



The All-New Cadillac ATS

More fun, less space

CARS

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New from the ground up, the 2013 Cadillac ATS ought to make a big dent in its class. The compact luxury sedan is the biggest luxury segment. Cadillac needs to make an impression here. Yesterday was ATS's official press launch in Canada. To celebrate we did hot laps at the legendary Mosport, now the Canadian Tire Motorsport Speedway. In the case of the ATS, "launch" is the exact right word. It's an easy car to get comfortable in at high speeds.

Decent Price

The ATS is aggressively priced to get in at the base, but so are its direct competitors. An ugly economy has devalued the euro, making its German rivals, in some cases, thousands of dollars cheaper than they were just last year.

There are three engines to choose from in the 2013 ATS collections. If you're looking for the lowest price, let's only discuss two for now: the 2.5L standard starts at \$35,195; the 2.0L Turbo with manual transmission is \$35,490. Each comes with plenty of goodies built-in: rear-wheel drive, Active Aero grille, leather seats, ZF electric steering, Bose stereo with USB ports and Brembo brakes, to list just a few. The Brembo braking system (bet you can't say it three times fast) practically lets you feel the road. The Active Aero Shutter Grille closes when it's already cold enough outside to keep the engine cool. However, start adding packages to the base models and those numbers climb quickly.

Watch Those Extras

The third engine choice, a 3.6L V6, starts in Luxury, Performance or Premium packages; the 2.5L, in Standard and Luxury; and the 2.0L Turbo, in all of the above. The price for the Premium 3.6L with all-wheel drive comes in at \$53,450.

Albeit that includes some pretty sweet extras. CUE, the infotainment system is touch-sensitive, intuitive

and unique to Cadillac. Among other surprises, the Driver Awareness Package alerts you when you're crossing a solid line by pulsing 3 times into your gluteus maximus. Honest. It's a less intrusive way of warning than noisy beeps — which get turned off quickly. Yes, you can turn the 'Safety Alert Seat' off too but why would you? Remember Magic Fingers at the Days Inn cost 50¢ for 5 minutes? That was a lot of money in the '70s, and people paid for the thrill.

A Study in Essentials

Despite aggressive race-speed driving, you could discuss the dynamics with your passenger without raising your voice, courtesy of the Bose Active Noise Cancellation. Here's one caveman's understanding of how it works: Microphones in the car are attuned to noise waves that humans won't like — like joyously screaming 3.6L engines — then it plays back inverted wavelengths to cancel the noise.

There's a laser attention to detail in the design. Wherever they could, Cadillac's engineers used lighter materials without ever compromising safety or quality. For instance, choosing magnesium steering wheel paddle shifters over a denser metal shaved just a few grams of weight. The Brembo brakes are cast in aluminum, again a lighter alternative that also performs better.

Lots of tiny subtractions like these make a difference though. Cadillac did a weight comparison of the ATS 2.5L Luxury edition with their intended 2012 direct competitors, the Mercedes-Benz C250 Luxury, Audi A4 Premium (2.0T), BMW 328i (2.0T) and 320i (2.0T). Only the last model was lighter. Why do we care about weight? Less heft to shift means better performance.

Lovely Performance

You can upgrade to all-wheel drive with the 2.0L with automatic transmission and the 3.6L V6 but I wouldn't recommend it. The rear-wheel drive is a blast and handles magnificently. There was a little rain still on the track during our session and the ATS jumped a bit in the more acute turns — but that was me adjusting to a new car at stupid speeds. It's an easy adjustment. It operates how you expect it to. No unwanted surprises.

We tested two models: the 3.6L V6 and 2.0L Turbo with 6-speed manual transmission. The V6 puts out 321 hp and 275 lbs of torque. When you're going in a straight line, it quickly roars to the speed of fun. But I found the 2.0L with the stick even more fun. (Mosport is so splendidly curvaceous and hilly that you can never actually get it to 6th gear.) The slight lag in acceleration is noticeable on the track, but probably would be much less so on the road. Indeed, 2.0L Turbo's stats indicate 0 to 60 mph in 5.7 seconds versus the larger engine's 5.4.

Veronica Was Just Betty with Black Hair — Both Were Hot, but We Noticed

Given that this was a new effort for Cadillac from the ground up, it's a pity they didn't choose a bigger departure in look. The ATS looks like a slightly smaller CTS. That's still a great look but it's one that's well established. If Cadillac's really trying to be different here, a departure in the outer design would be a fairly obvious place to start.

Nonetheless, the 2013 Cadillac ATS is an efficient and fun ride that will turn plenty of heads, just like its bigger sister the CTS did upon launching.

Image courtesy of [Automotive Rhythms](#).

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