

# Road beat: Camry performance excels



The 2015 Camry looks the same, but it's the performance that is worth noting. Photos/Larry Weitzman

**By Larry Weitzman**

While Toyota claims the 2015 Camry is an all new ride, examination of the specs shows us that its wheelbase remains the same (109.3 inches), as is the width (71.7 inches), to the tenth of an inch. Even the body retains the same almost identical shape with the biggest change coming in a new front fascia. The window line, while looking different because of an appliqué to the rear of the rear window, is almost the same. Even if you compare this edition to a 2007 Camry, the resemblance would be striking.

There are improvements that need to be discussed as minor changes can make a huge difference. I have always like the shape of the Camry since 2007 and this model continues with its elegant, stately styling, except for the new front end. The new almost full width black grille overpowers its otherwise great lines. A close look shows a design that is not dissimilar to the Lexus L'Finnesse theme, but enlarged. It is the only negative. Length is a mid-size 191 inches.



### **Specifications**

Price (base including transportation) SE \$24,115 to over \$30 large for a loaded V-6

### **Engines**

2.5L, DOHC 16 valve inline four 178 hp @ 6,000 rpm  
170 lbs.-ft. of torque @ 4,100 rpm

3.5L DOHC, 24 valve V-6 268 hp @ 6,200 rpm  
248 lbs.-ft. of torque @ 4,700 rpm

### **Transmissions**

Six speed automatic

### **Configuration**

Transverse front engine/front wheel drive

## **Dimensions**

Wheelbase 109.3 inches

90.9 inches

Width 71.7 inches

Height 57.9 inches

Track (f/r) 62.4/62.0 inches

Ground clearance 6.1 inches

Weight 3,480 pounds

Tow capacity 1,000 pounds

Passenger volume 102.7 cubic feet

Trunk capacity 15.4 cubic feet

Fuel capacity 17.0

Steering lock to lock 2.85 turns

Turning circle 36.7 feet

Wheel sizes 7.5X18 inches alloy

Tires 225/45X18

Co efficient of drag 0.28

## **Performance**

0-60 mph 5.35 seconds

50-70 mph 2.67 seconds

50-70 mph uphill 3.53 seconds

Top speed Do you think that any of the prior 8.5 or so million Camry buyers in the United States really care? But without intervention electronic or otherwise even the four cylinder should top out at close to 130 mph (but not with me in the car).

Fuel economy EPA rated at 21/31/25 mpg

city/highway/combined.  
Expect to achieve 25 mpg in overall driving and 33 mpg plus on the highway at legal speeds.

Engines also remain the same since the 2010 model with a choice of two, either a DOHC, 16 valve, 2.5L inline four cylinder making 178 hp at 6,000 rpm along with 170 pounds of twist at 4,100 rpm or as was my test ride, the very potent 24 valve, DOHC 3.5L V-6, the same V-6 that powered the Lexus IS 350 and so many other Lexus models. In Camry form it makes slightly less power at 268 hp at 6,200 rpm and 248 hp which incidentally is exactly the same rating for the 2010 model. Power is sent to the front wheels only via a six-speed cog swapper.

Now here is where it gets good, really good. This V-6 Camry can scamper to 60 mph from a stop in a world class 5.35 seconds. It wasn't just one time, but five times. Passing times also reflect this world-class performance with 50-70 mph acceleration runs taking just 2.67 seconds on level roads and only 3.53 seconds up a 6 percent grade. These numbers rival automobiles cost two and three times the price. This Camry V-6 is amazingly quick. Is there any negative to this quickness? A small one in low speed full throttle acceleration situations, significant torque steer. It's not unique to the Camry V-6 as torque steer plagues most any front-wheel drive high performance car.

And it does all this while averaging 25 mpg overall. EPA rates the Camry V-6 at 21/31/25 mpg city/highway/combined, but it does a bit better on the highway indicating 33.4 mpg at a constant 70 mph on a level highway. When you consider the performance, the Camry V-6 is remarkably efficient. Camry's 17-gallon fuel tank means 500 miles nonstop is a piece of cake, barring human limitations. Coefficient of drag is a very

low 0.28.

Another surprise is the Camry V-6's sporty handling. With the V-6 and in the SE/XSE models you get upgraded sport tuned gas filled shocks and coils plus strut tower and trunk mounted braces. It all works quite well. During a three mile sprint down one of my favorite twisty roads I was following a Honda S2000 who thought he was going to show the Camry what the S2000 was all about. For the next three miles I stayed on his butt mimicking his every move. When we stopped at the stop sign he couldn't believe that a Camry could stay with him (in a less difficult straighter section of road, the Camry's power might have overwhelmed him). While speeds rarely touched 60 mph and the driving was perhaps at seven-tenths, the Camry V-6 can be a fun car in the twisties. Turning circle is a tight 36.7 feet.

Adding to its credentials is a quick electric power steering rack that goes lock to lock in 2.85 turns, a wide track of 62 inches front and rear plus 18X7.5 inch alloys shod with 225/45 series tires and solid stab bars at both ends.

Camrys are usually known for ride comfort and quiet and this one certainly fits that model. It rides very smoothly as you would expect, plus it is extremely quiet. The engine spins a low 1,950 rpm at 70 mph.

Safety in the Camry starts with what Toyota calls its Star Safety System that includes an enhanced vehicle stability control (EVSC), traction control (TRAC), ABS, EBD, BA and Smart Stop Technology SST). Plenty of alphabet soup there. Braking is excellent with four wheel discs (front ventilated) arresting forward progress in 40 feet from 40 mph. Also standard are 10 airbags including side impact airbags for the rear seat. LED headlights are very good with broad, flat and deep coverage.

With the XSE comes an upgraded near luxury interior and seats

of leather and Ultrasuede that are sublime with both power and heat. My rides had charcoal materials done with a contrasting sporty red stitching on the doors, seats, and dash, very sporty. Instrumentation is complete with tach, speedo and trip computer.

Radio and climate are controlled through a multimedia screen at least for the radio system while HVAC are still controlled by convenient knobs and buttons; small favors. At least there is no mouse to deal with. Of course it has the connectivity of an interstellar space station.

Rear seating is voluminous and when the volume is combined with the large trunk capacity of the 15 plus cubic foot trunk, Camry falls just a cubic foot short of the EPA large car definition.

While pricing for a base model, 178 hp, four cylinder LE starts at around \$20 large, my XSE V-6 tester hammers you a bit at \$31,370, plus \$825 for the train/truck from Georgetown, Ky. When you add in the blind spot/cross traffic alert system (\$500), the JBL sound system (\$805), technology package that includes lane departure alert, radar cruise and auto high beam plus the obligatory floor mats of \$225 and a couple of other small items you are out the door in a full boat Camry for a bit more than \$35K. It's big money, but it I love what it did for me.

*Larry Weitzman has been into cars since he was 5 years old. At 8 he could recite from memory the hp of every car made in the U.S. He has put in thousands of laps on racetracks all over the Western United States.*