

Sensibilities by Joe Sage

Meet the Buick Cascada. New to the US this year, Opel has built the car in Europe since 2013. But with a new badge, we have a sexy new premium German convertible here. It's Buick's first convertible since the 1991 Reatta and their first two-door since the 1999 Riviera. It has a different look for the Buick brand.

Buick last winter announced a new logo—like before, but “returning” to the use of red, white and blue—saying “it is part of an all-new grille design inspired by the award-winning Avenir concept, which sets the new chrome insignia against darkened waterfall grille bars.” They also say Cascada signals a “perception-shifting” year. We’re surprised they didn’t adapt the highly recognized Buick waterfall grille to this car (all the more so since Cascada means waterfall in Spanish). We like Cascada’s black and silver logos, but also wonder where all that red, white and blue buzz went.

Family brand points aside, Cascada the individual car brings you premium German engineering at Detroit prices. It also retains European sensibilities.

There is no keyless entry or start. Seat adjustments seemed limited. The steering wheel has mechanical tilt. There is auto climate control, but no sync. In one oxymoronic feature, you have to go several layers into the screen to set one of three “auto” fan speeds, and that’s your speed, not so auto. Touchscreen tabs are narrow and very close to the edge, hard to use with big American hands. Some of these things will probably become more Americanized. For now, take them as “foreign car” charm.

Cascada is firmly road-connected. We could feel the pavement through its run-flat tires, a smooth, strong ride. The car has front-wheel drive and electric steering, but neither one showed its bad side—the car was catlike in curves, and the steering was solid and sure.

The convertible top is quick—with windows not involved, we timed it at 14-odd seconds down, 15-odd up. Officially, it’s a 17-second open, windows included, although you are dry in about 11.

GM almost sold off Opel during the economic



SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE/DRIVETRAIN1.6L turbo VVT dir.inj. / FWD
HP/TORQUE200 hp / 207 lb-ft (221± w/overboost)
TRANSMISSIONHydra-Matic 6T45 6-spd auto
WHEELS/TIRES20-in aluminum / 245/40R20 ALS
BRAKESF: 12.6 vent / R: 11.5 solid single-piston
STEERING ...rack-mount elec, var assist rack/pinion
SUSPENSION: Fr: HiPer Strut indep., tuned coils, direct-activ. stabilizer bar, hydraulic ride bushings
 R: compound crank torsion beam, Watts Z-link
SEATINGfour (2/2)
CARGO CAPACITYtop up 13.4 / top down 9.8 cu.ft
WEIGHT / DISTRIBUTION3979 lb, 57/43 F/R
LENGTH / WHEELBASE184.9 in / 106.1 in
TURNING CIRCLE38.7 ft
FUEL / CAPACITYpremium rec/not req'd / 14.3 gal
MPG20/27/23 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE\$36,065
DESTINATION CHARGE:925

TOTAL\$36,990

downturn of 2008-09. We were glad they didn’t, as it’s a source of many technologies and cars. Cascada offers considerable value with one model at \$33k and this one at \$36k. Buick service costs should also be an advantage over German-branded badges in the US. We figure Buick Cascada is bringing us European pomme de terre elegance at an American potato price. ■

