

Road Beat: Hyundai Elantra Value Edition, a super deal



The Hyundai Elantra Value Edition is priced for most wallets. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

Hyundai has in the past few years taught the Japanese manufacturers a thing or two, doing what I refer to as out Japaneseing the Japanese. They make high quality cars that perform well in all categories, becoming an almost default brand. In other words, it's a brand you buy without even thinking about it as you know you just can't go wrong. This new Elantra Value edition is one of those very few, special cars.

First it stickers for \$20,000 plus \$835 for the train from its Montgomery, Ala., assembly plant. But this is no bare bones

ride. It comes with full power including the drivers' seat. It even has auto dimming headlights, heated front seats and blind spot detection, all standard.

And being an Elantra it comes with honest good looks. A great looking, hexagonal aggressive grille, slick LED parking lights, a great window line and a strong appearance. It is one good looking ride. It is 180-inches long and rides on a long 106-inch wheelbase. At 71-inches wide and a 56-inch height just add to its strong, aggressive nature. At 0.27 coefficient of drag, it is also a wind cheater.

Under the bonnet is Hyundai's 2.0L DOHC, 16 valve direct injected Atkinson cycle engine, meaning higher compression and late closing intakes valves which improve engine efficiency at a small loss in overall hp. But it still pumps up 147 hp at 6,200 rpm and 132 pounds of twist at 4,500 rpm. It drives the front wheels via a very smooth six speed automatic torque converter cog-swapper. It hunts a bit when driving aggressively and that's understandable when applying the whip to all those horses.

At full tilt boogie this Elantra will scamper from 0-60 mph in 8.91 seconds, an above average time for an inexpensive compact. Passing times are also above average with a level 50-70 mph simulated pass of 4.95 seconds and the same test up a steep grade slows that time to 9.16 seconds. All good times for compact, especially when considering how it sips fuel. Throttle response is quite lively giving the driver a fun, guilt free time behind the wheel.



Specifications

Price \$21,210 about \$21,210

Engine

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

Transmission

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) 61.2/61.6 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 34.78 feet

Wheels 16-inch alloys

Tires 205/55X16

Coefficient of drag 0.27

Performance

0-60 mph 8.91 seconds

50-70 mph 4.95 seconds

50-70 uphill 9.16 seconds

Top speed Well into triple digits

Fuel economy EPA rated at 28/37/32 (automatic) mpg city/highway/combined.

Expect 33-34 mpg in rural country driving with some stop and go. 43-48 mpg on the highway at legal speeds.

Fuel economy is EPA test rated at 28/37/32 mpg city/highway/combined. But the Elantra did even better than those numbers in my testing. At a constant 70 mph in a two-way 20-mile run, the Elantra averaged 47.8 mpg or a solid 10 mpg more than the EPA test. They must have forgot to release the emergency brake. In my 210-mile run to Carson City and back averaged 40.6 mpg with only 10 miles of that trip spent on a constant speed multilane highway. At least 30 miles were spent in Carson City and South Lake Tahoe stop and go traffic and the rest of the time was spent going up and down the Sierra on two lane roads with at least a dozen full throttle passes. Overall fuel economy was about 36-37 mpg in the 500 miles of testing.

And instead of the usual 13.2-gallon fuel tank, Hyundai has a larger 14-gallon unit. Kudos, Hyundai. That means an easy 500 miles and I suspect even 600 miles, if your tank can last that long.

Suspenders are MacPherson struts up front and a semi-

independent torsion beam in the rear with gas shocks and coils in all four corners. Steering is a quick (2.7 turns lock to lock) electric power rack. Wheels are 16 inch alloys shod with 205/55's a mid-size handling tire so the Elantra is a bit more playful although in aggressive driving in the twisties it had gobs of grip and it was a no brainer to push it hard as it was very benign and extremely predictable. It just followed my input perfectly without complaint. Nicely done Hyundai, and this is supposed to be some super economy budget sedan. Not hardly. Let me turn on the seat heater.

Ride quality is even better. This Hyundai is smooth and quiet. No road, wind or tire noise. Even coarse roads are quiet. Ride is slightly less than firm, meaning its very compliant, nicely controlled and bank vault solid. Coast to coast would be no issue and as cheap as a super cut rate discount airline fare even if doing it solo and no need to rent a car when you get there. Just might take a day or two longer. But if you are doing 400-500 miles, the Hyundai will be within an hour in the time department and cost you much less, never mind the need to rent a car. I know I have done it several times driving to L.A. and to Portland.

Safety is all there including standard blind spot detection and a big screen rear view camera. All the acronyms are present and the brakes are strong (four-wheel discs, ABS, etc.) and the headlights very good, especially with the aforementioned auto dimming. All standard equipment.

Inside is a quality interior, no cheaping out here, all first quality. The cloth seats are surprisingly comfortable and with power in the driver's seat, infinitely adjustable and on those cold mornings, just turn on the butt warmer, passenger too. Soft touch materials abound and the instrument panel is perfect. Large tach and speedo left and right flanking the center trip/info computer with easy to use steering wheel controls for the sound system, bluetooth and cruise as well. This could be a model for how to do a center stack. There is

nothing lacking.

Rear seating is roomy for two and OK for three. The trunk is huge (for a compact) at 14.4 cubes. When you add the cabin volume of 95.8, it puts the Elantra into a midsize car category in a compact size.

Pricing for this ride as said above totals \$21,210 with the train ride from Alabama. And the engine and tranny are manufactured here in the USA. The only extra or up charge on this ride are the perfunctory embroidered floor carpets/mats (\$125). When are manufacturers going to throw them in for free? Hyundai throws in what would be about a \$2,000 up charge their 10 year/100,000-mile powertrain and a five year/60,000-mile whole car warranty for free, why not the floor mats? Notwithstanding, this Elantra is the real deal in a compact, just buy the dang floor mats, they look good and fit perfect.

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.