

ARIZONA DRIVER

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OFF-ROADERS,
LUXURY CRUISERS,
TWO MANUAL TRANS
SPORTS MACHINES
PLUS MONTEREY HIGHLIGHTS,
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Acura Integra
A-Spec 6MT

VEHICLES • EQUIPMENT • TECHNOLOGY • PEOPLE • EVENTS • DESTINATIONS • ATTRACTIONS



Integra reborn

by Joe Sage

We're delighted to see the Acura Integra name make a comeback. It's far more distinctive than all their three-letter names, and it carries quite a heritage. Most commonly a tidy little coupe, the car was defined by its niche, while the niche in turn was defined by Integra, when it entered the world in the '80s.

The new Integra departs that niche. Though they flirted with occasional sedan versions in the past, a sense that coupes were not carrying enough of a market is what prompted Integra's discontinuation almost 20 years ago. This surely still played a role in the form it takes for its rebirth for 2023. Though it may be mistaken for a sedan at first glance from the front, from the rear it looks like what they officially term it—a five-door liftback (with huge cargo volume and rear legroom). The car is big enough this time around that it could also be taken as a European-style grand tourer.

There are three trim levels starting with the base model, then A-Spec. As Honda and Acura

avoid confusing buyers with optional add-ons, A-Spec with a Tech Package becomes a third trim level. These first three are outfitted with a CVT (which may make some nostalgic tuner fans shed a tear). Then the A-Spec with Tech Package top trim but with a 6-speed manual transmission equals a fourth, and that's the one we're driving here.

The two A-Spec with Tech versions (CVT and manual) cost exactly the same, so you can rely on just your heart and soul for this decision. And a bonus for shift-it-yourselfers—the top trim with manual is lighter than any other in the lineup, at any trim level, at 3073 lb. (This does not translate into higher fuel economy—the manual has the lowest MPG.)

The new Acura Integra is basically identical under its skin—in platform and mechanicals—to the Honda Civic Si, while its body structure is two percent stiffer than a Civic sedan, five percent stiffer than a Civic hatch. Apart from styling, brand loyalties or price,

the CVT automatic in most Integras is the big differentiator from Civic Si. (Our 6MT sample is the only Integra to match across the two.)

Its 200 turbocharged horses are reasonably peppy, given the car's light weight, with torque kicking in early and holding its max from 1800 to 5000 rpm. Sport mode has clear shift-mapping (-mimicking) benefits with the CVT, though on the manual felt about the same as normal—fine by us, with the control the short-throw manual provides, and it's one less button to push. (Modes do also vary steering, active damping suspension and acoustics.)

The manual does generate a noticeable blip and engine surge on certain downshifts. This is from its rev-matching feature, though sound effects seem enhanced just for show—both aspects of which we could do without (and promptly set out to defeat). Both rev-matching and hill start assist are intended to ease the learning curve for new manual drivers, which itself is a noble purpose indeed.

We caught a very stormy week for a drive into the high country in this car, which highlighted one thing we'd suggest they consider:



as a hatchback, despite its great set of cameras, it could use a rear window wiper.

The early Acura Integra (a couple of gen-three samples from the '90s shown above) met wide adoption and praise, and was a darling of the tuner set.

Some will debate bringing the name back as a different kind of vehicle and considering it generation five. Acura is not completely alone on such things, though (for another ex-

ample, see Ford's Maverick). We're glad to see the name again and understand the market decisions they've made, including the appeal of an Acura version of the Si. In fact, we'd love to see more "real names" return.

Will the new Acura Integra become a legend, like the originals? That remains to be seen, but come what may, saying "legend" has just reminded us of another great Acura model name worthy of a comeback. ■

Of all Integras sold since the new lineup's launch in the first half of 2022, 65 percent have had the manual transmission. Integra's self-identified competitive set comprises premium-luxe Europeans all approaching the mid-\$40s in price.



SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	.....	Marysville, Ohio
ENGINE / TRANSMISSION	.....	USA / India
PARTS CONTENT	.....	65% US/Canada
ENGINE	.....	1.5L turbo-4 16v DOHC VTEC dir inj
	.....	100,000 miles± btwn scheduled tune-ups
HP/TORQUE	.....	200 hp / 102 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....	10.3:1
TRANSMISSION	.....	6-spd manual
	.....	(CVT also available)
DRIVETRAIN	.....	FWD
SUSPENSION	.....	F: MacPherson strut,
	.....	27.0x4.5 tubular stblzr bar;
	.....	R: multi-link, 18.0 solid stblzr bar
STEERING	.....	var ratio elec pwr-assist
	.....	rack & pinion
BRAKES	.....	F: 12.3 vented; R: 11.1 solid disc
WHEELS	.....	18-in alum alloy
TIRES	.....	235/40R18 91W all-season
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....	185.8 / 107.7 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....	5.1 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....	38.1 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....	37.6 / 36.4 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....	42.3 / 37.4 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....	24.3 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....	3073 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....	premium unl / 12.4 gal
MPG	.....	26/36/30 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	.....	\$35,800
PAINT: Liquid Carbon Metallic	.....	500
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....	1095
TOTAL	.....	\$37,395

2023 ACURA INTEGRA LINEUP

Integra	.....	CVT	.....	\$30,800
Integra A-Spec	.....	CVT	.....	32,800
A-Spec w Tech Pkg	.....	CVT	.....	35,800
	.....	6MT	.....	35,800

