

# Road Beat: A new kind of small car



The 2018 Hyundai Accent is affordable, fast and comfortable. Photos/Larry Weitzman

**By Larry Weitzman**

Hyundai continues its tsunami of fabulous automobiles with the overachieving, brand new 2018 Accent. No more is it to be considered a cheap little car, a throwaway. Something that is considered just basic transportation. Something that shouldn't be fun to drive, lacking performance and styling. You can fuhgeddaboutit.

All that is now history with the new Accent, a stylish, quality, high performing subcompact that is fun to drive. Something that you will want to drive, a car that will want you taking the twisty, long way home. A car that will be guilt

free. That is the new Accent.

Styling will make it difficult to tell it from the new Elantra. The sleek shape is the same as is the grill, the window line and the rear end. The proportions are perfect. Dimensions are small, with a length of just 173 inches on a 102-inch wheelbase. Width is a narrow 68 inches and it stands a deceiving 57-inches-tall (it looks lower). Track, however, remains a wide 59 inches, which pays handling dividends.

Motive power is a simple, yet sophisticated 1.6L DOHC, 16 valve direct injected inline four cylinder that pumps out a solid 130 hp at 6,300 rpm combined with a peak torque 119 pounds at 4,850 rpm. This stingy unit drives the front wheels via a six-speed auto torque converter tranny. In the base SE model, a six-speed manual is standard but the auto tranny is available for an even grand.

How quick you ask? Zero to 60 mph will come up in a tick above 8 seconds, with an average time of 8.11 seconds and that makes the sub-compact Accent about the quickest in the business. A 285 (gross) hp 1957 Dodge D-500 muscle car with a 5.3L V-8 could barely break into the eights with a time of 8.9 seconds. This little Accent, in other words is capable of embarrassing some so-called muscle cars from the '50s and '60s. Passing times are also very good, with a 50-70 mph run taking 4.64 seconds and the same run up a 6-7 percent grade slowing that time to 7.59 seconds.



## **Specifications**

### **Price**

\$15,880 to \$19,780

### **Engine**

1.6L DOHC, 16 valve, direct injected inline four cylinder 130 hp @ 6,300 rpm  
119 lb.-ft. of torque @ 4,850 rpm

### **Transmission**

Six-speed manual (SE model only)

Six-speed torque converter automatic (std on SEL and Limited)

### **Configuration**

Transverse mounted front engine/front wheel drive

### **Dimensions**

Wheelbase 101.6 inches

Length 172.6 inches

Width 68.1 inches

Height 57.1 inches

Track (f/r) 59.3/59.5 inches

Weight 2,502 to 2,679

GVWR 3,439 to 3,638

Fuel capacity 11.9 gallons

Truck capacity 13.7 cubic feet

Passenger volume 90.2 cubic feet

Steering lock to lock 2.8 turns

Turning circle 33.46 feet

Wheels 17X6.5 inches

Tires 205/45X17

### **Performance**

0-60 mph 8.11 seconds  
50-70 mph 4.64 seconds  
50-70 mph (uphill) 7.59  
seconds  
Top speed – Well into triple  
digits, but does anyone  
really care? It will cruise  
comfortably at any U.S.  
speed limit.  
Fuel economy EPA rated at  
28/38/32 mpg  
city/highway/combined.  
Expect 32-33 mpg in  
suburban/rural driving and  
42 mpg on a level highway at  
legal speeds.

Throttle response feels even better than the excellent numbers as response to throttle inputs are instantaneous without feeling jerky while being easy to modulate. Nice job Hyundai. I've driven more than 1,000 cars in testing and the Accent was one I looked forward to driving.

Fuel economy is even better than EPA predictions, which are 28/38/32 mpg city/highway/combined. You can expect 10 percent better on the highway where at a constant 70 mph on cruise control the Accent averaged exactly 42 mpg. In my 200-mile round trip to Carson City over Echo Summit the Accent averaged 39 mpg in very aggressive driving. Overall fuel economy for the 400 miles of testing averaged 32-33 mpg, with less than 15 percent spent on the freeway. Accent is a true economy car. With a fuel capacity of just 11.9 gallons, I would like to see a bigger fuel tank.

Suspension is standard small car with MacPherson struts up front and a semi-independent torsion axle in the rear with coils in all corners. The electric power steering rack is just

2.8 turns lock to lock and standard with the Limited are 17-inch alloys shod with comparatively meaty 205/45 rubber. Adding to its creds are its relatively wide track and light curb weight of just 2,679 pounds.

Consequently, the Accent makes quick work of the twisties as its grip seems almost limitless and its accurate steering slices and dices each corner. There is some body roll when pushed to the limit, but handling is not just very good, but more important, fun. Powering out of corners is part of the overall package as you squeeze the go pedal on the exit approach. Chicanes are a blast. Accent's turning circle is a very small 33 feet. Parking lots will never be so maneuverable.

About the only negative is road noise on coarser roads. I don't know if its tires or a lack of sound deadening (tires are probably more of the issue), but it seems all small cars have this issue. If it were a bit quieter, this might have an almost luxo ride as it takes road imperfections so well. The engine spins about 2,250 rpm at 70 mph and on a smooth asphalt surface (or concrete, for that matter), the Accent is very quiet with no wind and mechanical noise.

Safety is all there with all the basic acronyms and with the top of the line Limited standard equipment includes automatic emergency braking and a driver's blind spot mirror. Even the rear-view camera has dynamic guidelines. Four-wheel disc brakes are strong and the projector beam headlights are very good on low and high beam.

Inside is a comfortable interior with cloth seats that will go the distance. While not power, they are six-way manually adjustable. But everything else is standard power, mirrors and windows and even the front chairs are heated on the Limited, a nice touch in what must be considered an economy car, at least by price and fuel economy, but certainly not by styling, performance, handling and content.

Instrumentation is complete with a big speedo and tach flanking a center trip and info center which gives you three trip computers for fuel economy, a nice feature for data geeks like me. The center stack is also well done and simple to use with a touch screen and a decent sound system. And its so intuitive to use, it just adds to the pleasure of the Accent. Even both sun visors have lighted vanity mirrors standard on the base Accent.

Interior volumes mimic that of a larger compact and the trunk is huge for a vehicle of this size at nearly 14 cubes. Some mid-size cars aren't that big and fold down rear seat backs add to the utility.

OK, so what's the damage? This top of the line Limited Accent which has every factory option available stickers for \$18,895, plus \$885 for the train and truck from its Nuevo Leon, Mexico, assembly plant which totals \$19,970. Carpeted floor mats add \$125, which is still under \$20 large. A base SE manual is \$14,995. That is a bargain as is the Accent Limited. It's a lot of car for the money and you get all the attributes, performance, economy, styling, handling, comfort and a long equipment list with it, but most of all, driving pleasure.

*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.*