

# Everything—in a convenient C-size

By Joe Sage

We put quite a few miles on this baby, and it was a satisfying experience from the get-go. Accelerating through the sweep onto a freeway ramp, smoothly, confidently and powerfully navigating our way among a mix varying from slow box trucks to non-signaling 100-mph fellow travelers, then up to speed on the open road, we quickly concluded that this 255-horsepower German drop-top delivered everything—a smooth and potent drivetrain, German luxury cabin, extensive creature comforts and tech features well implemented, plus it's a convertible, plus ours is a rear-driver but could be 4MATIC all-wheel-drive if you prefer—basically delivering everything you would get in an E-Class Cabriolet that costs almost 50 percent more, or a

flagship S-Class Cabriolet that costs about two and a half times as much.

And by everything, we partly do and partly don't mean it's the same car except for size. Glance at the fundamentals in our model chart at lower right, and you'll see that power also climbs across the model range, although the ponies per dollar ratio is actually better toward the smaller end. But of course ponies aren't ever the whole story. And size can have its own reasons in the decision process, independent of any real compromise. The bigger models (E- and S-Class) will have a bit more legroom, perhaps some more cupholders and so on. But the smaller model (our C-Class here) has a considerably tighter turning circle (always one of

our bigger delights around town) and higher fuel mileage, and there is that favorable price. Other features—instrumentation, upholstery, some of the industry's most advanced driver assist for those who like that, even cabin size and certainly the experience in general—are very similar across the board. Some say everything is never enough. But this C-Class Cabriolet argues back that everything is more than enough.

The Mercedes Cabriolet lineup has some special weather-beating features we have long taken special interest and delight in—the Aircap® air dam atop the windshield frame, which deploys along with a rear wind deflector, creating a relatively-still-air cocoon in your open car; the Airscarf® headrest-embedded neck-warming system, and of course heated and cooled seats. Aircap, Airscarf and heated seats are tailored for cooler weather

(which in fact is often convertible season in Arizona), and for a few years, we indeed kept happening to drive E-Class Cabriolets with these features in colder and wetter weather—from their introduction in the Smoky Mountains of Tennessee and North Carolina, to Northern California's rainy season, to right here at home.

But we had always wondered what the systems might offer—Aircap, deflector and cooled seats (but not heated Airscarf) in hot weather.

Last summer, we finally had the S-Class Cabriolet for a week during a blistering hot stretch, a perfect chance to see whether the open-air cocoon system provided benefits in Arizona's extreme summer. At about 120 degrees and at around-town speeds, it was a neat novelty, but we were happy once we put the top back up.

We tried it again this summer in the C-Class, and this time it was bliss. The differences? This time it was only 108 degrees. This time we were cruising the open two-lane roads of backcountry Arizona between metro Phoenix and metro Tucson at highway speeds. And this time we had the smaller cabin of a C-Class. Does smaller size create more of a cocoon? It's possible! If so, advantage, C-Class. We had thought we'd just give it a quick experiment, as with the prior summer's S-Class Cabriolet, but we left the top down and the devices deployed the whole way.

You're not likely to dwell upon the value equation of size, power and price for long—pretty much just at purchase time. Whatever your size decision, from that point forward, your enjoyment will be quite complete. And hey, if you like the C-Class Cabriolet, but your neighbor has an E-Class, just show up with two of these for about the same price. If they have an S-Class, show up with three. If your neighbor has an AMG, perhaps save up a little more between now and trade-in time. No matter how you slice it, you and your neighbor will both find plenty to love at the size you bought, as well as in each other's. It's a Goldilocks triad well executed. ■



## SPECIFICATIONS

DOORS/SEATS	.....four / four
BUILD	.....steel unibody, alum sheet metal
ENGINE	.....2.0L alum alloy I-4 turbo 16v DOHC
HP/TORQUE	.....255 hp / 273 lb-ft
DRIVETRAIN	.....RWD (AWD avail)
TRANSMISSION	.....9G-Tronic 9-sp auto
0-TO-60 / TOP SPEED	.....6.1 sec / 130 mph (lim)
SUSPENSION	.....F: indep multi-link w coil spring, single-tube shock w CDC & torsion bar; R: indep multi-link w coil spring, single-tube shock w CDC & torsion bar;
STEERING	.....speed-dependent electro-mechanical rack & pinion
BRAKES	.....F: 13.0; R: 11.8
WHEELS	.....F: 7.5x18 cast; R: 8.5x18 cast
TIRES	.....F: 225/45R18; R: 245/40R18
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....184.5 / 111.8 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....36.8 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....(max load) 3.5 in
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....38.4 / 36.0 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....tba
CARGO CAPACITY	.....8.83 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....tba
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....premium unl / 17.4 gal
MPG	.....21/29/24 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	.....\$53,950
LUNAR BLUE METALLIC PAINT	.....720
PORCELAIN LEATHER	.....1620
PASSENGER SEAT: memory, thigh support	.....350
VENTILATED FRONT SEATS	.....450
12.3" DIGITAL INSTRUMENT CLUSTER	.....750
19" AMG MULTISPOKE WHEELS	.....500
WIRELESS CHARGE, NFC PAIRING	.....200
DRIVER ASSIST PKG: Distronic® active distance assist, active steering assist evasive steering assist, active lane change assist, active lane keep assist, active blind spot assist, active brake assist w cross-traffic, active emergency stop assist, active speed limit assist, route-based speed adapt	.....1700
MULTIMEDIA PKG: Comand® navigation incl 3 yrs live traffic & weather, car-to-X communication, voice control	.....1250
AMG LINE: AMG body styling, sport suspension, sport steering, perforated front brake discs w MBenz calipers, brushed alum sport pedals w rubber studs, AMG floor mats	.....1500
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....995
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>.....\$63,985</b>

## CABRIOLET LINEUP

<b>C-Class</b>	
<b>C 300 Cabriolet</b>	
2.0L inline-4 turbo / 255 hp	.....\$53,950
<b>C 300 4MATIC Cabriolet</b>	
2.0L inline-4 turbo / 255 hp	.....55,950
<b>AMG C 43 Cabriolet</b>	
AMG-enhanced	
3.0L V6 turbo / 385 hp	.....64,750
<b>AMG C 63 Cabriolet</b>	
AMG 4.0L V8 biturbo / 469 hp	.....77,300
<b>AMG C 63 S Cabriolet</b>	
AMG 4.0L V8 biturbo / 503 hp	.....84,900
<b>E-Class</b>	
<b>E 450 Cabriolet</b>	
3.0L V6 biturbo / 362 hp	.....\$71,400
<b>E 450 4MATIC Cabriolet</b>	
3.0L V6 biturbo / 362 hp	.....73,900
<b>AMG E 53 Cabriolet</b>	
AMG-enhanced 3.0L inline-6 with EQ Boost & elec aux comp / 429 hp	.....81,650
<b>S-Class</b>	
<b>S 560 Cabriolet</b>	
4.0L V8 biturbo / 463 hp	.....\$138,600
<b>AMG S 63 Cabriolet</b>	
AMG 4.0L V8 biturbo / 603 hp	.....183,500