



2016 Hyundai Sonata 2.0 Sport Hits a High Note

The Hyundai Sonata has been sold in North America since 1989. Now in its seventh generation here in the US the Sonata has changed radically over the years. This week's test vehicle is a Sonata Sport 2.0T which offered a lot of standard equipment and an interesting mix of elegance and economy with a sporting edge.

In fact, there is a 2016 Sonata to fill just about any midsize-sedan need. Want a budget-conscious 4-door? The base Sonata SE has you covered, while sporty sedan drivers will appreciate the Sonata Sport 2.0T. Hyundai even offers three different fuel-sippers, the Sonata Eco, and the Sonata Hybrid and Plug-In Hybrid.

My Sport 2.0 Turbo model was not equipped with much optional equipment but rather came loaded with lots of standard goodies for price of around 28K.

When it was first unveiled the styling of the current generation was a bit of a disappointment. The previous generation featured curves, edges and creases everywhere it was very distinctive but perhaps a little too much.

The Hyundai design team did a great job of taking that bold leap of the previous generation and dial in back to create as Hyundai executives describe it as “an athlete in a well-tailored suit”. There's still a sharp line of chrome extending from the headlights and down the flanks of the car, and Hybrid and Eco models all benefit from unique trim designed to enhance aerodynamics and improve fuel economy. There's not a lot of envelope-pushing here, but it's a good-looking car that will likely age well. Something that the previous generation will in my opinion not do well in the aging department. My Sport Model had a n a bit high performance neat aero treatment to the lower rear bumper and valance giving it some subtle nod to its sporting intentions.

All 2016 Hyundai Sonata models get a new 17-inch touch-screen audio system with HD Radio, Bluetooth and USB smartphone integration, and Hyundai's Blue Link telecommunications suite. Automatic headlights are now standard across the board as well. It all complements a nicely laid-out and easy-to-use interior whose only real fault is being a bit on the bland side.

However, I found myself liking more than the “look at me” six generation car inside and out. The hugely accommodating rear seat was a welcome and pleasant treat.



There are clever touches, such as the intermittent-wiper speed shown on the 4.2-inch color display between the gauges. Its styling and overlook and feel now position the vehicle “smack dab” in the middle of its major competitors such as the Honda Accord and Toyota Camry Plus the Nissan Altima, Ford Fusion, The Chevy Malibu, VW Passat, Chrysler 200 and its sibling the Kia Optima.

For 2016 Andriod Auto and Apple Car Play make debuts as options on the Sonata as more high tech finds its way into the Hyundai across the board.

My Sport model with its 2.0-liter turbocharged inline-4 delivers 245 horsepower and 260 lb-ft of torque hooked to six speed automatic. Fuel economy is rated at 23 cities and 32 highways.

Driving Dynamics were good for a mild sport sedan. For 2016 the Sport 2.0 model gains aluminum suspension components to reduce unsprung mass for improved handling. For those who would like a conventional sunroof is available on Sport models.

The Drive Select switch allows you to choose normal, sport or Eco settings. For the first time in recent memory I found the car drove best in Eco mode. Normally I would keep it in Sport all the time but something about the “throttle mapping” and other computer elements made for me the Eco mode the most pleasant to live with day to day. Front Drive Torque steer is present when pushed and around town fuel economy might benefit with the addition of an 8 speed automatic

In its lifetime the Sonata has played many different tunes but I find the move to more elegant and refined design and engineering philosophy to be the sweetest note to date.

Front Engine-Turbo/FWD

Highlights

Styling

Standard and Available Equipment

2.0-liter Sport Package

Lowlights

Some interior materials could use improvement

The Long Drive Ratings

Scale 1 low-10 High

Exterior Styling 8

Interior styling and quality 7

Handling 6

Braking 6

Fuel Economy 7

Stereo System 5 (Base)

Performance 5

Trunk-Cargo Capacity 9