

Road beat: Hyundai Sonata Limited 2.0T



The Sonata 2.0T Sport/Limited fires on all cylinders and then some. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

There are four distinct models of the Hyundai Sonata, the Sonata, the Sonata Eco, the Sonata Hybrid and this new Sonata 2.0T Sport/Limited. Within those four models there are also various trim levels. I tested a version of the 2015 model a year ago and while it is essentially the same vehicle, it is not. Because of a reworked 2.0-turbo engine it now boasts of 245 hp at 6,000 rpm and 260 pounds of twist from 1,350- 4,000 rpm.

Sonata is now in the second generation of its fluidic sculpture (seventh generation overall) and as said before

about the new Sonata body, if you like the last generation, you are going to love this new generation. The new grille and front end and new character lines all tie together to make the whole concept flow with each component enhancing the next. And with the wide spaced quad exhaust, it is the best looking Sonata yet, especially the front end (I think I said that already). Coefficient of drag is a low 0.27.

Size-wise, the new Sonata 2.0T is a mid-size outside, but a full-size inside. Wheelbase is 110 inches and length is 191 inches, width and height 73 and 58 inches respectively, perfect mid-size numbers. But inside there are 122 cubic feet of passenger and cargo volume, 106 cubes on the inside and 16 cubes in the trunk. While the new Sonata is one slick design in reality and perception, it's huge on the inside. Remarkable.



Specifications

Price \$35,035

Engine

Four cylinder inline 16 valve 2.0L 245 hp @ 6,000 rpm

260 lb.-ft. of torque @ 1,350-4,000 rpm

Transmission

Six speed torque converter automatic with a semi manual mode

Configuration

Transverse mounted front engine with front wheel drive

Dimensions (Sport)

Wheelbase 110.4 inches

Length 191.1 inches

Width 73.4 inches

Height 58.1 inches

Track (f/r) 62.9/63.1 inches

Ground clearance 5.3 inches

Cabin volume 106.1 cubic feet

Trunk volume 16.3 cubic feet

Fuel Capacity 18.5 gallons

Weight 3,589 pounds

Steering lock to lock 2.78 turns

Turning circle 35.8 feet

Wheels 18X7.5 inch alloys

Tires 235/45X18

Co-efficient of drag 0.27

Performance

0-60 mph 6.32 seconds

50-70 mph 3.28 seconds

50-70 uphill 4.41 seconds

Top Speed Beyond sanity

Fuel economy EPA rated at 21/31/25

city/highway/combined.

Expect 27-28 mpg in suburban driving and 36 plus mpg on a level highway at 70 mph.

While it's engine performance parameters appear to be identical to my last go-round, it is much more responsive to the throttle and its performance, especially in its 0-60 mph,

which is now 6.32 seconds shortening the time by almost a full second. There is no lag in this turbo. However, passing times are virtually identical with a 50-70 mph run on the level stopping the Chrondek in 3.28 seconds and the same run up a six percent grade taking 4.41 seconds. Now we have a real performance sedan. Actually, you have to be careful not to stab the throttle as it really responds to significant throttle input in right now fashion and doesn't let up until you do. It's all about that super fat torque curve, 260 pounds of twist starts at just 1,350 rpm.

While EPA fuel ratings are about one mpg lower (21/31/25 mpg city/highway/combined) real fuel economy is up about one mpg over the last test. Overall, including rocket testing, the 2.0T averaged between 27-28 mpg. But in my run to South Lake Tahoe and back to Rescue improved by 2 mpg at 32.3 mpg. Even the 70 mph highway run showed an improvement of almost 2 mpg at 36.5 mpg. Those new 245 horses are really feeling their oats or Hyundai has a better breeding program.

If you don't think cars have improved, here is a car with a full-sized interior that can accelerate from 0-60 mph in six seconds, carry five basketball players in sublime comfort and go down the road achieving 35 mpg plus. In 1957, in the middle of the horsepower race (which began in 1951 with the first Chrysler hemi of 180 hp which set the Speed weeks' record of 117 mph) you could buy a Dodge D-500 with a 325 cubic inch V-8, producing 285 gross hp that the dean of automotive writers, Tom McCahill ran 0-60 mph in 8.7 seconds and returned about 17 mpg on the highway. At about a \$3,500 purchase price you got an am radio with power steering and power brakes. No A/C and only one (left) side view mirror. Think about the equipment you get on this Hyundai, everything is power, it is probably safer than the Battleship Missouri, has built in TV cameras, has a panoramic sunroof and on a race track it would be crossing the finish line at Laguna before the Dodge made it to turn 8 (the Corkscrew) and while the price maybe 10 or 11

times more, the real cost in present dollars is far less. With proper maintenance, the Hyundai should be good for 300,000 miles, while the Dodge would be at the shredders at about 100,000 miles if you were lucky.

Speaking of Laguna Seca, this Hyundai can change directions with the best of them. For 2016, Hyundai has returned the suspension. Already a good handler with its 63-inch track quick and quick (2.8 turns lock to lock) steering, you can add on 18X7.5 inch alloys shod with some serious 234/45 rubber. Yes, it dances through the twisties with the best of them, mild understeer with a flat profile. Most drivers will never use 70 percent of this 2.0T Limited's cornering power.

As to ride quality it's about perfect, just slightly on the firm size. With no float it can do large undulations perfectly and absorb sharp bumps without any harshness or jarring. Couldn't ask for more. And with the engine spinning right at 2,000 rpm at 70 mph, you certainly will be able to hear a church mouse if there is one because of the otherwise silence.

Safety is all over this Hyundai. Four-wheel ventilated disc brakes, you need a calculator to add up the airbags and count the electronic safety devices that act as an intervention for bad driving behavior or judgement including the emergency braking system, lane departure warning, blind spot detection, rear cross traffic alert and rear view camera. Panic stops from 40 mph were achieved in an excellent 42 feet. Headlights were excellent.

With the 2.0T Limited comes a sporty leather interior with contrasting piping on the seat edges. The soft light gray leather is comfortable and the define seat bolsters and wings were a bit wide for me, maybe I need to eat more. But that doesn't deny their comfort. Rear seating is massive as this is a true five passenger sedan. Not only is the trunk massive, so is the gas tank at 18.5 gallons.

Instrumentation is complete and easy to use as is the radio, HVAC and the NAV. Some manufacturers think that dazzle and complexity outweigh simplicity of use and good, tasteful design.

Pricing for this limited 2.0T which has no options is \$34,075 plus \$125 for the carpeted floor mats. The train ride from Montgomery, Alabama assembly plant will add \$835 making the totally \$35,035. This car comes so well equipped it even has standard rear side window shades. You won't find that in that Dodge D-500 at any price, nor will the Dodge have disc brakes or any of the electronics which in the Dodge consists of weak sealed beam headlights, turn signals, a floor dimmer, brake lights, possibly a 12-volt battery, an am radio and one low fidelity speaker.

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.