

Road beat: 2017 Hyundai Elantra Limited rocks



Hyundai Elantra Limited is one of the best in its class. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

The almost all-new Hyundai Elantra Limited is reaching for best of class status in some pretty heady competition from the likes of the new Honda Civic and Mazda 3. Is it succeeding?

About the only leftover from the prior generation is the wheelbase dimension of 106.3 and the height of 56.5 inches. The balance of the car is all new including a new engine, tranny, construction techniques and exterior design. By construction means a much higher use of advanced high-strength steel which contributes to more torsional rigidity and bending strength which greatly improve vehicle dynamics, smoothness

and quiet.

Elantra is an inch longer at 180 inches and also wider by an inch at 71 inches. Interior volume is 110 cubic feet, meaning by EPA standards it is a mid-size car.

First is the gorgeous new body. While it keeps the fluid dynamic theme, it is greatly improved by the new slick signature hexagonal grille design now used on the Sonata. Overall the new Elantra carries a more aggressive theme. It also has a low coefficient of drag, 0.27 which is just one piece of the puzzle to improve Elantra's fuel efficiency.



Specifications

Price \$17,150 to \$27,710

Engine

2.0L 16 valve, DOHC, Atkinson cycle inline four
147 hp @ 6,200 rpm, 132 lb.-ft. of torque at 4,500 rpm

Transmission

Six speed manual

Six speed torque converter automatic

Configuration

Transverse mounted front engine/front wheel drive

Dimensions

Wheelbase 106.3 inches

Length 179.9 inches
Width 70.9 inches
Height 56.5 inches
Track (f/r) 61.0/61.3 inches
Ground clearance 5.3 inches
Fuel capacity 14.0 gallons
Trunk capacity 14.4 cubic feet
Passenger cabin volume 95.8 cubic feet
Weight 2,811-2,976 pounds
Steering lock to lock 2.7 turns
Turning circle 34.8 feet
Wheels 17 inch alloys
Tires 225/45/17
Coefficient of drag 0.27

Performance

0-60 mph 8.71 seconds
50-70 mph 4.71 seconds
50-70 uphill 6.79 seconds
Top speed Well into triple digits
Fuel economy EPA rated at 28/37/32 mpg city/highway/combined.
Expect 34-35 mpg in rural country driving with some stop and go. 40 plus mpg on the highway at legal speeds.

A new Atkinson cycle 2.0L DOHC 16 Valve inline four-cylinder engine boosts a 12.5:1 compression ratio and it runs on regular. It does this by using late closing intake valves. The six speed torque converter cog swapper has improved efficiency by 3.3 percent through a variety of improvements.

Making 147 hp at 6,200 rpm and 132 lb.-ft. of twist at 4,500 rpm the new Elantra scampers to 60 mph in 8.71 seconds. While average for the class, it feels spunkier than the numbers reflect as demonstrated by its passing numbers of 50-70 mph of 4.71 seconds. Up a steep grade that 50-70 mph time expands 6.79 seconds. Good performance especially in light of the Elantra's new fuel economy numbers

EPA says the new Elantra should return 28/37/32 city/highway/combined mpg. My numbers were 5-10 percent higher with an overall number of 34-35 mpg and on the highway at 70 mph with the cruise control set at 70 mph it returned an average of 42.5 mpg and that's with the engine spinning 2,300 rpm at 70 mph. And there is another model of the Elantra, the Eco with a new 1.4 turbo four on my test list that should do even better. Hyundai is going great guns. Something else contributing to its fuel economy and that is its new lower weight, 2,811 pounds in the base model and 2,976 pounds when fully loaded.

Something else is happening at Hyundai and it's called "quiet." Remember all that stuff above about advanced high strength steel is what you won't hear in the cabin. This new Elantra is noticeable quieter than my previous Elantra tests. Hyundai even developed new adhesives to keep cars tighter. Also included in this new quiet campaign is new-found smoothness. It is uncanny that as driver or passenger just how smooth and quiet this new Elantra is.

Suspension is a Macpherson strut system up front and a semi-independent torsion beam out back with coils in all four corners along with gas filled shocks. The front set-up gets a stab bar. Steering is an electric motor driven rack that is quick at 2.7 turns lock to lock. No winding of the steering wheel in tight parking situations. It is more responsive. On and off center feel is also good. It's turning circle is less than 35 feet. Also helping is the standard 17 inch alloys shod with 225/45X17 inch rubber. That's a wide tire for a

“compact.” The result is a sporty handling compact with some body roll, but the handling is very secure and maneuverability is excellent.

Ride quality is very good, handling with ease all but the worst road imperfections. And then there is the aforementioned smooth and quiet. In my last Elantra test, the previous generation couldn't hold this new generation's lug nut. Four hundred miles in this new Elantra would be a piece of case especially with its 40 plus mpg fuel economy and 14-gallon fuel tank.

Safety is also enhanced with nearly all electronic warning device available including, lane departure warning, lane keep assist, automatic emergency braking including pedestrian detection, blind spot detection, rear cross traffic alert and lane change assist. Those safety aids only add to the airbags and the already standard safety acronyms. Brakes are strong.

Inside is a new, easier to use Instrument panel somewhat in the style of some expensive German cars. Tach and speedo are front and center with the trip computer and other pertinent and not so pertinent driver info splitting the difference. To the right is the horizontally divided center stack with controls a seven-year old could master in a few minutes. Maybe that's not such a good thing.

Doing 400 miles will require appropriate accommodations and the Elantra Limited supplies that as standard equipment with soft leather and a power driver's seat with adjustable lumbar support. New this year thicker front door glass and added sound absorption, all adding to the quiet. Rear seating will handle three reasonably well in a pinch (pun intended).

New Hyundai Elantras start at \$100 below last year at \$17,150 plus \$825 for the train from Montgomery, Ala. For \$22,350 you can purchase by tester, the Limited Edition, which is hardly limited. My tested was loaded with the Tech package (\$2,500)

and Ultimate package (\$1,900) which gives you all options, except for carpeted floor mats and for that you will pay another \$125. With train fare my Limited totaled \$27,710. While that price is maybe in mid-size car territory, the new Elantra is technically a mid-size car.

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.