

CLASSIC DRIVER

The new R-Class, the Grand Sports Tourer from Mercedes-Benz



Mercedes-Benz is lifting the wraps on another brand new model series, the new R-Class, which is making its world debut at the New York International Auto Show. The R-Class takes the acknowledged strengths of established vehicle categories, such as sporty Saloon, Estate, MPV and SUV, and fuses them to create a new car with a character all of its own, a car that is all about the three Ds: Dimensions, Design and Dynamism. The new R-Class is being launched first in North America in autumn 2005. Deliveries to customers in Europe will begin early in 2006 with UK arrivals around spring 2006.

It was back in 2002 that Mercedes-Benz first unveiled this revolutionary new vehicle concept to the public; less than three years later the study has evolved to reach series-production status.

Each of the vehicle's six passengers can sit back and relax in comfortable individual seats which offer the added luxury of armrests in the second row. The list of optional extras includes a centre console between the individual seats in the rear with extra stowage compartments along with large cup holders for holding both cups and bottles upright during the journey. The separate DVD/CD player which is also available as an option gives passengers in the rear full control over their own in-car entertainment programme. Colour screens and earphone connections are integrated into the back of the head restraints in front.

The specially developed panoramic sunroof (optional), whose glass panels extend over virtually the entire surface of the roof, ensures a cooling supply of fresh air for the interior whilst letting in a pleasant amount of extra light, which all adds up to a matchless open-air motoring sensation for the occupants.

Engine outputs range from 224 hp up to 306 hp, clearly signalling just what the new R-Class is capable of in terms of dynamic performance and motoring enjoyment. The powerful V8 powerplant under the bonnet of the R 500 propels it from standstill to 62.5 mph in just 6.9 seconds and on to a top speed of 149 mph (provisional figures).

Also to be found in the engine line-up is a new six-cylinder power unit with third-generation common-rail, direct-injection technology, whose credentials include improved fuel consumption, even lower exhaust emissions and an audible improvement in refinement. The V6 engine places its class-beating peak torque of 510 Nm on tap from as low down as 1600 rpm. The fuel consumption figures returned by the R 320 CDI are no less astounding: 31.7 mpg (combined consumption).

Powered by the new 272-hp V6 petrol engine, the R 350 accelerates from 0-62.5 mph in just 8.3 seconds and goes on to reach a top speed of 143 mph.

Permanent all-wheel drive, the electronically controlled 4ETS traction system and ESP team up to offer peerless driving safety and keep the new R-Class safely on course, even in very bad road conditions. These systems all make up part of the vehicle's standard specification, as does air suspension at the rear axle.

Mercedes customers also have the option of AIRMATIC all-round air suspension. This is interlinked with the ADS Adaptive Damping System, offering motorists the facility of raising the body by up to 50 mm when driving along rough roads. At high speeds above 75 mph, the body is automatically lowered by 20 mm to reduce wind resistance.

Mercedes-Benz offers a number of packages comprising valuable extras for the new R-Class. This allows customers to appoint and upgrade their Grand Sports Tourer to suit their personal taste. In addition to the AIRMATIC all-round air suspension package, options include the chrome styling package for the exterior, a sports styling package featuring a specially styled instrument cluster, sports pedals, 19-inch wheels and power-adjustable sports seats upholstered in Alcantara/ARTICO man-made leather, as well as an interior appointments package comprising leather upholstery, power-adjustable front seats and wood trim.



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