

An Alfa for the Masses

New Tonale Crossover Has Wider Appeal, Marks Fresh Direction

By Derek Price

CARGAZING.COM

Much of Alfa Romeo's appeal is wrapped up in the past: its Formula One racing history, its distinctly Italian roots and its uncanny ability to pen some of the world's prettiest cars for more than 100 years.

This week, I'm driving an Alfa that looks to the future more than the past.

It's called the Tonale, and it's a break from what one would expect from Alfa in several ways.

It's a compact luxury crossover, for starters, which broadens this niche brand's appeal to the widest segment of new-car shoppers. It's also less expensive, starting under \$43,000, even lower than the Giulia sedan.

Two other things mark a break from Alfa's past. It uses electric power, and it doesn't share the same spirit.

The Tonale is a plug-in hybrid with an electric range of 33 miles, after which a small gasoline engine will keep you going for a total range of 320 miles, according to the spec sheet.

A 121-horsepower electric motor is connected to the back axle, and it works in concert with a 1.3-liter turbo-charged gasoline engine to deliver surprisingly spirited acceleration to all four wheels from such a fuel-conscious powertrain.

System horsepower totals 285, which is plenty to get



An all-new model for 2024, the Alfa Romeo Tonale is a plug-in hybrid crossover that should greatly broaden Alfa's appeal in the American car market.

into trouble, yet it still achieves a 77-mpg equivalent rating from the federal government.

Like all plug-in hybrids, your actual results will depend on how you drive it and how often you charge it. For short trips less than 33 miles, you could drive it like an electric car and never burn a drop of fuel. On the flip side, if you rarely charge it and do lots of gasoline driving on longer trips, you'll burn a lot more.

In my real-world driving, admittedly with a liberal use of the gas pedal, my disap-

pointment was more about range than fuel economy. The Tonale's gas tank holds just 11.2 gallons, so I had to make frequent stops to fill up. Drivers who make better use of its EV capacity won't encounter this problem.

The other thing to know about the Tonale is that it drives very different from other Alfas. It just doesn't have the same spirit as its stablemates, which is difficult to describe in words but easy to feel from the driver's seat.

Compared to most compact crossovers, the Tonale is

a huge improvement. It's quick. It feels good in corners. Its steering and suspension are taut, exactly like a good sporty car should be.

Compared to other Alfas sold in America, though, it feels limp. It's a bit more mundane, which should help it sell in bigger numbers but might not please the Alfisti enthusiasts.

Fortunately, it looks like an Alfa crossover should.

The Tonale is gorgeous, a fortuitous DNA trait it shares with a long line of Italian ancestors. Its distinctive nose, sculpted back end and

sleek silhouette make it one of the best looking crossovers for sale this year.

Inside, it's similarly beautifully designed but doesn't exude the same sense of quality and precision you see in other luxury competitors. Its upsides are more about style than material choices, feeling like a fashionable but not particularly expensive place to spend hours on the road.

In fact, that idea sums up the whole Tonale experience. It's definitely eye-catching and more sensual than most of today's crossovers —

WHAT WAS TESTED?

2024 Alfa Romeo Tonale Veloce EAWD (\$47,495)

Wheelbase: 103.8 in.
Length: 178.3 in.
Width: 82 in.
Height: 63.2 in.
Powertrain: 1.3-liter four-cylinder engine plus 90 kW electric motor (285 total system horsepower)
Battery: 15.5 kWh lithium ion
Fuel economy: 77 mpg equivalent

Why buy it?

It delivers some Alfa Romeo appeal — beautiful looks and spirited performance — in an efficient and family-friendly crossover format. It's a more affordable and practical alternative to the excellent Stelvio.

which admittedly is a low bar — but is also practical and affordable enough to appeal to the masses.

If that helps Alfa thrive in the United States, allowing it to keep delivering its more exciting-to-drive sedans and sports cars to stateside connoisseurs, that's a future I'll be happy to see.

Pricing starts at \$42,995 for the base Sprint, \$44,995 for the mid-grade Ti, and \$47,495 for the upscale Veloce.

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The Tonale's interior is inspired by Alfa's racing history, with a driver-focused cockpit and sporty design touches.

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In my real-world driving, admittedly with a liberal use of the gas pedal, my disappointment was more about range than fuel economy. The Tonale's gas tank holds just 11.2 gallons, so I had to make frequent stops to fill up. Drivers who make better use of its EV capacity won't encounter this problem.

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A CLOSER LOOK



AT A GLANCE

FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

What was tested? 2024 Alfa Romeo Tonale Veloce EAWD (\$47,495).

Options: Premium paint (\$660), Customer Preferred Package 28E (\$2,500), Active Assist Advanced Package (\$2,000), power moonroof (\$1,200), 20-inch wheels (\$2,000). Price as tested (including \$1,595 destination charge): \$57,450.

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Length: 178.3 in.

Width: 82 in.

Height: 63.2 in.

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Battery: 15.5 kWh lithium ion

Fuel economy: 77 mpg equivalent

RATINGS

Style: 10

Performance: 7

Price: 6

Handling: 8

Ride: 7

Comfort: 6

Quality: 6

Overall: 7

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