



Alfa Romeo Tonale

Hybrid with heart and soul

Review | Big news at Alfa Romeo! After a long silence around the Italian carmaker for a very long time, it is now time for an entirely new model. It is not an exclusive sports car accessible only to a few privileged buyers, but a car in the most popular segment at the moment: a mid-size SUV. What makes this SUV special: it is a hybrid in more ways than one.

It had been known for some time that the Tonale was on the way, as it was first seen as a concept car at the 2019 Geneva Motor Show. That was a stunning three-door SUV with such sensual lines that many an enthusiast would already place an order without knowing the price or specifications.



Now that the final production model has been unveiled, it gives mixed feelings. Little remains of the desirable lines of the concept car. Although the production model has "hidden" rear doors, it nevertheless lacks the look of a coupé. In other words, the harmony of the concept car is lost in the

production model. For a brand that is all about emotion and experience, this is a setback. However: because Alfa Romeo has opted for functionality, the Tonale will better suit the average family's wish list.

Space and equipment

On the inside, the Tonale is a true Alfa Romeo with extravagant shapes and plenty of decoration. What makes the Tonale a true Alfa Romeo are its many details. On the outside, those are the Italian flags in the wing mirrors. Inside, these include the round housings around the instrument panel, the digital animation of analogue trip meters and the nostalgic indicator sound.



The seats are large, but also firm and sporty. The steering wheel pokes deep into the interior, like sports cars. Space in the front is good. Rear space is moderate (for a car this size).

The Tonale is the first Alfa Romeo to use an all-new audio, communication and navigation system, based on technology from Jeep. Its functionality is good and response time short.

At the same time, it is noticeable that this is a first version. For instance, the voice-controlled assistant says it can send messages, but when asked to send a message, the system tells it that that command does not exist! Pairing an iPhone with a cable via Apple CarPlay is laborious. Sometimes it works instantly, during other trips the system would get stuck in "setting up connection" for minutes or never connect

at all. Fortunately, the infotainment system can be updated via the internet, so the wait is on for that.

Hybrid

To make the Tonale more than just an exotic enthusiast's car, only hybrid engines are on the programme. These are a mild hybrid (brief assistance from an electric motor when needed), a parallel hybrid (covering short distances entirely electrically) and a plug-in hybrid. All variants recover energy during braking. Only the plug-in hybrid (also known as "PHEV" for "plug-in hybrid electric vehicle") can also charge with a cable and, thanks to its much more powerful battery, can also cover full journeys electrically.



As with every modern Alfa Romeo, the Tonale has a "DNA" button that can be used to determine the car's character. Previously it stood for "dynamic", "neutral" and "all weather". From now on, it stands for "dynamic" (the petrol and electric engine work together for maximum performance), "neutral" (the computer decides when which engine is best to use) or "Advanced Efficiency" (emphasis on electric driving). Although the choice of propulsion technology certainly affects the character of the car, the influence of the DNA button is much less than before.

During the test in cold weather (unfavourable for electric propulsion), the Tonale was able to cover 65 km in electric mode all-electric. Then, however, the Tonale does not have the character of an electric car! In electric mode, the Tonale is not as quiet as a typical electric car because of the prominent tyre noise. In

addition, it is only possible to automatically brake on the engine (and thus recover energy). Single-pedal driving is not possible. Finally, it is noticeable that the performance with just the electric motor is moderate at best.

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When the two motors work together, that interplay is harmoniously. It is barely audible or tangible when which motor is providing the drive, and that is as it should be. In neutral mode, performance is more than adequate, but that's all. Only when the dynamic mode is chosen and the accelerator is decisively pressed to the floor does the total power of 280 hp / 270 Nm is unleashed. Then, on paper, performance is excellent with a sprint from 0 to 100 km/h in 6.2 seconds. However, the speed sensation is slight, partly because an exciting engine sound is missing. When the battery is flat and only the petrol engine provides propulsion, 7 litres per 100 km is the best mileage that can be achieved (continuous 90 to 100 km/h on the motorway) and that is relatively high for a car like this.

Driving behaviour

Alfa Romeo recently became part of "Stellantis", the parent company that also owns Fiat, Opel, Peugeot and Citroën. However, development of the Tonale began before Alfa Romeo joined this group. Despite the fact that the Tonale is roughly the same size as an Opel Grandland or Peugeot 3008, the Alfa Romeo is therefore on a completely different platform.

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And that means completely different handling too! As can be expected from Alfa Romeo, dynamics have been chosen. The suspension is firm, but certainly not harsh. The steering is decidedly direct, making for an alert and lively character. Thereby, the higher the speed, the heavier the steering becomes. This ensures stability on the motorway and agility in the city. However: in all cases, hardly any resistance from the front wheels can be felt in the steering (poor feedback). Combined with steering that adapts to speed, this makes for unpredictable reactions in the Tonale.

The most important goal, however, has been achieved: any extra weight from the hybrid drive battery is not noticeable. In fact, the Tonale feels smaller and more nimble than it actually is and is, making it a true Alfa Romeo!



Conclusion

After a long silence, Alfa Romeo introduces a new model. The "Tonale" (named after an Italian mountain pass) is a mid-size SUV and with it Alfa Romeo is targeting the most popular segment at the moment. The Tonale is distinguished by typical Italian design and decoration, both inside and out.

Characteristic of the Tonale is its hybrid design. This concerns not only the drive, but also the whole concept of the car! The Tonale also combines emotion and reason, modern and familiar, dynamics and comfort. With its design, the Tonale is less idiosyncratic than traditional Alfa Romeo cars, but that is precisely what can secure the brand's future. It proves that: now that Alfa Romeo is opting for hybrid, it is with heart and soul. ■



Specifications

Alfa Romeo Tonale

Size and weight



Length x width x height	453 x 184 x 160 cm
Wheelbase	264 cm
Kerb weight	1.910 kg
Trailer	700 kg
Trailer - braked	1.250 kg
Fuel capacity	43 l
Luggage space	385/1430 l
Tyre size	R20

Engine and performance



Capacity	1332 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	280 PS @ 5750 rpm
Max torque	270 Nm @ 1850 rpm
Drive	four wheel drive
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	6.2 secs
Top speed	206 km/h
Average mileage	1.3 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	unknown
Mileage extra urban	unknown
CO2 emissions	32 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 44,595
Price base model	Â£ 38,595