



Honda S660 Supercarlet

Review | Do you know that joke about the classes on how to deal with disappointment? They were cancelled. That's what it felt like when Honda showed off the S660 at several motor shows around the world and then announced it would only be on sale in Japan. There was only one way to overcome this huge disappointment: Autozine travelled to Japan to test drive the Honda S660.

Why go to all that trouble for a little Honda that costs a mere 20,000 euro? Because that little car has all the makings of a supercar, but at a fraction of the price. Just like with a traditional supercar, fun to drive is paramount and things like space, comfort, safety or ergonomics all come second.



Concept

And that goes for the Honda S660 just as well! Just like with a large supercar it all starts with jaw-dropping looks. When seen from the side the S660 looks like an athlete that's ready to set off at any moment. And thanks to the mean, slit-like headlights and narrow wing mirrors (which offer excellent visibility as well) this 1.4 metre wide car looks the part. Seldomly does such a small car trigger such strong emotions!

Underneath the seductive skin the S660 has the layout of a true sports car. That is: the engine is located in the middle of this two-seater car (just before the rear axle) and it powers the rear wheels.



To boost the fun even more, the S660 has a drop cloth roof. The rear wall, including a (movable) window, is fixed and that's why the S660 isn't a true convertible. The most important asset of the removable roof is that it increases the communication between the driver and the mechanics. Also, the occupants of the S660 hear, see and even smell the outside world for an even more intense experience.

The "retractable" roof can be stored in a box underneath the bonnet, reducing the luggage space to zero. To reduce weight, the cabin has a simple layout and even the glove box is absent, making the single cupholder the sole luggage space. Good luck stuffing your groceries or holiday luggage in that! In short: the Honda S660 has all the features of a true supercar, including the oddities.

Kei-car

At the same time the S660 is a real "kei car". A "kei car" (also known as "K-Car") benefits from big tax discounts in Japan thanks to its modest size (maximum 3.4 metres in length, maximum 1.4 metres wide) and evenly modest engine. Underneath the muscular bodywork lives a modest 660 cc engine. It is supplied by Mitsubishi, so no Honda gimmicks like VTEC here.

Not impressed? Press the starter button and shiver when this tiny engine starts to scream and shout. Of course it doesn't even come close to the mighty roar of a V8 or V12 in a traditional supercar, but for a 660 cc engine this Honda has an impressive voice. And at just about every gear shift the turbo hisses and puffs as if it is its sole purpose in life!



Handling

Yet, it is the handling that really makes the S660 a unique offering in its segment. Thanks to the midship engine, the S660 is more dynamic than a traditional car with the engine in the front. Think of it this way: an object with the weight concentrated in the middle will revolve around its axle more easily than an object with the weight distributed around the edges. That's why the S660 reacts quicker and is more alert to any input from the steering wheel, after which it seems to bend itself through the corner.

The electronic safety systems offer some leeway. For those who want to, it takes just a flick of the steering wheel to will the S660 into a beautiful drift. This doesn't require high speeds, just a gutsy driver.

Add to that the low seating position and the fact that the three-cylinder engine continuously shakes the bodywork, and it seems like the S660 is a very fast car indeed. In fact, the average diesel powered family saloon will outperform the S660, but the Honda driver has infinitely more fun and that's what it's all about.

The S660 is available with a six-speed manual gearbox or a CVT automatic. The latter is a tad more fuel efficient, but because of its more pure character we opted for the manual. Thanks to its short lever and close ratios it's easy to shift quickly. Because the engine strongly depends on the turbo, under 2,000 rpm performance is poor. Around 2,500 rpm torque is at a maximum, which is ideal for cruising. Any higher engine speed and the eager engine wants nothing more but to please its master.



Conclusion

On car shows around the world Honda showed several concepts and finally the production model of the S660. And then it bluntly announced the S660 would only be on sale in Japan. A more than enjoyable test drive in Japan learns that the rest of the world misses out on a truly remarkable vehicle. That's because the S660 offers supercar thrills at a fraction of the price.

At the same time Honda's choice is a logical one. The S660 has literally been build for the Japanese market and Japanese drivers. Those who are taller than 1.75 metres will be uncomfortable in the S660 and will almost be blown out with the roof open. Also, the engine and gearbox are designed for Japanese top speeds, which are much lower than those in the rest of the world. That's why the S660 shouts and screams constantly at European speeds (we tried it anyway). So the S660 will never be a true supercar, but it certainly is a supercarlet. ■



Specifications

Honda S660 alpha

Size and weight



Length x width x height	340 x 148 x 118 cm
Wheelbase	229 cm
weight	830 kg
Trailer	unknown
Trailer - braked	unknown
Fuel capacity	25 l
Luggage space	unknown
Tyre size	165/55R15

Engine and performance



Capacity	658 cc
Cylinders / valves	3/
Max power	64 PS @ 6000 rpm
Max torque	104 Nm @ 2600 rpm
Drive	Rear wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	unknown
topspeed	140 km/h
Average mileage	4.7 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	INF l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	INF l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	110 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 0
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