

Three of the best: Mercedes-Benz

Motor expert Mark Gallivan breaks down his three of the best Mercedes-Benz cars on the market in Ireland.

Sitting it out at a lonely 14th place, Mercedes-Benz's lowly place in Irish car sales charts in 2019 masks the rejuvenation behind the three-pointed star. Mercedes-Benz is back with a striking model range. You could stretch to the narrative that the glory years are back with over-engineered icons like the R107 SL and W124.

Walk into any Mercedes showroom and gleaming cars like the A-Class and C-Class are scrambling with attractive finance options to lure younger buyers. They somehow coaxed Nicki Minaj to appear in a toe-curling advertising TV spot for the A-Class launch. And certainly, the current crop of Mercedes models is bewildering but in amongst them lurks the world's best flagship saloon - the Mercedes S-Class. The world's best looking roadster – the gorgeous AMG GTC. The world's best overall E-Segment saloon – the E-Class.

Supposing you have under €57,000 to spend and aghast at the thought of stumping up for another SUV, which Mercedes cars make the most satisfying ownership propositions and a three of the best choice?

2019 Mercedes CLA Coupe from €34,110 (main image)

Satisfying is the CLA Coupe's middle word. New for 2019, the sixth-generation Mercedes CLA Coupe is based on the A-Class hatchback and adds a smattering of Mercedes CLS style. You won't like the rear seating that's restricted in legroom but the interior itself is spectacular. The CLA gets the 10.3 inch TFT screen with pin sharp graphics and functions easy to grips with.

Mercedes has gone to great lengths to raise the level of quality and the low seating position with a thick steering and cool ambient lighting is a winner on the showroom floor. There is plenty of seating and steering wheel adjustment for the driver and even though the sloped roofline robs space, there's just enough headroom for four.

A top recommendation is to choose smaller petrol engines. Like the CLA 180 AMG-line with 1.3-litre four-cylinder petrol. Driven swiftly it'll still achieve 5.3 l/100 km with a €270 Band 1 road tax.

Priced at €36,530 before any options are added, this is the CLA Coupe to consider. The driving refinement is excellent and while offering predictable handling it's still reasonably fun to drive. Adding the AMG-Line option adds another €4,379 on top of the €36,530 CLA 180 AMG-line price, but it's worth it. Standard safety equipment includes active lane keeping assist, multi collision

brake and crosswind assist. If you're dipping your toe into a Mercedes for the first time, the CLA Coupe will prove a nicely satisfying choice. It has just enough appeal to make it a three of the best car.

You'll like: Satisfying and bedecked with glitz in equal doses. Impressive interior with MBUX multi-media system. Generous standard equipment for a Merc. Engaging to drive. Strong and economical small petrol engines. Good residuals predicted.

You'll grumble: Restricted space for four. Boot is bigger than A-Class but harder to load luggage. 1.3-litre petrol strained under hard acceleration.

2019 Mercedes C-Class Coupe from €38,365

Hands up everyone that wants to own a Mercedes S-Class Coupe? Of course, you do. It is a fabulous car. Well, put your hands down now. It costs €175,590.

Though, take heart, there is a far less expensive way into the stratospheric image and pricing of the S-Class Coupe. It's one of Mercedes' prettiest cars – the C-Class Coupe. Prices start at €38,365 for a basic C-Class but spend a bit more, while choosing yours in a non-primary colour, and it's a very attractive Coupe.

Heavier than the four-door saloon, the C-Class is a spirited companion off the motorway. Real credit for the cars improved agility is the new rear suspension that's been engineered to be stiffer and helps the steering weight feedback to be more accurate. The C-Class interior and dash displays do not have the same wow-factor of the E-Class Coupe, especially with the floating infotainment screen. In a cabin that is well constructed it looks like a budget afterthought. There's plenty of competition in the C-Class's forecourt with BMW's 4 Series and Audi's A5. But if you hanker for Mercedes S-Class Coupe style for a lot less cash, the C-Class is a good place to hide out.

You'll like: Merc's prettiest car under €40,000. Surprisingly agile and good to drive. Makes you feel like a success for a lot less.

You'll grumble: That infotainment screen. Poor rear head and legroom. You'll wish you owned the E-Class Coupe.

2019 Mercedes E-Class Estate from €56,995

Every car brand has a sweet spot. The criterion is simple. It has to be supremely comfortable, parsimonious, finely constructed, practical and quietly reflects its owner as an intelligent buyer. The car you'll consider keeping for a decade.

Step forward the Mercedes E-Class Estate. You may have thought the Saloon or the curvaceous Coupe should get this vote but Estate E turns out to be the pick of the bunch. Proud looking with a reserved image, the E-Class Estate brings 1,820 mm of cargo space with the rear seat folded. That's 120 mm larger than the BMW 5-Series Touring. Inside the cabin that's shared with the Saloon, you'll find the best interior in the segment. There are contemporary displays, comfortable seats with an excellent range of adjustments and controls and switches that click and whirr with pleasing accuracy.

Stick to the 2.0-litre diesel with 194hp and 400 Nm. Mercedes has worked hard to make this a refined diesel. Unless you are set on buying a petrol engine, the diesel's claim of 4.9 l/100km is attractive. Arguably, the Estate also looks better than the saloon and will carry all your lifestyle equipment in style without succumbing to an SUV. It's a great all-rounder that can slot into any family with ease for years to come. And we didn't mention the Mercedes premium name that offers real desirability. The quiet one in the Mercedes range and a recommended three of the best winner.

You'll like: Ticks all the boxes – premium image, practicality, huge luggage capacity, so comfortable, best-in-class interior, calming to drive and dripping with tech.

You'll grumble: Probably lacks the BMW 5-Series Touring's engagement. Little else.

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