

HYUNDAI EF-B SONATA

2.7-Litre GL Automatic Sedan

FEATURES	
BEST	WORST
A good value family car	Resistance to brake fade only fair
Five year warranty	Steering kickback on bumpy corners
Generally pleasant to drive	Comfort for rear centre occupant



Hyundai has given its Sonata range a major workover, with new styling, two new engines, revised transmissions, sportier handling and additional standard equipment.

As a result, the new Sonata is not only a better-looking car, it's also better to drive, roomier, more comfortable and safer.

The new Sonata range has been rationalised to just two models – the GL 2.4 litre (up from 2.0 litres previously) and the GL V6 2.7 litre (up from 2.5 litres). Both are available with either a five-speed manual or a four speed 'Selectronic' adaptive automatic with a sequential manual mode.

Sonata prices start at \$23,990 for a 2.4 litre manual, with the V6 manual costing \$25,990. Add \$1,990 for automatic in both. Options include an enhanced safety pack that provides anti-lock brakes and a front passenger airbag for \$2,190, and a range of special paint finishes.

Though it's disappointing to have to pay extra for anti-lock brakes and a passenger airbag, the Sonata does come with a good range of standard equipment. Items include air conditioning, a driver's airbag, power-operated windows and exterior mirrors, remote central locking, engine immobiliser and alarm, and a six-speaker stereo with CD player.

Both models also get a 60/40 split folding rear seat, lap/sash seat belts and head restraints in all five positions, front seat belt pretensioners and load limiters, a driver's footrest and a tilt (but not telescopic) steering wheel. The V6's cruise control is the only equipment difference between the model variants.

Styling revisions are extensive, with virtually everything fore and aft of the cabin glasshouse being completely new. The body is slightly longer, wider and higher, with a wider rear track. Boot capacity has increased.

As well as presenting a more modern and more attractive appearance (there's a hint of Jaguar around the tail, and the headlights are reminiscent of the Mercedes-Benz E-class), the body is said to be considerably stronger than the previous model.

Along with upgraded sound insulation, the stronger body brings improvements in NVH (noise, vibration and harshness), in addition to the obvious safety benefits.

Inside the Sonata, there's plenty of legroom up front and satisfactory headroom. Front seat comfort is good, but the seats don't provide much lateral support.

Legroom is reasonable in the back for adults, while comfort in the two outer seat positions is

basic, but acceptable. Comfort for a centre occupant is only fair.

The Sonata has quite a good size boot compartment, with new non-intrusive hinges. The rear seatback folds in a 60/40 split, but the cushion doesn't fold.

Though a telescopic steering wheel would have been nice, the driving position is generally good, thanks to the height and tilt adjustable driver's seat and ample fore and aft travel. The controls are straightforward, including the sound system, which makes a nice change from some of the complicated-to-use systems that are around.

The Sonata can't match the larger engined family cars on outright performance, however its good engine response was demonstrated by the smart times it set during in-gear acceleration tests. From 50 to 80 km/h in Drive, the Sonata was the equal of anything in the family car class and this is a very useful attribute when travelling around the city and suburbs.

The engine is also commendably smooth when cruising and though some engine noise is apparent under firm acceleration, it's not unpleasant.

On our fuel economy test results, the Sonata rates as the best of the family cars, using only 8.1 litres/100 km on highway-type running and 9.4 litres/100 km overall.

As part of an extensive suspension retuning programme for the new Sonata, German-made Sachs gas dampers replace the previous Korean-made oil-type dampers. The wheels are wider and one inch greater in diameter.

These changes, along with the stiffer body, have sharpened the Sonata's handling and it does quite well in the majority of conditions, driving in a relaxed, easy fashion. The only slight flaw I experienced was when pushing the car fairly hard through bumpy corners, some kickback through the steering could be felt.

The test car was equipped with the ABS brake package and it stopped very well in emergency braking tests from 80 km/h. However, repeated moderate stops from the same speed resulted in the front brakes getting rather hot and smelly, and the brake pedal action became spongy.

SUMMARY:

Introducing a wide range of improvements, the new Hyundai Sonata represents an appealing buy for anyone looking for a reasonably priced family car and who doesn't need the extra space and power that's found in alternatives such as the Commodore and the Falcon.

HYUNDAI SONATA GL V6

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE:

Type V6, DOHC, 24 valves
Capacity in litres..... 2.657
InductionMulti-point electronic fuel injection
Fuel recommendation..... ULP
Claimed max. power 132 kW at 6000 rpm
Claimed max. torque 245 Nm at 4000 rpm
Specific power output..... 49.7 kW/litre

TRANSMISSION:

TypeFour speed adaptive automatic with 'Selectronic' sequential manual mode
Driving wheels Front
Speed per 1000 rpm in top gear..... 39.0 km/h

WHEELS: Steel, 6.0J x 15 inch

TYRES: Hankook, 205/65HR 15

Spare: Matching size and type

STEERING:

Type Power assisted rack and pinion
Turns lock to lock..... 2.8
Turning circle (measured) 11.5 metres

DIMENSIONS:

Mass 1411 kg
Length 4747 mm
Width (incl. mirrors 2033 mm) 1820 mm
Height..... 1422 mm
Ground clearance (measured)..... 162 mm
Seating capacity 5
Fuel tank capacity..... 65 litres

TOWING:

Max. towed mass (trailer plus load)..... 1700 kg
Max. towball download (laden trailer) ... 75 kg

NRMA THEFT RATING:

Points on 0-110 scale (high score best) 50.5

WARRANTY: Five years, 130,000 km

MANUFACTURED IN: Korea

TEST RESULTS

ACCELERATION:

50 - 80 km/h (in Drive)..... 3.6 sec
60 -100 km/h (in Drive)..... 5.7 sec
0 - 80 km/h 6.9 sec
0 - 100 km/h 9.8 sec
0 - 400 metres..... 17.1 sec

FUEL CONSUMPTION:

Litres/100 km in city 12.0
Litres/100 km on highway..... 8.1
Litres/100 km overall 9.4

BRAKING:

Distance to stop from 80 km/h 28.5 metres

NOISE:

Interior at constant 80 km/h..... 66 dB(A)

• Test vehicle supplied by Hyundai
Automotive Distributors Australia Pty Ltd

Call NRMA Automotive Technical Services on 1300 655 443, should you require additional information on this vehicle, on other makes, or for general advice on automotive matters.