

Road Beat: Veloster, a new way to experience velocity



Ride quality of the Veloster is firm with good compliance over the rough stuff. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

Veloster, which is still in its first generation starting life as a 2012 model, got a shot in the arm recently with the installation of the new Hyundai 1.6L direct injected turbo and a new seven-speed dual clutch automated manual transmission.

Veloster is hard to categorize, it is a three door with two right side doors and a single driver's door on the left. It is in reality a sub-compact car at just 167-inches long, but it rides on a compact car wheelbase of 104 inches and it is in effect a wide 71 inches. While looking like a wind cheater, its co-efficient of drag is 0.33.

By comparison the excellent Hyundai Elantra compact car which is 180 inches rides on a 106-inch wheelbase, only 2 inches longer than the Veloster. Other dimensions are in effect identical leading one to believe that the Veloster rides on a channeled Elantra chassis as the Veloster also uses the Elantra suspension components. But the Veloster's body is anything but an Elantra with a very sporty, low slung body that catches everyone's eye. The question is will it meet a driver's expectation of what it promises?

Yes, would be the short answer, especially with this new power train which appears to be also identical with the new Elantra Sport tested a few weeks ago. The Veloster however doesn't get the Elantra Sport's unique independent rear suspension but instead gets a coupled torsion beam semi-independent set up used in most other Elantra sedans.

Under that longest hood is the answer to the promise of the body, a 1.6L turbo, direct injected, DOHC, 16 valve inline silky smooth engine that belts out a big 201 hp at 6,000 rpm and 195 pounds of twist from 1,750-4,500 rpm. Without the turbo, the same 1.6L engine produces 132 hp at 6,300 rpm and 120 pounds of twist at 4,850 rpm which while more than adequate (it is 200 pounds lighter) will feel like the emergency brake is on when compared to the turbo.



Specifications

Price \$22,600 to about \$27,000

Engine

1.6L DOHC, 16 valve direct injected turbo inline four 201 hp @ 6,000 rpm,

195 lb.-ft. of torque at 1,500-4,500 rpm

1.6 DOHC, 16 valve, direct injected inline four 132 hp @ 6,300 rpm

120 lbs.-ft. of torque @4,850 rpm

Transmission

Six speed manual

Seven-speed dual clutch automated manual

Configuration

Transverse mounted front engine/front wheel drive

Dimensions

Wheelbase 104.3 inches

Length 167.3 inches

Width 71.1 inches

Height 55.1 inches

Track (f/r) 60.9/61.4 inches

Ground clearance 5.6 inches

Fuel capacity 13.2 gallons

Trunk capacity 15.5, rear seats down 34.7 cubic feet

Passenger cabin volume 89.8 cubic feet

Weight 2,877-2,998 pounds

Steering lock to lock 2.78 turns

Turning circle 34.12 feet

Wheels 18X7.5 inch alloys

Tires 225/40X18

Coefficient of drag 0.33

Performance

0-60 mph 6.34 seconds

50-70 mph 3.00 seconds

50-70 uphill 4.12 seconds

Top speed Well into triple digits

Fuel economy EPA rated at 25/33/28 (manual) mpg city/highway/combined.

Expect 30 mpg in rural country driving with some stop and go. 34-35 mpg on the highway at legal speeds.

Performance is strong with the Veloster knocking down 0-60 mph in an almost world class number of 6.34 seconds. Passing performance is equally outstanding with a level 50-70 mph simulated run requiring exactly 3 seconds and the same run up a steep grade (6-7 percent) slows that time to 4.12 seconds. Those are very quick times, virtually identical to the times posted by the Elantra Sport with the same power train but with about 150 pounds less weight. Performance like this makes the Veloster turbo into a real sports car especially when considering the handling.

But there is no guilt penalty for all this performance. It is EPA rated at 25/33/28 mpg which is about two to three mpg better than the Elantra Sport (E. Sport) EPA numbers with the exact same power train with about that 150 less pounds. But the reality is that the Veloster actually returned while exceeding the EPA numbers, three to four less mpg than the E. Sport which actually exceeding the EPA numbers by at least five-eight mpg. Veloster averaged 32.6 mpg in my Placerville to Carson City and back Sierra round trip. On the highway at 70 mph on cruise control in a two-way run the Veloster averaged 34.6 mpg. Overall fuel economy averaged 30 mpg. I have no reason to understand the E. Sport's better fuel

economy although their fuel economy was identical as measured by a fill-up at about 200 miles in Carson City which included vehicle testing and almost identical driving for both cars. Interestingly the fuel tank of 13.2 gallons is about a gallon smaller than the E. Sport.

We already know that the Veloster doesn't get the fully independent rear set up of the Elantra Sport, but the fact is that after experiencing the well-tuned coupled beam semi-independent holding up the rear with huge 225/40 x 18 series tires on 18 x 7.5 inch alloys the difference between the two is imperceptible even in hard, aggressive driving. Wheel track of 61 inches is also identical to the E. Sport. The electric power steering rack has as with the Elantra Sport, excellent feel although it is a bit slower with 2.78 turns lock to lock instead of the very quick 2.6 turns on the E. Sport. I wouldn't be surprised to see the Veloster Turbo on Club and higher racing circuits in numbers soon if not already. Veloster is water through a hose in doing the twisties. With a 34-foot turning circle, small, tight maneuvers are a snap.

Ride quality is firm with good compliance over the rough stuff. As with the E. Sport, it has identical gear ratios with the engine turning a bit high 2,700 rpm at 70 mph. But is still quite quiet with respect to interior noise with no engine, tire or wind noise except for the raucous and racy exhaust when hard in the throttle which most buyers will welcome, if not desire. It does sound good when the driver gets aggressive.

Besides the usual acronyms such as ABS, ESC and more, the Veloster uses the same four-wheel disc brakes found on the Elantra Sport which are powerful. It also comes with driver's blind spot monitor and a backup camera with rear sensors. Projector headlights are very good in low and high beam.

Inside is bathed in leather with some trick two tone seats done in black perforated leather seating areas plus orange

trimmed (Hyundai calls it Vitamin C as is the exterior color) that is embroidered with the word "turbo." The IP is well done with a large tach and speedo separated by an information center/trip computer. The center stack was easy to use and included a 7-inch nav screen which doubled for radio and other functions.

That right side rear door is quite big and allows great access to the rear seating which is certainly adequate for two adults even in a trip for a few hours. I wouldn't make a habit of that, but for short half hour rides, no problem. And then there is the hatchback cargo area which has 15.5 cubic feet with the rear seats up and turns into a minute 35 cubes with the rear seat down.

Pricing starts for this good hippest of sports car at about \$18,100 and the value edition which has all the stuff this Turbo has for \$21,350. But the Turbo and its engine makes this car and delivers the promise of its looks and starts at \$22,600 which is only a \$1,250 premium, a small price. Get the seven-speed dual clutch while you add it for an about an additional grand plus you will pick up a couple of mpg along the way. Total for my six-speeder manual with the Tech Package of \$2,700 which added nav, a huge panoramic moon roof and more and the total with the obligatory carpeted floor mats (\$125) and the boat trip from Ulsan, Korea, (\$835) and my total was \$26,260. That's a lot of sport for the money.

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.