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2017 Annual Auto Issue

10 Top Picks

The best new cars of 2017 are outstanding all-around performers—shown to be reliable, safe, and satisfying. That means they have scored high in our stringent track tests and extensive owner surveys. They have won our admiration, and we recommend them with confidence.

by **Jeff S. Bartlett**

WHAT IT TAKES TO BE TOPS

Overall score To be a Top Pick, a model has to have an exemplary Overall Score in its category. This single number consolidates the findings from four key pillars: road-test performance, predicted reliability, owner satisfaction, and safety. A car that bests the competition by these measures is truly extraordinary.

Road Test Performance for each car is rated based on more than 50 evaluations conducted at our 327-acre Auto Test Center, ranging from instrumented track tests to assessments of comfort and convenience while in daily use by our staff.

Reliability We predict how trouble-free new cars will be based on actual problems reported by subscribers in our 2016 auto survey on more than half a million vehicles. Predictions for new or redesigned models depend on the manufacturer's track record or previous generations.

Owner Satisfaction Simply put, a good car should make its owner happy. We rate owner satisfaction based on the percentage of surveyed owners who say that if they had to do it all over again, they would definitely buy the same car. Our latest subscriber survey collected data on more than 300,000 vehicles from model years 2014 and later.

Safety All cars recommended by Consumer Reports must perform satisfactorily in accident-avoidance tests at our track and provide effective occupant protection based on crash tests conducted by the government and/or insurance industry (if tested). We give credit to models that have standard forward-collision warning (FCW) systems or automatic emergency braking (AEB) systems.

Sports Car

Mazda MX-5 Miata

OVERALL MPG 34



The Mazda MX-5 Miata is the embodiment of driving pleasure. Its alchemical formula has been honed since 1990, with the core ingredients consistently being a pliant four-cylinder engine, rear-wheel drive, sharp handling, and light weight. The real magic is in how the machine responds to the driver. The modest power is harnessed to great effect with a slick-shifting manual transmission with closely spaced gear ratios. The Miata truly comes alive on winding roads, with immediate steering response and a handling balance that will make you grin. On top of all that, it gets impressive fuel economy. Fantastically fun and frugal, the Miata is spellbinding.

Large Sedan

Chevrolet Impala

OVERALL MPG 22



The Impala continues to reign as the leading large sedan. Slide behind the wheel and you can see why. Roomy, supportive seats put you in the perfect position to access the intuitive controls. Despite its prodigious size, the Impala's handling is responsive and secure. Road imperfections are effectively absorbed, resulting in a ride reminiscent of a pricier luxury sedan. The rear seat is roomy enough for three adults, and the ample trunk can swallow their bags with ease. Sedan shoppers browsing upmarket choices would be wise to give this smart, competitively priced alternative serious consideration.

Compact Hybrid

Toyota Prius

OVERALL MPG 52



The car that pioneered the hybrid movement and has defined fuel-efficiency for four model generations still stands tall as an innovative green machine. Its fuel economy in our tests was a staggering 52 mpg overall—the highest we've ever recorded in a car that doesn't plug in. Prius also touts excellent reliability, a remarkable accomplishment given the inherent complexity of its hybrid powertrain. It has improved even more with its recent redesign, reducing cabin noise, improving ride comfort, and making handling more responsive. Sweetening the deal, the new Prius comes standard with a comprehensive suite of safety features. Being green has never been so easy or smart.

Luxury SUV

Audi Q7

OVERALL MPG 20



The seven-passenger Q7 is the highest-rated SUV we've recently tested. Sumptuous and pampering, it feels more like a luxury sedan than an SUV. The quiet interior coddles riders, and it's decked out with premium trimmings and road-trip-friendly seats. The infotainment system provides seamless interaction with phone, audio, and other functions. Despite its generous size, the Q7 has genuine agility, with road-hugging chops, a settled ride, and excellent brakes for rapid stops. Sure, it's pricey, but it's also rich in rewards.

Compact Pickup Honda Ridgeline

OVERALL MPG 20



Innovation abounds in this suburbia-targeted pickup, proving that trucks can be both refined and versatile. The Ridgeline glides along, more akin to a sedan than its roughneck rivals. It also handles far better than any compact or full-sized pickup, and it shames all nondiesel trucks for fuel economy. The Ridgeline isn't up for big-time towing or off-road adventures, but this smartly designed truck more than makes up for that with other benefits. The lockable in-bed trunk and dual-mode tailgate add to its flexibility. Many truck buyers dream of a large, rugged behemoth, but the Ridgeline excels at the factors most noncommercial drivers with weekend warrior aspirations will appreciate.

Subcompact Car Toyota Yaris iA

OVERALL MPG 35



Developed by Mazda, launched by Scion, and now marketed as a Toyota, the Yaris iA proves that subcompact cars can delight. A different model from the Toyota Yaris hatchback, the frisky iA sedan stands out in a segment filled with insubstantial models. It feels refined for this entry-level class, with a smooth and willing four-cylinder engine, slick six-speed automatic transmission, and relatively compliant ride. Mazda's sporty DNA shines through the well-tuned steering and eager handling to bring playfulness to this affordable party. A full-featured infotainment system and standard low-speed automatic emergency braking add further appeal, making the Yaris iA a desirable no-excuses budget sedan.

Midsized SUV Toyota Highlander

OVERALL MPG 20



In this competitive segment, midsized SUVs have to do it all well, and none do it better than the Toyota Highlander. Expectations here are high, with buyers looking for family-friendly functionality, all-weather traction, three-row seating, generous cargo space, and the capability of light towing. Throw in good performance, fuel economy, and long-term reliability, and Highlander's appeal is clear. The 2017 update sees 25 more horsepower for the V6 engine, two additional gears, and advanced safety equipment made standard. In other words, this gem of an SUV has all the right moves.

Small SUV Subaru Forester

OVERALL MPG 26



The Subaru Forester sets the standard for small SUVs, combining relatively roomy packaging, fuel efficiency, solid reliability, and easy access. Large windows and a boxy shape maximize room for passengers and gear in sharp contrast to style trends exhibited by competitors that compromise practicality. Big square doors aid access, and the unmatched visibility inspires driving confidence. Secure handling and a supple ride add to the appeal. Performance is decent from the standard 2.5-liter four-cylinder engine, and fuel economy is excellent at 26 mpg overall. And last, safety technology like forward-collision warning and automatic emergency braking is available on all but the base trim level.

Compact Car Chevrolet Cruze

OVERALL MPG 30



This redesigned sedan and hatchback bests two segment stalwarts, the Honda Civic and the Toyota Corolla, with an Overall Score at the top of the class. The formula is simple: Put the Malibu and Impala in a shrink ray, reducing scale but preserving the commendable driving manners and generous available features. The result is a hushed, smooth-riding sedan that's roomy enough to be a budget-friendly alternative to a midsized car. The polished 153-hp turbocharged four-cylinder engine is lively yet frugal. The Cruze we tested returned a good 30 mpg overall, but look deeper into the data and you find that it achieved 47 mpg on the highway. Given that impressive figure, it might not be worth waiting for the diesel engine.

Midsized Sedan Kia Optima

OVERALL MPG 28



Move over Honda Accord and Toyota Camry: The Kia Optima rocks the midsized sedan segment as a smart alternative to the me-too mainstream. It checks all of the right boxes for family-sedan buyers, with responsive handling, a steady ride and pleasant powertrain, short stopping distances, easy-to-use controls, and a roomy backseat. The Optima is a vehicle that delivers all of these virtues in a stylish, value-laden package that's filled with features usually found on pricier cars. With outstanding reliability and extensive warranty coverage, savvy sedan shoppers should take this recently redesigned car for a test drive.