

Proving Sedan Relevance

Elantra Makes Case for Affordable, Good-Looking Four-Door Cars

By Derek Price

CARGAZING.COM

Crossovers may have replaced cars as America's favorite family vehicles, but the Hyundai Elantra makes a strong case that the four-door sedan is still relevant.

After a week behind the wheel, I liked a lot of things about this sedan better than its wildly popular, SUV-style alternatives.

It's surprisingly roomy inside, for one thing. Hyundai claims the Elantra offers more passenger volume than many compact SUVs, including the Mazda CX-3, BMW X2 and Toyota RAV4. Every dimension feels generously sized, including the back seat.

It also gets better gas mileage than most similarly sized crossovers. The fuel economy works in Washington rate the Elantra for 30 mpg in city driving and 40 on the highway, without any need for complicated and pricey hybrid tech to hit those numbers.

It looks good inside and out, one reason it was named 2021 North American Car of the Year. Autotrader also awarded it for having one of the best interiors under \$50,000, quite an honor for a car that starts around the lowly \$20,000 mark.

My tester was the heavily loaded Limited model, priced around \$26,000 with enough equipment to make



Named North American Car of the Year when it was introduced, the current generation Hyundai Elantra offers a lot of content and style for the money.

it feel more like a luxury car than an economy cruiser. The Limited comes standard with Highway Drive Assist, one of the best such features on the market that makes the Elantra feel like it almost drives itself on well-marked freeways.

It also comes with a terrific Bose sound system, a long list of active safety features and a 10.25-inch touchscreen for running a myriad of infotainment choices, including connecting to your smartphone.

The digital interface worked great with one excep-

tion: it was slow to respond when using map programs in Apple CarPlay. A quick search of online forums shows my experience was not unique, and I hope Hyundai figures out a quick fix for drivers who use Waze or Google Maps to navigate. Fortunately, the car's internal navigation system works fine as an alternative.

As a whole, if you're shopping for the most content per dollar, it's hard to beat the Elantra. It delivers a lot of features for the money, making it one of the best deals I've driven in the past year.

If you're shopping for performance, though, it's not as impressive.

A 2.0-liter, four-cylinder engine is adequate but hardly exciting, and it's paired to an even more humdrum continuously variable transmission. It's clearly designed more for utility than enjoyment, which is fine for most drivers but not something enthusiasts would appreciate.

It almost redeems that deficit with pretty looks.

This current generation Elantra is proof that four-door sedans, even affordable

ones, can look sexy. To my eyes, it's sleek and modern, and I wish more cars mimicked its crisp, crystalline lines.

There's good news for performance-minded drivers who want speed to match those good looks. The Elantra N offers a much more exciting experience, including a 276-horsepower turbocharged engine.

Other choices include a hybrid Elantra rated for up to 56 mpg on the highway and the N Line, which offers sporty performance and looks without requiring the

WHAT WAS TESTED?

2023 Hyundai Elantra Limited (\$26,350)

Wheelbase: 107.1 in.

Length: 184.1 in.

Width: 71.9 in.

Height: 55.7 in.

Engine: 2.0-liter four cylinder (147 hp, 132 lbs.-ft.)

Transmission:

Continuously variable
Fuel economy: 30 city, 40 highway

Why buy it?

It offers a terrific value for the money, especially on the feature-packed Limited model priced around \$26,000. It's efficient, spacious and well equipped.

price premium of a full-blown Elantra N.

Speaking of prices, the 2023 Elantra with the 2.0-liter engine starts at \$20,650 for the base SE trim and tops out at \$26,500 for the Limited. The sportier N Line, with a 1.6-liter turbo engine, is priced at \$27,200, while the hybrid starts at \$24,550.

The ridiculously fast Elantra N is priced at \$32,900 with a manual transmission — the only way you should buy it — or \$34,400 with the heretical dual-clutch automatic.

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The Elantra offers more interior volume than many popular compact crossovers such as the Toyota RAV4, Hyundai claims. It's spacious, especially for the price.

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A CLOSER LOOK



AT A GLANCE

FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

What was tested? 2023 Hyundai Elantra Limited (\$26,350).

Options: Carpeted floor mats (\$210). Price as tested (including \$1,095 destination charge): \$27,655.

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Width: 71.9 in.

Height: 55.7 in.

Engine: 2.0-liter four cylinder (147 hp, 132 lbs.-ft.)

Transmission: Continuously variable

Fuel economy: 30 city, 40 highway

RATINGS

Style: 7

Performance: 6

Price: 8

Handling: 6

Ride: 7

Comfort: 7

Quality: 6

Overall: 7

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