

2018 Toyota Avalon: Premium Sedan Without the Premium Price

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As Toyota's flagship midsize sedan, the Avalon brings premium style, performance, interior amenities, and presence to the masses – without a first-class price. It's this exceptional blend of high-quality characteristics that has been key to the Avalon's multiyear success since it first rolled off the assembly line at Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky (TMMK) in February 1994.

Avalon offers V6 and hybrid powertrains, the latter delivering an EPA-estimated 40 mpg combined. Standard on all grades is advanced Toyota Safety Sense-P (TSS-P) suite of technologies. The safety collection equips the Avalon with Automatic High Beams (AHB), Dynamic Radar Cruise Control (DRCC), Pre-Collision System with Pedestrian Detection (PCS w/PD), and Lane Departure Alert with Steering Assist (LDA w/SA).

The available Blind Spot Monitor (BSM) and Rear Cross-Traffic Alert (RCTA) help identify vehicles that drivers may not see when changing lanes or backing out of a parking space and will then warn the driver by illuminating a signal on the corresponding outside mirror.

Quiet Power in Two Forms

The Avalon remains unique in its segment for 2018 with the choice of powerful V6 or hybrid powertrains – one of eight Toyota hybrid models available for 2018. The Avalon's 3.5-liter, DOHC V6 with Dual VVT-i (Variable Valve Timing with intelligence) produces 268 horsepower at 6,200 rpm and 248 lb.-ft. of torque at 4,700 rpm. Teamed with a 6-speed automatic transmission, the V6 offers both impressive performance and EPA-rated 24 mpg combined fuel economy (21 city/30 highway).

The Avalon possesses a luxurious ride, yet also has sporty tendencies, especially when drivers utilize the standard steering wheel paddle shifters on the gas model and driving mode selector (Eco, Normal and Sport modes). Sport mode extracts the Avalon's inner sportiness, quickening throttle response, enhancing electric power steering feel, and raising transmission shift points. Downshifts "blip" the throttle, as the driver of a stick-shift sports car might do, to maintain power through a curve, for example.

Selecting Eco Mode gives the Avalon a more parsimonious personality, prioritizing fuel efficiency by balancing driving dynamics and climate control functionality. Normal mode yields the best balance of everyday performance and comfort.

Fuel-Conscious Luxury

Avalon Hybrid doesn't discount performance to deliver an amazing EPA-estimated 40 mpg combined fuel economy (40 city/39 highway). Toyota's Hybrid Synergy Drive system combines output from a 2.5-liter Atkinson-cycle four-cylinder engine and a high-torque electric motor. The resulting combined 200 horsepower gives the Avalon Hybrid strong, responsive acceleration along with seamless and quiet road manners.

The hybrid system can switch between the gas engine and electric motor, or combine output from both, channeling torque through a unique planetary gear-type continuously variable transmission. An EV Drive mode enables the Avalon Hybrid to drive solely on the electric motor for a short distance at speeds under about 20 mph.

Like all Toyota hybrids, Avalon Hybrid augments the conventional brake system with Toyota-pioneered regenerative braking. The system captures the kinetic energy of the wheels when braking or decelerating, storing it in the hybrid battery. That same kind of hybrid intelligence permeates the Avalon Hybrid. Because the air conditioning and power steering systems are driven electrically, both continue to operate normally when the car is operating under electric power alone or when the auto start/stop system shuts off the gas engine.

A Hybrid System Indicator in the 3.5-inch thin-film transistor (TFT) color multi-information display shows power output and regeneration. With the compact nickel-metal-hydride battery located in the trunk area, the Avalon Hybrid maintains a generous 14 cu.-ft. of trunk space, just two less than the gasoline Avalon models.

Proficient in Premium

The Avalon certainly looks the part of a premium luxury sedan, with a coupe-like profile, bold grille and discrete chrome trim. Even with the sweeping roofline, Avalon provides ample rear seat head room. Interior design and appointments also live up to the premium promise. Avalon's cabin – one of the roomiest in the segment – offers a choice of three interior color themes including Almond, Light Gray, and Black. Serenity on the road is assured by strategically placed sound-absorbing and sound-insulating materials, including acoustic-type glass used for the windshield and side glass, plus foam injected into the A-, B-, and C-pillars, and rocker panels.

Even the smallest of cabin details have been paid attention to. The power windows, for example, slow down as they approach the top of the window frames, and the coin box features a damper for smooth opening and closing. The steering column tilts and telescopes, and elegant smoke chrome trim surrounds the center panel, while glossy trim frames the shifter.

For drivers wanting more sportiness, the Avalon Touring provides a dynamic and responsive driving experience with sport-tuned suspension and 18-inch dark gray painted alloy wheels. Standard LED headlights and LED daytime running lights give the Touring grade a unique styling signature as well as cutting-edge illumination.

The Avalon's striking exterior Mica color choices reflect a premium positioning: Ooh La La Rouge Mica, Crème Brulee Mica, Sizzling Crimson Mica, plus Parisian Night Pearl.

Five Levels of Avalon

The Avalon line starts with XLE, which features standard medium-grain leather-trimmed seating, an 8-way power driver's seat and 4-way power front passenger seat, both with multi-stage heating. The rich-looking instrument panel uses Optitron-type gauges and a 3.5-inch thin-film transistor (TFT) color multi-information display. In all Avalon models, the eBin electronics storage tray in the center console can store two devices out of sight while they recharge. During evening hours, the eBin tray is illuminated by LEDs. Both the XLE Premium and Limited go wireless with Qi charging for compatible smartphones.

The leather-trimmed steering wheel conveniently puts numerous controls at the driver's fingertips, including Entune Audio, information display, and hands-free phone function. The steering wheel also includes buttons for voice recognition and a vehicle-to-vehicle distance switch for the standard Dynamic Radar Cruise Control (DRCC). The XLE includes a Smart Key System on the driver's side and trunk and remote illuminated entry. (Higher grades have Smart Key on the passenger door, as well.)

The XLE Plus is next in line on the gasoline model and is the entry grade for Avalon Hybrid. This grade adds a power tilt/slide moonroof with sliding sunshade, and an auto-dimming rear view mirror with compass, map lights, and HomeLink universal transceiver.

The Avalon Limited coddles occupants in perforated leather-trimmed seats, along with a 10-way power-adjustable driver's seat with power lumbar support and power cushion extension, and 8-way power front passenger seat. Both are heated and ventilated, while the rear seats are heated. The Limited expands automatic climate control to three zones, including the rear seat area. (Other grades have a dual-zone system.) Intelligent Touch controls respond to a light touch, and can be easily operated by hands with gloves or longer fingernails.

The Avalon Limited even helps shield rear passengers from the sun with a rear window power shade. Shift the transmission into reverse, and the shade lowers to aid rearward visibility, then rises again with the shift into Drive. A standard backup camera enhances rearward visibility for all Avalon models. In the Limited, dynamic guidelines superimposed on the display help make parking maneuvers even easier by showing approximate distances from objects in the camera's field of view. Super Chrome alloy wheels put the finishing touch of elegance on the Limited – 17-inch on the Hybrid and 18-inch for the gas model.

Entune Multimedia

Multimedia is premium-grade in all Avalon grades, playing music from just about any digital source, including CDs. Standard for the XLE and XLE Plus, the 8-speaker Entune Audio Plus system with 7-inch touch-screen display and Scout GPS Link App for navigation is equipped with AM/FM CD player, SiriusXM Radio with 3-month complimentary trial, HD Radio and HD Radio traffic, and weather in major metro areas. It comes ready to connect with the Entune Multimedia Bundle, auxiliary audio jack, USB 2.0 port with iPod connectivity and control, advanced voice recognition, plus Bluetooth for hands-free phone capability, phone book access, and music streaming.

The 9-speaker Entune Premium Audio with Navigation in the XLE Premium and Touring grades use a 7-inch high-resolution touch screen with split-screen capability. The App Suite adds HD Radio predictive traffic and Doppler weather overlay, Gracenote album cover art, and AM/FM cache radio, which lets you pause up to 20 minutes of a broadcast to replay later. Toyota's Entune App Suite functions through a smartphone interface and brings applications including Destination Search, iHeartRadio, MovieTickets.com, OpenTable, and Pandora to the vehicle audio display.

The available Entune Premium JBL Audio with Navigation system delivers an in-car concert experience with a 12-channel JBL Synthesis amplifier and 11 JBL speakers, including two subwoofers. GreenEdge technology reduces power draw on the car's electrical system.

Safety Technology Aplenty

The Avalon comes equipped with 10 standard airbags and a Toyota Star Safety System that includes Vehicle Stability Control (VSC), Traction Control (TRAC), Anti-lock Brake System (ABS), Electronic Brake Force Distribution (EBD), Brake Assist (BA), and Smart Stop brake-override Technology (SST).

Limited Warranty and Toyota Care

Toyota's 36-month/36,000 mile basic new-vehicle warranty applies to all components other than normal wear and maintenance items. Additional 60-month warranties cover the powertrain for 60,000 miles and against corrosion with no mileage limitation. The hybrid-related components, including the HV battery, battery control module, hybrid control module and inverter with converter, are covered for eight years/100,000 miles.

All 2018 Avalon and Avalon Hybrid models come standard with Toyota Care, a complimentary plan covering normal factory-scheduled maintenance and 24-hour roadside assistance for two years or 25,000 miles, whichever comes first.