

# CLASSIC DRIVER



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## Facelifted Mercedes C Class for 2004 includes 367bhp C 55 AMG

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**Four years after launch, Mercedes-Benz is significantly enhancing the technology, equipment and design of the successful C-Class. The newly sports-tuned chassis, steering and six-speed manual transmission make the C-Class an even more agile performer. Whilst the new C 55 AMG developing 367 hp is the first car in this Mercedes-Benz model series to feature an eight-cylinder engine.**

Available in the UK in Estate and Sports Coupé guises from May, and in Saloon form from July, this Mercedes model series features a new-look front section – bumper, radiator grille and headlamps – that gives the cars a dynamic appearance even when stationary.

Major styling elements that define the cars' dynamic looks include the newly designed front bumper, featuring a prominent lower air intake with sports-car overtones, as well as the new radiator grille which now has three louvres, giving a wider and hence more powerful feel.

These louvres are either painted or feature an even more dynamic perforated design, depending on the model and appointments. In addition, the Mercedes-Benz C-Class will have clear-lens headlamps fitted as standard.

The enhanced interior of the C-Class is a testament to the great care and meticulous attention to detail displayed by the Mercedes designers. This is immediately apparent in the tasteful use of chrome trim around many of the controls on the dashboard. It is also reflected in the newly developed switches and the modified seats which feature a different design for each line and provide added comfort.

Four circular dials with white lighting, which are designed in the style of high-class chronometers and easy to read, form the centrepiece of the all-new cockpit. A vertically arranged central display situated between the speedometer and rev counter works in tandem with the buttons on the

multifunction steering wheel, thus allowing the driver to customise numerous settings. The climate-control module has been enhanced in terms of visual appeal and ergonomic design. Large, easy-to-use dials make it easier to alter the settings and also contribute to the upgraded look and feel of the interior.

To improve the already outstanding driving dynamics, the C-Class chassis, steering and manual transmission have all been modified. The raft of measures implemented – collectively referred to as DIRECT CONTROL – includes newly developed bearings on the front and rear axles, which allow even more agile cornering without impairing comfort, as well as a more direct steering ratio and a reinforced anti-roll bar at the rear. The standard-fitted six-speed manual transmission is easy to use and ensures extremely precise gear changes.

Mercedes-Benz is extending the engine line-up for the Saloon and Estate models by introducing the supercharged powerplant developing 192 hp, which was previously only available for the Sports Coupé. With a peak torque of 260 Nm, the four-cylinder engine propels the C 230 KOMPRESSOR from 0 to 62.5 mph in 8.1 seconds (Estate 8.7 seconds) and enables a top speed of 149 mph (Estate 146 mph). Thanks to the TWINPULSE system, which combines various technologies such as a compressor, balancer shafts, intercooler, variable valve timing and four valves per cylinder, the engine consumes just 31.7 mpg (NEDC combined consumption, Estate 30.4 mpg).

The new C 55 AMG is the first of the current Mercedes-Benz C-Class models to feature an eight-cylinder engine and delivers performance on a par with a thoroughbred sports car: the power output of 367 hp and peak torque of 510 Nm are new records in this vehicle category. From a standing start, the new C 55 AMG accelerates to 62.5 mph in just 5.2 seconds. Furthermore, the AMG sports suspension – fitted as standard – and the five-speed automatic transmission with steering wheel-mounted gearshift buttons and AMG-SPEEDSHIFT make for a very sporty driving experience.

On the outside, the C 55 AMG is clearly distinguishable from the other C-Class models by virtue of its unique front end which has been extended by around 80 mm in order to accommodate the powerful V8 engine and now incorporates elliptic twin headlamps. Further features which emphasise the high-performance characteristics of the eight-cylinder model include the sporty side skirts, boot lid and rear bumper. Available as a Saloon or an Estate and introduced to replace the outgoing C32 AMG, the new C55 AMG comes complete with 18-inch light-alloy wheels, 225/40 R 18 front tyres, 245/35 R 18 rear tyres, AMG sports seats with Alcantara covers and a distinctly sporty instrument cluster with silver dials.

*Photos/Text - DaimlerChrysler*

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