

CLASSIC DRIVER

Mercedes to announce new 2003 CLK Cabriolet at Geneva



Stuttgart, Feb 05, 2003 Superlative technology, exciting styling and sheer pleasure for four occupants - these are the outstanding characteristics of the new CLK-Class Cabriolet, which is being presented to the public for the first time in spring 2003 and continues the successful tradition of four-seater Mercedes-Benz convertibles.

The new CLK-Class Cabriolet achieves outstanding figures in aerodynamics (Cd value 0.30), noise comfort and boot capacity (390 litres). In the area of occupant safety Mercedes-Benz has made further progress with a high-strength body structure, head/thorax sidebags as standard, adaptive airbags for the driver and front passenger and belt tensioners on all seats. Comfort is also exemplary in the new Mercedes Cabriolet, which now offers even more interior space. The newly developed, multi-layered fabric roof is designed for optimal noise damping and operating convenience, opening and closing fully automatically at the touch of a button or by remote control. The outputs of the four, six and eight-cylinder units for the new CLK-Class Cabriolet range from 120 kW/163 hp to 270 kW/367 hp, while fuel consumption has been reduced by up to seven percent.

With its exciting lines, which were developed from the design of the successful Coupé, the new Cabriolet emphasises the distinctive character of the CLK-Class within the Mercedes-Benz car range. Every detail of the dynamic, elegantly contoured body and the tasteful interior confirms the claim to the highest exclusivity.

Since 1998 the model designation CLK has stood for open-top driving pleasure at the highest level. The technical innovations and attractive design of the new CLK-Class Cabriolet provide an ideal basis for continuing the success of the preceding model series, which captured the hearts of more than 110,000 male and female customers.



Soft top: opened and closed by remote control

The soft top available in black, blue or grey is a new development. It opens fully automatically (also by remote control), disappears completely beneath an attractive cover in the rear within a few seconds and immediately provides the purest form of open-air driving enjoyment in conjunction with fully lowered side windows. Neither is any manual operation necessary when closing the soft top, as the hydraulic unit does everything necessary and automatically locks the roof in place on the upper windscreen frame.

The multi-layered lining of the soft top provides outstanding thermal insulation and keeps the interior noise level extremely low. The slim C-pillars and large side and rear windows offer excellent visibility to the rear even when the soft top is closed. The new CLK-Class Cabriolet is the best in its class where interior noise, thermal insulation and all-round visibility are concerned.

The boot capacity of 390 litres (acc. to VDA measuring method) is a 40-litre increase over the preceding series - another peak value among four-seater convertibles. Like the soft top, the boot lid can also be opened by remote control.

Safety: large sidebags and automatic rollover protection

Other typical Mercedes highlights in the new CLK-Class Cabriolet include the sensor-controlled rollover bar, which extends within fractions of a second when danger threatens, large head/thorax sidebags in the front seat backrests and belt tensioners with belt force limiters for all seats. Automatic belt feeders for the driver and front passenger are also standard equipment, as are adaptive front airbags. The weight of the seat occupant is also taken into account when activating the front passenger airbag. Sidebags for the rear are also available on request for the first time.

A rigid body structure creates the conditions for exemplary safety and a high level of comfort. Approx. 40 percent of all the bodyshell panels are of high-strength steel alloys which offer maximum safety and stability for minimum weight. The torsional rigidity of the bodyshell – an important indicator for handling characteristics and vibration comfort – has been improved by approx. another twelve per cent compared with the preceding series.

The new CLK-Class Cabriolet also achieves the best marks in its class where aerodynamics are concerned. In addition to a low coefficient of drag (Cd figure) of just 0.30 the new series also exhibits outstanding key values for aerodynamic lift at the front and rear axles. Accordingly the aerodynamics greatly contribute to a high level of handling stability, optimal noise comfort and a favourable fuel consumption.

Comfort: more freedom of movement on all seats

Open-air driving pleasure accompanied by first-class comfort for four occupants – this objective too has been achieved even more convincingly in the new CLK-Class Cabriolet than in the preceding series. Thanks to an increase in all body dimensions (length +71 millimetres) and a longer wheelbase (+ 25 millimetres) this two-door car offers its occupants significantly more space and freedom of movement. Headroom at the front has increased by 23 millimetres, elbow room in the rear by 30 millimetres and kneeroom for the rear seat passengers by almost 44 millimetres.

Further improvements to the Easy-Entry system make for easier access for rear seat passengers, who are provided with comfortably contoured single seats. These are equipped with integral inertia-reel seat belts and height-adjustable head restraints which can be almost fully recessed by pushing a button on the instrument panel.

Equipment: automatic climate control and a radio as standard

The standard equipment of the new CLK-Class Cabriolet also includes other systems that significantly improve ride and operating comfort: automatic climate control with outlets in the rear, Headlamp Assist, a rain sensor for the windscreen wipers, cruise control with SPEEDTRONIC, a cassette radio, a reach and height-adjustable, leather-covered multifunction steering wheel with illuminated operating keys and a central display for individual settings.

Innovations adopted from the top Mercedes-Benz models make the new CLK-Class Cabriolet a high-tech automobile which is unique in this vehicle class. Optional equipment available includes the proximity cruise control system DISTRONIC, the keyless access and drive authorisation system KEYLESS-GO, the operating and display system COMAND APS, LINGUATRONIC voice control for the telephone, radio and navigation system, the intelligent automatic climate control system THERMOTRONIC with a sun sensor or powerful bi-xenon headlamps.

As in the case of the Coupé, Mercedes customers have a choice of two lines –ELEGANCE and AVANTGARDE – for the new CLK Cabriolet, enabling them to satisfy their personal wishes with respect to design and equipment.

Engines: five petrol-driven units with an output range of 163 to 367 hp

The individuality and variety typical of a Mercedes also apply to the engines, with a choice of five modern petrol units available from launch. These distinguish themselves from the engines in the preceding series by a considerably higher output, more torque and a lower fuel consumption. The engine range is headed by two eight-cylinder units which have the performance characteristics of thoroughbred sports car engines: the new CLK 500 develops an output of 225 kW/306 hp and accelerates the CLK-Class Cabriolet from standstill to 100 km/h in 6.2 seconds. It is therefore 20 kW/27 hp higher in output and 1.2 seconds faster in acceleration than the previous CLK 430. Despite a higher output the CLK 500 Cabriolet consumes approx. five per cent less fuel than the preceding V8 model. Mercedes-AMG is the producer of the 270 kW/367 hp V8 engine of the CLK 55 AMG, whose output is 15 kW/20 hp higher than that of the preceding model. It enables this Cabriolet to sprint from standstill to 100 km/h in only 5.4 seconds (predecessor: 6.2 seconds).

Mercedes-Benz has extended the range of six-cylinder engines for the CLK-Class Cabriolet with a smooth-running 2.6-litre unit developing 125 kW/170 hp. The well-proven V6 engine of the CLK 320 Cabriolet (160 kW/218 hp) remains unchanged.

In the CLK-Class Cabriolet the new generation of four-cylinder engines with the unique TWINPULSE system has ensured further progress in terms of performance characteristics, torque, refinement and fuel

consumption. The TWINPULSE system combines various technologies such as supercharging, balancer shafts, intercooling, variably adjustable camshafts and four-valve technology.

With this high-tech package beneath the bonnet the new CLK 200 KOMPRESSOR has the smoothness of a six-cylinder unit, develops 120 kW/163 hp and consumes only 8.8 litres of premium petrol per 100 kilometres (NEDC combined consumption) – which is approx. seven per cent less than the equally powerful preceding model.

Suspension: new developments for dynamic handling

New and further developments in many areas of the suspension complete the dynamic driving experience. With its new three-link front suspension, precise rack-and-pinion power steering and modified independent multi-link rear suspension, the CLK-Class Cabriolet provides an ideal combination for outstanding handling safety, agility and comfort. A suspension with even more sporty, i.e. stiffer configuration of the springs and shock absorbers and a lowered body is available on request.

16-inch light-alloy wheels and mixed tyre sizes at the front and rear (205/55 R 16 and 225/50 R 16) emphasise the sporty character of the new Mercedes Cabriolet. The V8 model CLK 500 is fitted with 17-inch tyres, while the CLK 55 AMG underlines its special position in the range with 18-inch tyres.

Story and photos: DaimlerChrysler

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