



Tesla Model 3

And that's three

Review | From the very start, Tesla had a plan. The first step was to build an image by introducing a cool sports car. The second step was to make money by selling a big luxury car. The final goal was step 3: improve the world by offering an affordable electric car for the masses: the Model 3.

The fact that step 1 and 2 were successful is obvious. Tesla has an excellent reputation and everything that carries the logo is desirable. More important: Tesla has a very faithful following. So when the affordable electric vehicle for the masses was announced, demand was overwhelming. That is thanks to the product itself and the Tesla brand name.



It's the size and the price that makes the Model 3 so desirable. Up to now Tesla only offered models in the highest segment of the market. The Model 3 is a mid-size sedan, comparable in size and price to a Mercedes-Benz C-Class or BMW 3-Series. But that's where the comparison ends! Tesla is a relatively new

car brand and that's why it isn't bound by tradition.

Ergonomics

It's why the Model 3 is different in every conceivable way. The Model 3 comes with a key, but instead it's locked and unlocked by a smartphone (there is a credit-card sized emergency key though). To improve aerodynamics (more efficiency and less noise) the door handles are flush mounted. By pressing the thumb on the far end, the handle flips open and the door can be opened. No complicated or expensive electronics here, just simple and effective mechanics.

"The Model 3 Performance is like a fighter that beats its opponents with one hand behind its back"



The dashboard is completely flat and has no buttons at all. Even air vents cannot be seen! Behind the steering wheel there are no dials. All functions of the car are operated by just two knobs on the steering wheel, two stalks on the steering column and the centrally mounted display. This seems to be a very radical choice, but because all menus are arranged so logically everything works simply and even intuitively.

Even the seemingly absent air vents work better than traditional ones: using the central display the direction of the air stream can be set by pinching and zooming. While driving, the big screen doesn't distract the driver, yet it quickly becomes second nature to read the speed from the middle of the dashboard. Although a sun visor is missing, the screen was readable under varying light conditions.

When it comes to equipment and luxury, Tesla is less innovative. In theory the Model 3 can drive all by itself, but most of this functionality has been disabled for now. Just like many other modern cars in Europe the Tesla Model 3 is restricted to just assisting at operating the throttle, brakes and steering. Thanks to an Internet connection the satnav always has the latest maps and up-to-date traffic information. On top of that, the system offers Internet radio, Spotify and old-fashioned analogue radio. The sound of the standard audio system is rich, detailed and clear.



Even the seating position is out of the ordinary. The steering wheel is small and the dashboard is low. This results in a wider view and a greater feeling of control over the car. Compared to traditional cabins the minimalist and low dashboard makes the Tesla driver feel "naked". The front seats are comfortable yet small and the integrated headrests are too low for tall adults. On the passenger's side a grip is lacking above the side window.

The space in the rear is fair. The boot is of average size, but because the rear window isn't part of the rear door the boot is a bit harder to reach. Because an electric motor doesn't require as much space as an internal combustion engine, the Model 3 has a second boot under the bonnet (the so-called "frunk"). It offers enough space for a large shopping bag.

Handling

The simple fact that the Model 3 is an electric car, determines its handling. Because the batteries are integrated in the floor, the centre of gravity is low and that improves stability. When opting for a version with four-wheel drive ("dual motor"), the weight distribution over the front and rear axle is almost perfect and that improves handling even more.

While the large Tesla models have adjustable suspension, the Model 3 sits on a firm underpinning with no adjustability. One can choose light, normal or sporty steering. In all cases the Model 3 has direct and precise steering, only the amount of force required to turn the steering wheel varies. The firm suspension

and alert steering make this 1.9 ton (!) weighing sedan feel light, agile and capable. The noise from the wind and tyres are above average for a car in this price range.



Performance

Just like other carmakers do, the most expensive versions are delivered to customers first. Those are the models that generate the most revenue! The test car is a so-called "Performance" version which can't be compared to the promised affordable car for the masses when it comes to price and performance. The dual electric motor delivers 450 PS / 640 Nm and that makes this unassuming looking sedan actually faster than the majority of supercars!

The sprint from zero to 62 mph is cleared in 3.4 seconds, without any wheelspin, smoke or primitive roaring noises. When putting the pedal to the metal the electronics brace for action, after which the occupants are pressed into their seats and the Model 3 shoots off. It's not the sensation of speed, but rather the lack of any form of drama that makes driving fast with the Model 3 a unique experience. The Model 3 Performance is like a fighter that beats its opponents with one hand behind its back.



Just as easily "Chill mode" can be activated, on which the reaction to the throttle is less eager and less power is available. Then, the Model 3 is a good-natured and comfortable mile muncher.

Range

The Model 3 is available with a standard and an extra large (75 kWh) battery. For this test the latter has been driven. According to Tesla this gives the Model 3 a range of 560 km. Autozine drove 477 km on a full battery in cold weather.

For the European market the Model 3 has a CCS charging port, which is the most popular socket in Europe. This means the Model 3 can easily be charged at home, on public chargers, on fast chargers and on Tesla's own network of "superchargers". On a fast charger from NLE the Model 3 charged at a speed of 41 kW (roughly 2 hours from empty to 100%). At Tesla's own supercharger a speed of 120 kW could be achieved, recharging the battery in less than an hour.



Conclusion

There was more than 3 years between Tesla's announcement of an electric vehicle for the masses and the actual introduction on the European market. So the big question is: does the Tesla Model 3 meet the high expectations? The answer is: yes, definitely.

The Model 3 differs from conventional cars in many ways, making it better in most cases. Thanks to daring ergonomics the Model 3 is an example of simplicity and logic. Also, the cabin is more calming, while the car is ready for the future (as soon as the announced "auto pilot" is ready, the steering wheel can easily be removed).

The performance of the "Performance" is smashing, but that's just a detail. When driving at normal speeds an electric car offers peace and quiet no internal combustion engine can ever match. At the same time the Model 3 has the same range as a comparable car with a petrol engine. However, the Model 3 is much cheaper per mile and doesn't produce any emissions. This means Tesla is far ahead of the rest of the industry and the goal has been achieved: this is indeed the electric car that the people were waiting for. ■



Specifications

Tesla Model 3 Dual Motor Performance

Size and weight



Length x width x height	469 x 185 x 144 cm
Wheelbase	288 cm
Kerb weight	1.931 kg
Trailer	unknown
Trailer - braked	unknown
Battery	75 kWh
Luggage space	425 l
Tyre size	R20

Engine and performance



Max power	450 PS @ 1 rpm
Max torque	640 Nm @ 1 rpm
Drive	four wheel drive
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	3.4 secs
Top speed	261 km/h
Average mileage	unknown
Mileage urban	unknown
Mileage extra urban	unknown
Range	530 km (NEDC)
CO2 emissions	0 gr. / km

Price

Price	Â£ 48,590
Price base model	Â£ 38,050