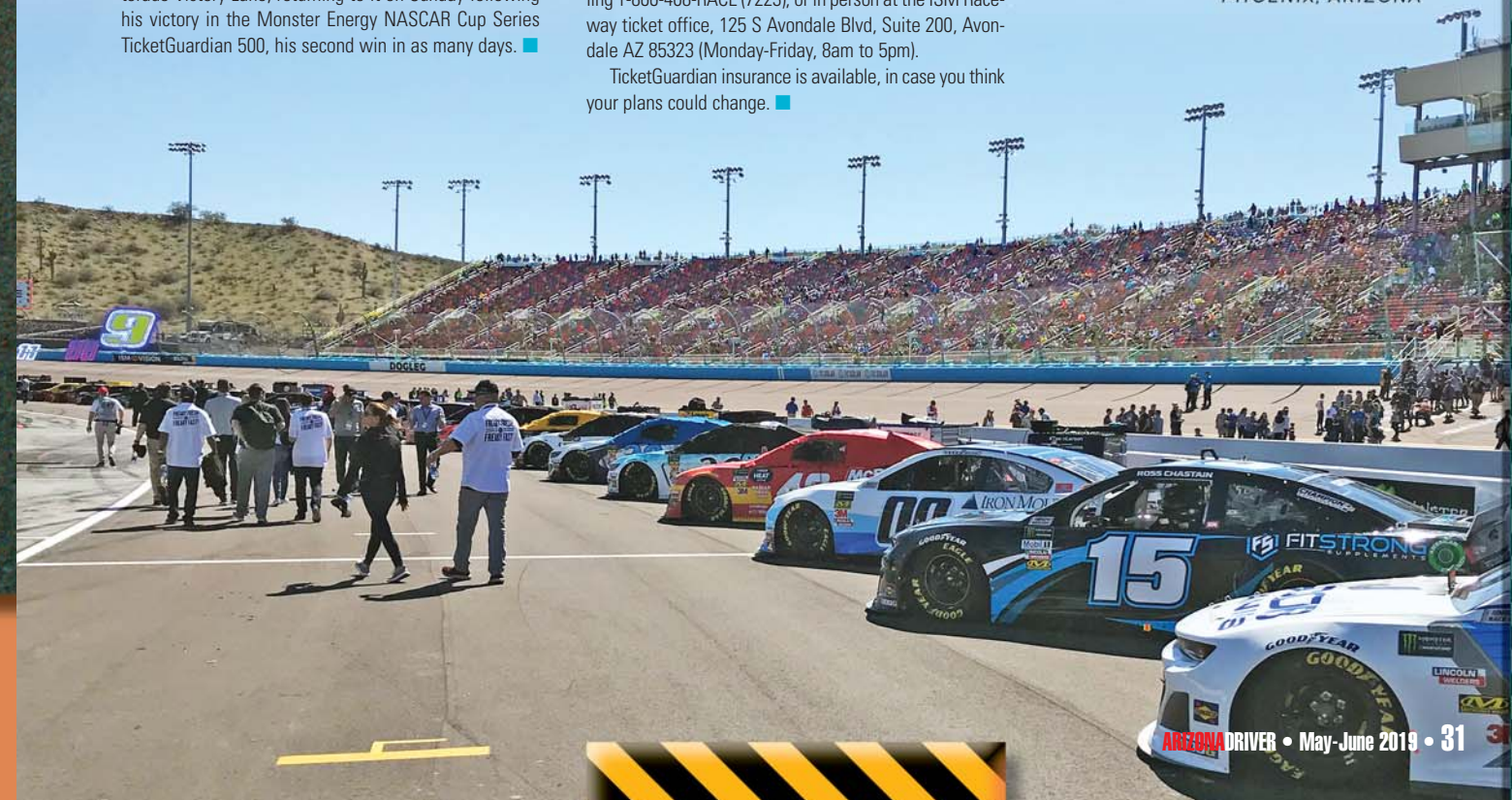
Guests will also have the opportunity to ride through the midway, visiting the grandstand side of ISM Raceway. Additionally, guests will receive a behind-the-scenes look at ISM Raceway's suite level, including NASCAR Race Control, and can observe the track from the perspective of NASCAR's race officials.

The two-hour Segway tour is \$89 per person. Guests who would prefer to stay on four wheels can enjoy the entire experience in a limousine golf cart for \$39 per person.

Tours run through May 19 (schedule may be subject to change). Reservations may be made online by visiting [PhoenixSegway.com](http://PhoenixSegway.com). ■



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# Luxury Liner with a Sporty Spirit

by Joe Sage

The specifications and build on this car pretty much equal the experience with it. This is not always the case with some brands, in which an optioned-up and derivatively-named model is no match for the full performance lineup. But we have long since come to appreciate that a Lexus F Sport is a true performance model, not just a trim level—in this case perhaps short of the V8 an LS F model would likely have (if it existed, which it doesn't as of now), but with plenty of performance from its twin-turbo six, while offering relative light weight, nice front/rear balance and notable fuel economy. All of the above really comes into play when you add an \$9700 F Sport Performance Package, as on our sample. It remains a puzzle why this is not part of an F Sport, period, but by means of comparison (since there is no LS F), the rear-drive GS sedan (a model offering both an F and an F Sport) runs \$46,710 for a base GS 300, \$51,300 for a GS 300 F Sport, and \$84,450 for a full GS F. It's clear there is plenty of headroom to option up to full F Sport performance short of full F model price.

The LS 500 F Sport's go power is the same as on a regular LS 500 (already a powerful beast), but its stopping power is upped dramatically (and appropriately for its upsized and staggered wheels), moving from four-piston to six-piston calipers front and rear on notably larger discs all around. The F Sport Performance Package adds significantly more—rapid-change performance air suspension, active rear steering and active stabilizer, in addition to

## SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	.3.5L DOHC 24v twin turbo V6, alum block/heads, VVT-iE intelligent elec intake, VVT-i intelligent exhaust
DRIVETRAIN	.....RWD (AWD avail)
HP/TORQUE	.....416 hp / 442 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....10.476:1
TRANSMISSION	.....10-spd automatic
0-TO-60 / TOP SPEED	.....4.6 sec (RWD) / 136 mph
SUSPENSION	.....F: hi-mount multi-link; R: multi-link
STEERING	..veh speed-sense rack & pinion, elec pwr assist
BRAKES	.....(F Sport) F: 15.7" vented, 6-piston opp alum calipers; R: 14.1" vented, 4-piston opp alum calipers, 4-channel 4-sensor ABS w veh dynamics integr mgmt
WHEELS	.....20" split 5-spoke alloys w dark graphite
TIRES	.....F: 245/45RF20, R: 275/40RF20 (Bridgestone, Dunlop, Michelin)
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....206.1 / 123.0 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....(RWD) 37.4 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....(RWD, air susp) 5.7 in
SEATING CAPACITY	.....five
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....(with panorama roof) 36.8 / 36.4 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....41.04 / 38.9 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....16.951 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....(RWD, air susp) 4751 lb
WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION (F/R)	.....53 / 47%
FUEL / CAPACITY	......91 octane prem / 21.7 gal
MPG	.....19/30/23 (city/hwy/comb)

## PRICE AS TESTED

BASE PRICE	.....\$81,200
F SPORT PERFORMANCE PACKAGE: F Sport exterior front bumper, mesh grille inserts, rear diffuser; F Sport interior lower door trim, perforated leather, steering wheel, shift knob, 28-way pwr front seats w embossed headrests, ultrasuede headliner, alum pedals & trim, variable ratio steering, active rear steering, active stabilizer	.....9700
F SPORT HEATED LEATHER STEERING WHEEL	.....nc
20" WHEELS: split 5-spoke alloy w dark graphite	.....nc
LEXUS SAFETY SYSTEM+: pre-collision w active braking, active steering assist, pedestrian alert, front cross traffic alert, lane change assist	.....3000
AIR SUSPENSION: adaptive variable w rapid height	.....1500
24" HEADS-UP DISPLAY	.....1220
LED HEADLAMPS w adaptive front lighting system	.....300
MARK LEVINSON AUDIO w 23 speakers	.....1940
PANORAMA GLASS ROOF	.....1000
PANORAMIC VIEW MONITOR	.....800
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1025
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>.....\$101,685</b>

fuel mileage and adds two feet to the turning circle. Hmm. We might not add if after all, unless we had specific weather or track conditions in mind.

As with all current Lexus models, the touchpad is still unnecessarily touchy. They've been improving it incrementally, but we'd love one major redesign.

Overall, the manumatic shift is much smarter than average. For a quick freeway lane change, it would hold our designated gear long enough to get into a new lane, then come out of it quickly on its own, as well it should—though if we down-shift to hold our place in a lower gear in slower traffic, it pops out within a matter of seconds.

If you can ignore a few points of overly intrusive technology, it's a fine performance sedan. ■

everything from a sexier grille and fascia, to performance wheels, sporty aluminum pedals and trim, embossed headrests and other details.

One thing we might add to our sample would be available all-wheel drive, but only because we like it in general, not because it needs it—its ground-hugging suspension and advanced handling technologies take care of that. The AWD build adds \$3,220 and about 200 pounds (varying by suspension options), but also knocks a point or two off





## Corporate

Nikola Corporation—designer and builder of hydrogen-electric vehicles, electric drivetrains and components, energy storage systems and hydrogen stations—is locating its Nikola Motor Company hydrogen-electric semi-truck manufacturing headquarters facility in Arizona, citing the state’s pro-business environment, top engineering schools, educated workforce and geographic location with direct access to major markets. The company’s one-million-square-foot facility is expected to bring \$1 billion in capital investment to the region by 2024.

They first had their eye on a Buckeye site, but have settled on a 400-acre location at Inland Port Arizona in Coolidge (a project of Saint Holdings LLC of Scottsdale), southeast of metro Phoenix in Pinal County, becoming the core of an anticipated broad vehicle manufacturing hub.

“When we set out to build a factory, part of my vision was to help an entire community,” says Nikola CEO Trevor Milton. “We can now begin to realize that dream. Imagine what it will do for property values, schools, parks and other city improvements. Bringing 2,000 jobs and thousands more from other suppliers will be a huge benefit to Coolidge and the surrounding areas for decades to come.”

Nikola (pronounced neek, not nick) recently celebrated their arrival with Nikola World 2019, a comprehensive presentation to shareholders, prospective buyers and the general public, at WestWorld in Scottsdale, showcasing five zero-emission products, including Nikola Two, the first purpose-built hydrogen fuel cell Class 8 truck for long haul driving with an optimum powertrain layout; a first glimpse of Nikola Tre, a hydrogen fuel cell semi-truck for European markets; the reveal of Nikola WAV electric personal watercraft; live demonstrations of the military-grade Nikola Reckless and civilian-grade Nikola Nzt OHVs; and live demonstrations and walk-throughs of the Nikola Two.

Over 2,000 people attended the first night’s unveilings, and over 3,000 attended the following Demo Day, with almost 50 nations represented.

## Powersports

Silence is golden in the outdoors—and in the military—and Nikola has branched out beyond semi trucks into the booming powersports market. “We want to transform everything about the transportation industry,” says CEO Trevor Milton. “With Nikola’s vision, the world will be cleaner, safer and healthier.”

**NIKOLA RECKLESS:** The first product unveiled at Nikola World 2019—driven on stage via remote control—was the autonomous-capable Nikola Reckless, an all-terrain vehicle that addresses the special needs of military missions. “With virtually no sound and no heat signature, the Reckless provides new meaning to stealth and is defying all standards,” said Andrew Christian, Nikola Powersports VP of business development and defense. “We believe all military vehicles will transform to battery electric and hydrogen fuel cells in the future.”

**NIKOLA NZT:** If you’re thinking about EV range for outdoor recreation, two things: if the military isn’t concerned about it (they are very good at planning), you needn’t be, either (planning is good for everyone, in any powertrain); and EV range exceeds the typical recreational outing, anyway. The Nikola NZT off-highway vehicle (OHV), with 590 hp and 775 lb-ft of torque via four independent waterproof motors, can hit 60 mph in four seconds and has up to 150 miles of range. Technology ranges from Fox shocks with 18 inches of travel to 7” cluster and 13” infotainment screens. Attendees were able to take a test spin in the NZT on a closed course at WestWorld during Demo Day.

**NIKOLA WAV:** If there’s one place quiet, clean powertrains are literally in demand, it’s watersports. Meet the Nikola Water Adventure Vehicle (WAV) and say goodbye to “no gasoline engines” rules. Still in concept stage, the craft’s “wakeboard” architecture is another world-first. “You can feel the rush of power and acceleration in your chest, with the sound of the water and breeze in your ears. It’s zero impact and pure fun,” says VP of Powersports Jordan Darling.

## Semi-trucks

Nikola’s core vision is the manufacture of the world’s first purpose-built fuel cell Class 8 truck (18-wheeler semi), a comprehensive mission comprising increased hydrogen storage, optimized placement of the powertrain and a fully-implemented 70MPa hydrogen fueling network. They recently opened their first hydrogen station at their new Arizona headquarters and are working with industry and other OEMs to develop hydrogen standards that safely enable fueling in under 15 minutes, interoperable and able to fuel any hydrogen trucks.

The opening night of Nikola World 2019 began with Nikola CEO Trevor Milton arriving on stage behind a team of the famous Budweiser Clydesdale horses, in honor of a significant initial customer (see below). He then unveiled the **NIKOLA TWO**, calling it “the most advanced commercial truck the world has ever seen,” with up to 1,000 horsepower and 2,000 lb-ft of torque. There are currently more than 13,000 Nikola trucks on order. Nikola Two demonstration drives were set up on a track at WestWorld on the second day of the event.

Nikola Two includes a clever styling touch—the angled rear of its side windows marks where the windshield would just be starting on a conventional diesel semi with its huge engine up front. These efficiencies also provide room for spacious premium seating in the cab, a stylish “digital cockpit” with functions concentrated in 13-inch instrument cluster and 17-inch infotainment screens (including integrated onboard diagnostics), and a sleeping compartment with full-size mattress.

Power is delivered to either two wheels or four through a single-speed direct drive unit with low-noise gears. Steering is electric-hydraulic. The truck features independent suspension front and rear, and aerodynamics get a boost from an aggressive (and again stylish) rear spoiler. Lighting is all high-performance LED.

Nikola also recently announced a battery-electric truck option, utilizing the same steel and aluminum platform build and electric drive

motors, but replacing the hydrogen-electric truck’s type IV carbon fiber compressed hydrogen tank with additional battery capacity—pure EV power for the shorter-range short-haul urban trucking market.

**ANHEUSER-BUSCH** has placed an order for up to 800 zero-emission hydrogen-electric powered Nikola semi-trucks—with a range of 500 to 1,200 miles and refillable in 20 minutes, reducing idle time—to join their fleet starting in 2020. A **NIKOLA TWO** truck in Anheuser-Busch livery was a popular attraction at Nikola World, including cab walk-throughs (above). The brewer aims to convert its entire long-haul fleet to renewable powered trucks by 2025. Their *2025 Sustainability Goals* include reducing CO2 emissions by 25 percent across its value chain. Once in operation, the carbon reductions gained from these first 800 Nikola semi-trucks will reduce the brewer’s carbon emissions from logistics by more than 18 percent, equivalent to taking more than 13 thousand passenger vehicles off the road annually. AB also welcomes improved road safety through Nikola’s advanced surround viewing system.

For the European market, CEO Milton and president Mark Russell unveiled the never-before-seen **NIKOLA TRE** (photo at top right). “With a range between 500 and 750 miles depending upon load, this gorgeous vehicle will have fast hydrogen fueling in under 15 minutes, even in Europe,” said Russell. “Think about Europe with no more diesel trucks,” says Milton. “The roads will be clean, quiet and beautiful.”

Though tens of thousands of professional truck drivers are itching to get behind the wheel of a Nikola, all their products can accommodate a self-driving future, built with autonomous driving hardware in place.

“By 2028, we anticipate having over 700 hydrogen stations across the USA and Canada,” says Nikola CEO Trevor Milton. “With nearly 9 billion dollars in pre-order reservations, we are building to order, not speculation, and are very excited for what’s to come.”

Nikola is partnering with Ryder System Inc., with over 800 North American locations to provide nationwide shop, mobile and on-site maintenance coverage. ■

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# A PIRATE LOOKS AT 40

Young rebel moves into maturity BY JOE SAGE

Though actually only in its eleventh year, not 40th, the new Kia Soul has reminded us of a classic Jimmy Buffett song title. What happens when a youthful rebel hits middle age? The original Kia Soul emerged in a time of change, bringing a lively new identity to smaller vehicles in general and to the Kia brand, which after its introduction referred for a few years to the era "since Soul," as the smallish economy car maker grew into a giant.

Taking cues from Japanese "kei cars," the gen-one Soul was on the cute side—represented by the Hamstar rockin' hamsters. Gen-three is a couple of inches longer, adding legroom and cargo volume. Other dimensions are unchanged, but an evolution from its lower-mid-side molding (gen one), then crease (gen two), to an upward-sloping lower crease (gen three), gives it more of a slab-side yet forward-dynamic appearance and visually moves away from the trailing-roof feel of earlier models.

Most notably, the face has changed considerably, moving from hamster-cute to a bolder yet still edgy look reminiscent to us of Boba Fett's helmet in *Star Wars*. The vehicle is also quickly recognizable from the rear by its high-wrapped taillights.

Our sample is one of two new trims, X-Line (the

other is GT-Line). At four grand more than the base model, X-Line brings lower side cladding, bolder wheel arches, X-Line 18-inch wheels, fog lights, highlighted roof rails and optional two-tone paint. You can't really build it up toward a higher trim (no engine, transmission or infotainment options), leaving you with handheld keyed entry and start, manual climate control, and a base audio unit (which persisted in pulling our music source out of shuffle constantly, forcing a new hand-set every time).

All trims have the same moderately powered engine, except for the top turbo model (see sidebar), and all have the same IVT transmission (an "intelligent" CVT) except for the turbo (with a DCT) or an option of IVT or manual on the base model.

The price walk is tight, as is typical on a less expensive vehicle, all the tighter now with six trims. This leaves the almost-30-grand turbo or the base model with manual as the most distinct versions, with others in between a somewhat complex set of tradeoffs in features and/or personal taste.

While other novelty boxes of 10 or 15 years ago have faded away, Kia Soul—not quite as "iconic" as, say, VW Beetle, Mustang or Model T, but close—has stood the test of time and evolved well. ■



## SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	2.0L DOHC 16v inline-4
DRIVETRAIN	FWD
HP/TORQUE	147 hp / 132 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	IVT (Intelligent Variable Transmission)
SUSPENSION	F: MacPherson strut, gas shocks, stblzr bar; R: coupled torsion beam axle, gas shocks
STEERING	elec motor-driven power steering
BRAKES	F: 11.0 vented; R: 10.3 solid
WHEELS / TIRES	(X-Line) 7.5Jx18 alloy / P235/45 R18
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	165.2 / 102.4 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	6.7 in
TURNING CIRCLE	34.8 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	39.4 / 39.5 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	41.1 / 38.8 in
CARGO CAPACITY	24.2 to 18.7 (w board) / 62.1 cu.ft
WEIGHT	LX base model 2844 lb / X-Line tbd
FUEL / CAPACITY	.87 octane reg unl / 14.3 gal
MPG	27/33/30 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	\$21,490
CARPETED FLOOR MATS	130
DESTINATION CHARGE	995
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$22,615</b>

**Lineup:**

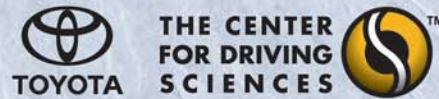
<b>LX:</b> 6-spd manual this trim only (opt IVT), 16" steel wheels, 7" UVO touchscreen	\$17,490
<b>S:</b> 16" alloy wheels, Tricot cloth seats, fwd collision avoidance, blind spot collision warning	20,290
<b>GT-Line:</b> 18" GT-Line alloys, leather wheel and shift knob, red accents front bumper & side sills	20,290
<b>X-Line:</b> 18" X-Line alloys, X-Line body kit, leather wheel and shift knob, roof rails	21,490
<b>EX:</b> 17" alloys (18" avail), keyless entry/start, power driver's seat incl lumbar, heated front seats, dual-zone auto climate	22,690
<b>GT-Line Turbo:</b> 201 hp / 195 lb-ft 1.6L direct-inject turbo, 7-spd dual-clutch trans (DCT), 18" alloys, bigger brakes, 10.25" UVO touchscreen w Nav, Harmon/Kardon audio, smart cruise control	27,490

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EV	\$33,950
EV+:	heated/vented leather, other upgrades. 35,950



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### A WEEK WITH : 2019 INFINITI QX80 LIMITED 4WD

## Luxury Yacht Battleship

BY JOE SAGE

The Infiniti QX80 is a proud beast, dominant on the road, carrying up to eight people and/or up to almost 100 cubic feet of cargo. The QX80 is built in Japan with body-on-frame construction based on the Nissan Titan full-size pickup. Its off-road capabilities have a solid foundation, from rear-drive bias (with near-perfect 52/48 weight distribution), to standard auto-leveling four-wheel independent suspension, clearing the road by 9.2 inches. 4WD models (the only kind in Limited top trim) have a pure four-high/four-low transfer case, snow mode and hill start assist—plus tow mode, as its roughly three-ton bulk can pull another 8500 pounds.

Infiniti QX80 is a hard-working SUV in a tuxedo. Tough, but luxurious. Luxurious, but tough.

Interior finishes are the typical Infiniti mix of multi-tone premium leathers, satin metals and rich, open-pore woods. We had the QX80 during the rarest of events, snow in the upper Valley, so we didn't need AC, but noted generous vents for all three rows. In the cold, we had solid heat, effective defrosting for the vehicle's large glass areas, and the indispensable (though perhaps *too* hot) heated steering wheel. Controls include a healthy mix of screen interfaces and manual knobs and switches.

Bottom line on features in any vehicle is that

whether they are mechanical, electronic, pneumatic, hydraulic, magic or otherwise, they should be intuitive. Whereas this vehicle is suitable for more than half a soccer team, we had with us this week just one 9-year-old soccer player, who happily took over the second row and quickly found everything he wanted, even in the dark—from entertainment to charging to heated seats to overhead lights—with no trouble or hesitation at all.

Our QX80 was a solid performer in heavy rain, snow and—most challenging of all—tire-grabbing and skate-inducing deep slush. It's quite maneuverable for a big three-row utility, taking half the space we had expected for foul-weather U-turns. Nissan-Infiniti is generally tops with backup cameras (including 360-degree views), though this one was less useful at night. The inside rear view mirror did not tilt up enough for a tall driver, but the attempt led us to discovering its exceptional super-wide rear video mirror.

You can get into a QX80 for \$65,400 (Luxe with 2WD, or 4WD for \$3100 more), with the same V8, full leather and more. The only other model, our top Limited trim (4WD only), at just under \$90,000, adds upgraded tech and creature comfort features inside and out, including a wide array of electronic handling and passive safety features, upgraded audio (both are Bose systems), a dual 8-inch theater package for the second row, model-specific 22-inch wheels, and available paint and interior

### SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	5.6L aluminum DOHC 32v dir inj V8
HP/TORQUE	400 hp / 413 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	7-speed auto w manual mode, adaptive shift control downshift rev matching
DRIVETRAIN	4WD
SUSPENSION	F: dual-flow path twin-tube shocks; R: double-wishbone, 36mm stblzr bar
STEERING	R: double-wishbone, auto-leveling, hydraulic body motion control system (delete stblzr bar)
BRAKES	vented discs: F: 13.78x1.18" / R: 13.78x0.79"
WHEELS	22x8 dark forged alum alloy, full-size spare
TIRES	275/50R22 all-season
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	210.2 / 121.2 in
TURNING CIRCLE	41.3 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	9.2 in
SEATING CAPACITY	8, or 7 w 2nd row captain's chairs
HEADROOM (F/2/3)	39.9 / 40.0 / 36.8 in
LEGROOM (F/2/3)	39.6 / 41.0 / 28.8 in
CARGO CAPACITY	16.6 / 50± / 95± cu.ft
WEIGHT / TOW CAPACITY	5926 lb / 8500 lb
FUEL CAPACITY	26.0 gal
MPG	13/19/15 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	\$89,800
ALL-SEASON PKG: A/S floor mats, cargo protector	355
PREMIUM PAINT: Anthracite Gray	500
DESTINATION CHARGE	1295
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$91,950</b>

colors specific to this trim—our sample's Anthracite Gray with Graphite/Stone interior. A handful of standalone options—from wireless smartphone charging, to wind deflectors, to a weight-distributing trailer hitch, to an attached tent—are surprisingly reasonable, keeping an every-bell-and-whistle build at about \$95 grand. ■



# Loyalty has its rewards

by Joe Sage

We've seen manufacturers develop sales based at least in part on value, only to look for every opportunity to nudge pricing uphill as soon as they sense growing popularity. Subaru has the most loyal word-of-mouth customers in the business. One look at the price on this next-to-top-trim Forester and all its inclusions (sidebar), and you will see they remain equally loyal in return.

Though you will recognize it immediately, this is a brand new Subaru Forester. The new fifth-generation Forester (actually introduced over a year ago at the 2018 New York auto show) is built atop the new Subaru Global Platform, after years of being built atop the Impreza platform. Since the Impreza was already the first to move to the Global Platform, this is not a philosophical change for Forester, and it provides benefits—better handling, a quieter cabin, higher safety standards, and room.

The new model is about an inch longer, wider and taller, and cargo volume is increased by about one and a half to almost two cubic feet. It has a larger fuel tank, on top of also now getting higher fuel mileage (and this despite being a little heavier). That's not the only win-win: despite being a little bigger, the new Forester has higher approach, breakover and departure angles, while retaining its bragworthy 8.7-inch ground clearance,

all enhancing its off-pavement capabilities. Tow capacity remains the same, at 1500 lb.

There are five trim levels, of which our Limited is next-to-top. All now have Active Torque Vectoring, Apple/Android, and Starlink apps. All except the base model include a power sliding moonroof. Yet with all these add-ons, the new models run just \$500 more than the prior year, with a base Forester starting at just \$24,295. That's loyalty to you.

Forester is not the sexiest SUV or crossover, but it gets the job done and doesn't blow the budget. It's a good provider. Long-term relationship material. And in a world where 60 percent of its competitors look almost exactly the same, we could even take that as a plus. We have a hunch its satisfied owners do. (And an available Sport model, with black grille and foglight surrounds and some tasteful red highlights, is actually moderately sexy.)

We had a lot of long voice memos on this one, often not a good sign, as we may be nitpicking and dig-dig-digging through manuals. On the Forester, it was a good sign, by and large. We were indeed digging, as quite a few of the Subaru's features are set up in ways that differ from almost everybody else. "It's what makes a Subaru a Subaru," as they say. Having dug, though, we found an impressive range of features well implemented, especially for the price. We only have these for a few days, but any owner will actually enjoy learning all this vehicle's tricks. You'll spend a bit of time getting oriented, but pretty quickly you will have

made everything your own, quirky or not, and that's all in line with the spirit of the brand.

Any nitpicks? While the upper display screen atop the dash is extremely well shielded from sunlight, the main screen is not shielded at all, though its surface didn't really have significant glare.

The CVT (continuously variable transmission) is a feature most colleagues profess to hate. We're not nuts about them, either, but we're convinced most owners will never know or care that they have one, or if they do know they won't care. Power feels good in this one, and Lineartronic faux shifts keep pace, though we might have wished for the up/down shift capability of a manual at times. The intelligent and sport modes of SI-Drive can be used to optimize these characteristics quite a bit. (There is no manual available in any trim.)

Its auto start-stop and lane-keeping features are aggressive and hard to defeat for long, and its pre-collision braking gave us one full panic stop over someone waiting to turn from a different lane.

Though not an intense off-roader, Forester benefits from X-Drive's modes for dirt, snow and mud.

Forester has the overall image of an SUV (which is how Subaru categorizes it, although they also put Crosstrek and Outback in this group, as well as of course Ascent), but its greenhouse height doesn't weigh much or raise its center of gravity all that dramatically. At 182 hp, it may not be a rally car, but it does have rally cars in the family, and it delivers a spirited drive when pushed.

The base trim Forester starts at \$24,295, with a top trim Touring at \$34,295. The engine and fuel mileage are the same on all models; EyeSight driver assist is included on all, as is some form of Starlink multimedia; a moonroof is on all but the bottom trim, while leather is on the top two trims; tow capacity, AWD, X-Mode and hill descent are the same on all. If you want to go all out, you'll find a favorable price walk to the top. If you want to economize, you'll find a favorable feature set at every level. When it comes to value, you'll find Subaru very much still has its eye on the ball. ■

## SPECIFICATIONS

**ENGINE** .....2.5L 4-cyl DOHC 16v boxer, alum block/heads  
**DRIVETRAIN** .....Symmetrical AWD  
**HP/TORQUE** .....182 hp / 176 lb-ft  
**TRANSMISSION** .....Lineartronic CVT; dual-mode X-Mode (Snow/Dirt, Deep Snow/Mud); hill descent  
**SUSPENSION** .....4-whl indep F: MacPherson struts, lower L-arms, coils, stblzr bar; R: dbl wishbn, coils, stblzr bar  
**STEERING** .....elec power assist rack & pinion  
**BRAKES** .....pwr assist 4-whl disc, EBD, actv torque vector  
**WHEELS** .....18" machine finish black alloys  
**TIRES** .....225/55R18 98H all season  
**LENGTH / WB** .....182.1 / 105.1 in  
**GROUND CLEARANCE** .....8.7 in  
**APPROACH/BRKVR/DEPART** .....22.9° / 19.6° / 24.6°  
**HEADROOM (F/R)** .....(w/moonroof) 40.2 / 37.7 in  
**LEGROOM (F/R)** .....43.3 / 39.4 in  
**CARGO CAPACITY** .....(w/moonroof) 33.0 / 70.9 cu.ft  
**WEIGHT** .....3541 lb  
**FUEL / CAPACITY** .....regular unl / 16.6 gal  
**MPG** .....26/33/29 (city/hwy/comb)

**LIMITED INCL:** blind spot; rear cross traffic; dual-mode X-mode w hill descent, 18" alloys in black w machine finish; all-weather package (heated front seats, heated mirrors, wiper de-icer); auto up/down front windows; auto LED heads w height adjustment control; high beam assist; steering responsive headlights; color LCD combo meter; dual USB in rear console; dark tint glass; foldable mirrors w turn indicators; fogs with chrome trim; wifi hotspot (monthly cost); keyless entry/start; perforated leather upholstery; leather shift handle; color LCD multifunction display; power moonroof; power rear gate w auto close & height memory; rear AC outlets; voice-act dual-zone auto climate; body color rear roof spoiler; black roof rails; black underguards on front, rear, sides.

<b>BASE PRICE</b> .....	<b>\$30,795</b>
<b>OPTION PACKAGE</b> .....	1695
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subaru Starlink 8-in high-res touchscreen multimedia navigation system; AM-FM-CD; Apple/Android, Starlink cloud apps; SiriusXM all-access radio, traffic, travel link; Bluetooth phone, text, audio streaming; voice-activated controls; TomTom voice-activated nav; near field communication (NFC)</li> <li>• Harman Kardon 576-watt equiv 9-sprkr premium audio</li> <li>• Reverse automatic braking;</li> <li>• Heated steering wheel</li> </ul>	
<b>DESTINATION CHARGE</b> .....	975
<b>TOTAL</b> .....	<b>\$33,465</b>

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## A WEEK WITH : 2019 GMC TERRAIN SLT AWD 2.0T BLACK EDITION

# Persona and purpose

BY JOE SAGE

There's something inherently appealing about an SUV from GMC, the truck division of General Motors. By definition, it is expected to present a trucklike bearing, a stylishly rugged look and a sense of purpose. The whole SUV-crossover thing remains open to interpretation, but as GM's truck division, GMC keeps it simple on the consumer website: the compact Terrain, three-row Acadia and big Yukon are "SUVs," while Canyon and Sierra pickups are "trucks." Simple? To a point.

Terrain is a cousin to Chevrolet Equinox, which Chevy calls a crossover. GMC's media site follows the consumer site SUV-truck groupings for specifications, but for images pairs Terrain and Acadia as "crossovers," puts Yukon with the pickups as a "truck" and does not mention SUVs at all. That's inside baseball, but we mention it in the course of getting our arms around the Terrain's persona.

We had mood swings with the gen-one Terrain, in our first review poking fun at its blocky styling as looking like it was standing still even at speed (the inverse of what people often say about swoopy performance cars), then appreciated its burly Sierra pickup-like charm the second time around. We were interested to get our hands on this gen-two Terrain, to see which heartstrings it might pluck.

The new Terrain (now in its second model year) has been visually transformed. No longer blocky, it's

arguably more generic than gen-one, but is defined by its trademark, trucklike, 100 percent GMC grille.

If they've thought about it, as GMC clearly has, vehicles sent to us for evaluation are outfitted in ways that will show their best face or emphasize their purpose. This one, with metallic black paint, 19-inch black wheels and other Black Edition style points, plus gold-stitched black leather, rich woods and brushed metals inside, along with a full set of tech packages (priced at considerable value), suggests "premium" and "urban," while its roof rack with crossbars suggests "active lifestyle"—equal parts modern and a bit tough.

Its tech tends toward comfort, entertainment and electronic driver assist, all toward the urban side, while its selectable 2WD/4WD, traction control, decent ground clearance and (with this engine) 3500-pound tow capacity (with low-range control for towing downhill) suggest it's ready for a weekend of biking, kayaking and dirt or gravel roads.

We made many notes during the week about switches and controls we would reengineer. Its shift interface (a distracting center stack cluster of differently sized switches and buttons you push or pull to change among gears) was top among these, with small and largely hidden headlights controls and an odd parking brake switch also noted.

In an extremely competitive segment, it's the GMC Terrain's truck division character that may let it stand out the most. Call it a crossover, call it an SUV, but when the weekend beckons, you might just as likely say, "let's take my truck." ■

### SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	.....(opt) 2.0L 16v DOHC turbo four-cylinder
DRIVETRAIN	.....AWD (also avail FWD)
HP/TORQUE	.....252 hp / 260 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	.....9-spd automatic
SUSPENSION	.....F: MacPherson strut w coils, direct-acting stblzr bar; R: four-link independent
STEERING	.....elec power assist rack & pinion
BRAKES	.....(2.0T) front 12.6, rear 11.3, low-drag calipers
WHEELS / TIRES	.....17"/18"/19" / P235/50R19
LENGTH / WB	.....182.3 / 107.3 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....(17" > 19" wheels) 37.4 > 41.6 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....7.9 in
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....(w/o sunroof) 40 / 38.5 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....40.9 / 39.7 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....29.6 / 63.3 / 81 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....(2.0T AWD) 3756 lb
TOW CAPACITY	.....(2.0T) 3500 lb
FUEL CAPACITY	.....15.6 gal
MPG	.....21/26/23 (city/hwy/comb)

**SLT INCLUDES:** HID headlamps w LED signature lighting, leather steering wheel, keyless entry-start, fold-flat front passenger seat, 18" machined aluminum wheels w dark grey accents (our were upgraded to 19"), leather-appointed seats, heated front seats, dual-zone auto climate.

BASE PRICE	.....	<b>\$32,600</b>
ENGINE: 2.0L Turbo	.....	1495
BLACK EDITION: 19" gloss black alum wheels, gloss black roof rails, dark grille, black accents & trim badging	.....	795
EBONY TWILIGHT METALLIC PAINT	.....	395
PREFERRED PKG: dual exhausts, roof rack cross rails, hands-free liftgate, heated wheel, front psngr 6-way pwr seat w pwr lumbar, seat/mirrors memory, univ remote	.....	1250
INTERIOR PROTECTION PKG: all-weather mats	.....	200
INFOTAINMENT PKG II: nav, voice recog, Bose, HD	.....	1180
TRAILERING EQUIPMENT w 7-wire connection	.....	450
DRIVER ALERT PKG I: lane change, blind side, rear cross traffic, rear park assist, safety alert seat	.....	445
DRIVER ALERT PKG II: adaptive cruise, low-speed & pedestrian auto brake, lane keep w lane depart warn, fwd collision alert, intel high beam, follow distance ind	.....	745
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....	1195
<b>TOTAL</b>	.....	<b>\$40,750</b>





45 years of Volkswagen Golf

▼ On March 29, 1974, the **Volkswagen** plant in Wolfsburg officially started production of the Golf. Nobody knew that the successor to the legendary Beetle would end up selling more than 35 million units through seven generations. A new Golf has been ordered somewhere in the world on an average of every 41 seconds since the start of production 45 years ago, an average of about 780,000 per year. In the US, more than 2.6 million Golf family models have been sold over this timespan. The Golf has earned a spot on *Car and Driver's* 10Best list for the last 13 years in a row, and the current-generation Mk 7 Golf was named North American Car of the Year when it debuted for the 2015 model year. For 2019, the Golf is available in two trims—S and SE—both powered by a 147-hp 1.4T engine paired with either a six-speed manual or eight-speed automatic. All have standard Volkswagen Car-Net® App-Connect, forward collision warning, autonomous emergency braking, pedestrian monitoring, blind spot monitor and rear traffic alert. Pricing for the 2019 VW Golf S starts at \$21,845 with six-speed manual, \$22,945 with the automatic.

▼ International technology and systems company TÖNNJES of Delmenhorst, Germany, is launching a new **vehicle licensing** system in Brazil through a joint venture with local authorities, affecting production and administration of Brazilian license plates, as well as tracking of citizenry. The key feature of the new system

is “Track & Trace,” which means all stages of the process will be recorded, from production to fitting the plates on a vehicle, said to aim at preventing abuse and manipulation. A central database will manage all license plates with a unique identification number, which is laser engraved into the plate foil using cryptographic codes. Rio de Janeiro state was first to introduce them, in September 2018. The other 26 states in the largest South American coun-



TÖNNJES vehicle license plate system

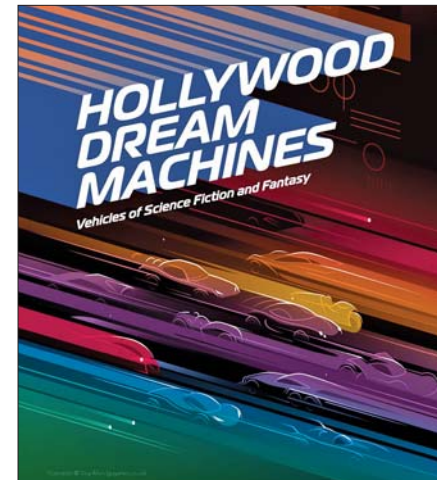
try will follow over the next 18 months. Brazil is one of the largest markets in the world with over 60 million registered vehicles. Around 2.5 million new vehicles are registered every year. However, “experts estimate that 10 to 20 percent of vehicles on Brazil’s roads are not registered or have fake license plates,” says TÖNNJES managing director Olaf Renz, “(making) it difficult to identify offenders through their

license plates in hit-and-run incidents and robberies. The new technology makes it harder to ‘clone’ license plates for crimes.” The system is also hoped to be a cash cow, as an increase in registered vehicles would generate millions in tax revenue. Renz says the system will ensure more fairness and efficiency in the use of toll systems and border controls. The new license plate system was developed by TÖNNJES to specific requirements of Brazilian authorities, with technology, software and raw materials supplied by the Germans, but production carried out in Brazil. Particular focus is on the active member states in the Mercosur trade bloc (Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina and Uruguay).

▼ Following on the heels of its display at WonderCon 2019, the **Petersen Automotive Museum** has a new exhibit featuring over 40 Hollywood vehicles from cult classic films, as well as video games. *Hollywood Dream Machines: Vehicles of Science Fiction and Fantasy* is produced in collaboration with Comic-Con Museum of San Diego, with additional support from Audi

and Microsoft. Along with iconic automobiles, the Mullin Family Grand Salon exhibit showcases a selection of concept artwork, props and costumes to explore and analyze the ways in which the speculative fiction genre pushes the boundaries of human imagination. Series represented in the display will span the niches of speculative fiction with emphasis on dystopian future films such as *Back to the Future*,

*Blade Runner*, *Ghost in the Shell*, *Transformers* and *I, Robot*. Key vehicles on display include the Warthog from *Halo*, the 2035 Audi RSQ from *I, Robot*, the DeLorean time machine from *Back to the Future*,



the Weyland Industries RT01 Group Transport from *Prometheus*, the 2008 Audi R8 from *Iron Man*, Bumblebee from the *Transformers* series, the GM Ultralight from *Demolition Man*, various Batmobiles and more. “*Hollywood Dream Machines* will be the biggest exhibit of our 25th anniversary,” says Petersen executive director Terry L Karges. “With more than 40 vehicles from the silver screen spread across the museum, the exhibit is an ode to the industry that Los Angeles was built upon.” The exhibit also features “Worlds Reimagined,” a Microsoft HoloLens immersive mixed reality experience giving guests an opportunity to see the Warthog from *Halo* and the *Back to the Future* DeLorean in a whole new way. *Hollywood Dream Machines: Vehicles of Science Fiction and Fantasy* runs through March 15, 2020.

▼ **BMW** and its subsidiary **Rolls-Royce** Motor Cars both have new design chiefs. The new Head of Design for Rolls-Royce is Jozef Kaba, 46, who has spent the majority of his career at a senior level in automotive design. He joins Rolls-Royce from BMW Group, where he has been Head of Design Studio BMW since 2017. Passionate about car design from an early age, and known for an obsession with detail, Kaba, of Slovakia, completed a degree in Product and Industrial Design from the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava in 1993, then graduated with a Master of Art in Car Design from the Royal College of Art, London, UK in 1997. At the age of just

20, Kaba was one of the youngest designers ever to join VW Group. He advanced rapidly and in 1998 was awarded project lead for the Bugatti Veyron, for which he designed the exterior, gaining him global



Domagoj Dukec, BMW

Jozef Kaba, Rolls-Royce

recognition. He then broadened his experience within VW Group, next as Head of Exterior Design at Audi AG, then the same at Czech-based Skoda Auto, where he was recognized for influencing the brand’s design ethos over a broad range of models, while also maintained design responsibility for small volume projects, including limited and special editions and show cars. Kaba will be based at Rolls-Royce design studios in Goodwood, West Sussex,

represented the latest in Ford engineering and design, developed to meet shifting consumer needs. Its sleek looks were a departure from the boxy sedan shapes of the time, and its 140-horsepower 3.0L V6 featured multi-port fuel injection. Taurus continued to evolve with the addition of a SHO model in 1989, with a 220-hp high-performance V6. By 1992, Taurus was America’s best-selling car. It went on to become a staple in stock car racing when



Last Ford Taurus

Domagoj Dukec, previously head of BMW i and BMW M design, has assumed design responsibility for the entire BMW brand, a systematic consolidation of design responsibility aimed at focusing BMW brand design more consistently.

▼ The last **Ford Taurus** rolled off the line at Chicago Assembly Plant on March 1, marking the end of US production of the

it entered NASCAR in 1998, the vehicle of choice for numerous race teams, delivering many championships. The nameplate briefly ended in 2006, then was revived as an all-new car in 2008. Ford is investing \$1 billion into its Chicago Assembly Plant and Chicago Stamping Plant, and adding 500 jobs to expand capacity to build the all-new 2020 Ford Explorer, Ford Police Interceptor Utility and Lincoln Aviator. ■

# UPCOMING FEATURES

Ram 3500 Longhorn Crew Cab Dually



Ford F-150 4x2 SuperCrew



Corvette Grand Sport Convertible



Two-day, 300-mile road rally to Sedona and Flagstaff



Photo: Tyson Hugie

Mudfest: NWAPA Outdoor Activity Vehicle of the Year



2020 Mercedes-Benz GLE 450



Nissan Leaf SL Plus



TerrainHopper USA (Tempe) off-road mobility vehicles



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Shown: Vintage Iron Speed Shop Clock / SKU: 09-BKG-VI

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The Greasemonkeys have the feeling their full line of durable all-steel portable toolboxes with lift-out tray and a variety of the most cool car guy graphics (five styles now and more coming!) just may be too good to stash tools in—we may have to call them "deco-boxes"!

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Wrench-In-Hand Steel Tool Box / SKU: 10-BKG-WCL

Vintage Pickup Truck Steel Tool Box / SKU: 10-BKG-VT

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— Many thanks! Jackie B.

♥ I just had the most wonderful buying experience! I only hope my father asks for something from The Busted Knuckle Garage for Christmas so I can do business with such a wonderful company once more.  
— Cheers! Michelle

♥ My husband just loves everything, especially me for getting him such cool stuff. I'd have to say we will be lifetime customers, oh ya!! Thank you, Greasemonkeys.  
— Sincerely, Pam

♥ First, let me be the one thanking you! I honestly cannot remember such extraordinary customer service.  
— Thanks again, "JR" Jean



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