

# ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

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2020 Chevrolet  
Corvette C8  
Stingray

**AUCTION RECAP**  
**CONCOURS & SHOWS**  
**C8 CORVETTE FIRST DRIVE**  
**/ AND MUCH MORE**

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





# Yep, it's that good

Corvette lovers have been dreaming of a mid-engined version of the great American sports car for decades. Now, for 2020, that wish has been fulfilled. After spending two fun-packed days in the Nevada desert putting the new Vette through its paces, I'm thrilled to report that it's one of the best performance cars you can buy—for any amount of money.

Story and photos by Paul Strauss  
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Thanks to some incredible engineering and a little help from physics, the new C8 Chevrolet Corvette Stingray offers muscle car launch speeds, the handling prowess of a Porsche, a luxurious interior, reasonable cargo space and the latest in technology.

The mid-engined configuration changes the Corvette's center of gravity dramatically, shifting roughly 60 percent of the weight to the rear of the car, improving cornering and traction. That change also means a shorter, lower hood, which increases forward visibility, keeping your eyes on the road ahead instead of on the hoodline.

The C8 packs a new 6.2-liter small block V8 that sits just behind the passenger compartment. The LT2 power plant makes 495 horsepower and up to 470 lb-ft of torque with the Z51 package (490 hp/465 lb-ft without). This engine has a built-in dry sump oil system, which means it stays lubricated even during hard cornering. It's also more efficient at power delivery than the outgoing model thanks not only to its position, but to its new 8-speed Tremec dual-clutch transmission. This gearbox is always at the ready with the next gear, so there's no loss of torque as it upshifts and downshifts. Some may gripe about the lack of a manual, but once you realize just how fast and smooth the DCT is, it's a sacrifice worth making.

Whether on the street or on the track, the transmission always seemed to know just the right gear to be in. It's especially impressive in Track mode, where it holds right up to the redline before



## SPECIFICATIONS

<b>ENGINE</b> .....	LT2 6.2L V8 VVT with direct injection & Active Fuel Mgmt (cylinder deactivation; cast alum block w cast-in iron cyl liners & nodular main bearing caps; cast alum heads; 59cc chambers; 2/cyl OHV, dual-equal VVT
<b>FIRING ORDER</b> .....	1-8-7-2-6-5-4-3; (with deact 1-7-6-4)
<b>LUBRICATION / SYSTEM</b> .....	dry sump-type incl oil-spray piston cooling; Dexos 2 0W40 synthetic
<b>COMPRESSION RATIO</b> .....	11.5:1
<b>HP/TORQUE</b> .....	(w perf exhaust) 495 hp / 470 lb-ft
<b>TRANSMISSION</b> .....	M1L 8-spd dual-clutch (DCT)
<b>DRIVETRAIN</b> .....	RWD
<b>0-1-60 / TOP SPEED</b> .....	(w Z51 pkg) 2.9 sec / 194 mph
<b>SUSPENSION</b> .....	<b>F:</b> short/long arm (SLA) dbl wishbone, forged aluminum upper & cast aluminum L-shape lower control arms; monotube shocks (46mm); Magnetic Selective Ride Control 4.0 avail on Z51. Adjustable front lift w memory avail. <b>R:</b> short/long arm (SLA) dbl wishbone, forged alum upper & cast alum L-shape lower control arms; direct-acting stblzr bar; monotube shocks (46mm); Magnetic Selective Ride Control 4.0 avail w Z51
<b>STEERING</b> .....	Bosch/ZF variable-ratio rack-and-pinion w elec power assist; ratio 15.7:1; incl Active Steer Stops w avail Magnetic Ride Control 4.0
<b>BRAKES</b> .....	Front & rear E-boost-assisted discs w Brembo 4-piston/2-piece front & 4-piston/monobloc rear calipers. (Z51: front & rear E-boost-assisted discs w Brembo 4-piston monobloc caliper front & rear <b>F:</b> 12.6x1.18 (Z51: 13.3x1.18) <b>R:</b> 13.6x1.02 (Z51: 13.8x1.06)
<b>WHEELS/TIRES</b> .....	<b>F:</b> 19x8.5 / 245/35ZR19 <b>R:</b> 20x11 / 305/30ZR20
<b>TURNING CIRCLE</b> .....	38.05 ft (w/Mag Ride 36.42 ft)
<b>LENGTH/WHEELBASE</b> .....	182.3 / 107.2 in
<b>HEADROOM/LEGROOM</b> .....	37.9 / 42.8 in
<b>WEIGHT</b> .....	(dry) 3366 lb
<b>CARGO VOLUME</b> .....	12.6 cu.ft
<b>MPG</b> .....	15/27/19 (city/hwy/comb)
<b>STARTING PRICE</b> .....	<b>\$58,900</b>
.....(incl destination)	<b>\$59,995</b>
<b>PRICE AS TESTED</b> .....	<b>\$83,330</b>





shifting under hard throttle application. As I made my way around the 2.2-mile north-south circuit at Spring Mountain Motorsports Ranch, I started out using the paddle shifters as my pro driving instructor recommended. But after a few laps, I switched into full-automatic and let the DCT work its magic all on its own. It was pretty amazing to hear the lead car calling out manual shift points and to see how the gearbox was nearly lock-step with his recommendations.

The C8 corners like no Corvette ever before it. It's precise and balanced and in some ways one of the easiest sports cars to drive—certainly with this kind of power. Sure, you can get yourself into trouble if you disable enough nannies and try hard enough, but I haven't felt this confident going this fast on a track since the first time I drove a Nissan GT-R. While it has supercar looks, the Corvette is in some ways a better car to drive than much pricier models from Ferrari or Lamborghini. It's more predictable than other exotics I've driven, and that means you feel more in control at higher speeds. Keep in mind that I only drove in vehicles with adaptive damping aka "Magnetic Selective Ride Control" (an \$1895 option), so it's possible that the base suspension isn't quite as agile.

Push your foot down, and the C8 goes. With launch control engaged, you'll get pushed back into your seat like a rocketship, with 60 mph approaching in just 2.9 seconds (assuming you go with the Z51 package). Even without using launch control, it's damned quick off the line. The passing power in this car is truly impressive.

One place I wouldn't expect high marks from

During a break, Hattie B's Nashville hot chicken in Vegas. Spicy, exceptionally crispy, just the right amount of grease. Used 20 napkins. Thumbs way up.

any previous-gen Corvette is an autocross course. That all changes with the C8. This car is crazy quick around the bends and is impressively flat as it corners. I barely applied my brakes throughout the entire course, in part thanks to the super sticky Michelin Pilot Sport 4S summer tires that come with the Z51 package.

Chevy really wants drivers to enjoy their Corvettes no matter how or where they drive them, so they offer lots of configurability. There are drive modes for touring, sporty everyday driving, aggressive track driving and inclement weather, along with customizable modes which let you store your preferences for throttle, steering, transmission and suspension (assuming you have the adaptive damping option).

The digital 12-inch instrument cluster automatically changes based on drive mode and is also highly configurable so you can show just the information you find important. There's even a stealth mode for night, which dims pretty much everything on screen except the speedometer. Chevy also recognizes that rear and side visibility can be a challenge with a car like this and includes an HD digital rearview mirror and rear park assist as standard equipment.

Blind spot monitors, rear cross-traffic alert and a front curb-view camera are worthwhile options for protecting this special ride from parking lot





dings and dents. There's also a nifty option which lets you raise the front end of the car up by an inch, which should reduce front splitter scrapes on speed bumps and parking lot ramps. It can even store GPS coordinates of up to 1000 locations where you want it to automatically lift its front.

As Corvette interiors go, the C7 was leaps and bounds above the C6, and the C8 goes even further. It's a dramatic cockpit, with bold angular lines, and makes no bones about the fact that the driver is the most important person inside. All of the controls are angled toward the driver, and the left side of the cabin just feels more spacious than the right. That's not to say that it's cramped for either seat, though the right seat position does have fairly limited elbow room due to the design of the center console.

There are three different seats available, with progressively higher levels of bolstering—the base GT1, the mid-range GT2 and the track-oriented Competition Sport seats (see photo). I found the adjustable side bolstering to be quite good on these seats, though the hip and butt area is a little narrow for anyone with a wider frame. Headroom isn't too bad for something this sleek, and I was able to comfortably fit inside with an XXL racing helmet on without being a contortionist.

The materials in use are top notch—especially in the top-end 3LT trim I experienced. Fully tricked out, there's real aluminum, carbon fiber, elegant hand-stitched leather and not the slightest bit of plastic to be seen. My vehicle was decked out in a bold and beautiful two-tone blue leather called "Tension/Twilight."

Thanks to some clever packaging, the C8 also

Early mule in Australia // Final chassis and frame // Mid-engine provides incredible balance // Interior with your choice of seatbelts in a variety of colors.

has an impressive amount of storage—at least as exotic sports cars go. Since the engine has moved to the middle, there's a front trunk ("frunk") that's great for groceries or other small bags. But there's also a storage area behind the engine that's actually big enough to hold two full sets of golf clubs if stacked properly. Keep in mind that's the same space where the removable roof section would be stored, so you can't pack both at the same time.

While the Corvette has been around for more than 65 years, moving to a mid-engined platform represents both a major risk and a major revolution for Chevrolet's prized performance nameplate. Given the fact that this is basically the first generation of a whole new car, Chevy's engineers and designers got almost everything right. What they've achieved is something very special indeed—a true supercar that starts at just under \$60,000 and tops out under \$90,000 with every single bell and whistle.

There's really no other car out there that comes close to its price/performance ratio. For a vehicle to start out with this strong an initial showing, I can only imagine what Chevy can achieve in future years as they refine and upgrade the C8. It's almost a sure bet we'll eventually see a Z06 variant, and I wouldn't doubt some kind of hybrid-electric enhancements down the road, too. But if you're one of the lucky ones to be getting your hands on a 2020 Corvette Stingray, you will be very, very happy with your purchase decision. ■



## Our Top 10 reasons the C8 is a fantastic sports car

**10) THE SIDE PROFILE:** The C8 has bold and imposing looks from every angle, but it's especially awesome when viewed from the side or a 3/4 angle. With its short front overhang, large rear wheel arches and angular air intakes, this Vette has more in common with European exotics than ever. Everything about its aerodynamic design says this thing is a fast car, and that proves itself out with the Corvette's impressive powertrain.

**9) CONFIGURABILITY:** Not only does the Corvette offer multiple drive modes for touring, sport, track and bad weather, it lets drivers customize each of its tuning parameters and store them for quick recall. You can tweak the car's throttle mapping, steering, exhaust and suspension tuning, and it will also remember your settings between restarts. In addition, its 12-inch digital information display changes dynamically based on the mode you're in, and its elements can be configured, as well. Track mode is our favorite, both for its aggressively-tuned steering and suspension, as well as its slick visuals with an emphasis on the tachometer, temperature and pressure gauges.

**8) STORAGE SPACE:** When you think of two-seat sports coupes, the last thing you expect is any meaningful space for luggage or other items. But the designers and engineers at Chevy managed to figure out a way not only to provide space for backpacks, groceries and other small items where a front engine would normally go, but there's an impressive amount of storage behind the engine. There's enough room to carry the removable roof panel and a couple of small bags, or two full golf bags stacked on top of each other.

**7) THE COCKPIT:** A car this special deserves a dramatic interior, and the Vette achieves that with its sharply-angled contours and no-holds-barred approach to making the driver feel like the master of his or her domain. Every control and screen is angled towards the pilot. The squared-off steering wheel allows easier entry and exit and improved sightlines over the dashboard. The aggress-

sively-bolstered competition sport seats keep you firmly in place while hard cornering. And in the top-of-the-line 3LT trim, you get real aluminum, premium leather and microsuede, and can opt for real carbon fiber trim. The cabin has great legroom for both the driver and passenger, and there's enough headroom to drive comfortably on track with a helmet on.

**6) IT'S A SURPRISE GRAND TOURER:** With its comfortable cabin and reasonable cargo space, a road trip in the Stingray is only a natural thought. With heated and ventilated seats, dual-zone climate control, and tech like Apple CarPlay and a 14-speaker Bose audio system, it's got the creature comforts down. But what really makes the C8 so good on-road is how composed it is. Not only is the transmission and torque application smooth as butter, but its suspension can soak up bumps pretty well too, though we highly recommend the Magnetic Ride Control option, which dynamically adapts ride firmness based on speed, driving surface, drive mode and more. Also, the Stingray manages an impressive 27 mpg on the highway, thanks in part to cylinder deactivation tech.

**5) ITS ORIGIN STORY:** Over the years, there had been numerous rumors that Chevy was working on a mid-engined Corvette, but it wasn't until 2014 that they built out a working proof of concept. This awesomely weird looking test prototype, dubbed "BlackJack," was used to wring out some of the early kinks of the engine layout, hiding a highly modified C7 cabin, inside a custom-machined body built from billet aluminum, and a small block V8 behind its passenger compartment. It was made to look like an Australian Holden Ute and even had a non-functional front radiator to help convince onlookers it was a front-engine car, should they stumble across it during development.

**4) THE CHASSIS:** Built primarily from cast aluminum, with strategically-placed bits of magnesium, carbon fiber and fiberglass, the structure of the C8 is incredibly stiff, even with the roof removed. These materials help keep

weight down, as well, and combined with the rearward weight distribution, this is the sharpest and most precise-handling Corvette we've ever driven.

**3) IT'S A TRACK BEAST:** Launching out of pit lane from a dead standstill to 60 mph in 2.9 seconds is an achievement that few production vehicles can muster, never mind ones that start around \$60,000. With a whip-smart 8-speed dual-clutch transmission, there's no loss in torque as it bangs through the gears. In the corners, it's impressively balanced and won't easily oversteer or dive forward like a typical front-engine, rear-wheel-drive car. It's flat as a pancake as it corners and lets you get on the power early, thanks to its stability and predictability. Plus, the shorter hood and skinny "A" pillars mean excellent visibility through the track.

**2) IT'S AN AUTOCROSS BEAST:** Well that's something we never thought we'd say about a Corvette, but the mid-engine car's 40/60 front/rear weight balance means the C8 pivots around the driver. So basically, it's like driving an oversized go kart around an autocross. With little practice, we were pulling off crazy fast laps through a narrow pathway of cones, cornering with an absolute minimum of braking and never overshooting or under-shooting our marks. We recommend going with some nice grippy summer tires for such an exercise, and the Michelin PS4S rubber that comes with the Z51 package is definitely up to the challenge.

**1) THE PRICE:** Ultimately, what makes the 2020 Corvette Stingray a true wonder is its value. Even in the \$59,995 base model, you get the vast majority of the car's capabilities—and a very well-equipped model, loaded with the finest materials, the Z51 performance package, Magnetic Ride Control and competition seats, can be had for just a bit over \$80,000. This represents an extraordinary deal for a car that by all definitions is a supercar and is every bit as well designed, engineered and equipped as cars costing two to three times as much money. Kudos to Chevrolet for creating an aspirational sports car that real humans might actually be able to afford at some point in their lifetime. •

