

SIMULTANEOUSLY FUNDAMENTAL AND TRANSFORMATIONAL

BY JOE SAGE

The Toyota Crown nameplate was born back in 1955 and is now in generation 16, with much variety—but only occasional US presence—along the way. The name reappeared here in 2023, after a 50-year gap, as a tall hybrid sedan with AWD and a touch of crossover flavor, impressive in styling, utility and powertrain variety.

A name-variant joins it for 2025—Crown Signia—a two-box design, distinct from the Crown sedan. There can be both pros and cons to naming different vehicles as though they're related when they aren't (or as though they're not, when in fact they are). In this case, people may ask, is Crown

the same as Crown Signia? And what's a "signia"? In Japan, a wagon variant is generally an "estate," also common in the UK, while Crown Signia also hints at the two-door European "shooting brake." While NHTSA classifies the Crown as a "car," the Crown Signia long-roof variant (with "wagon" no longer in our lexicon) is classified as an SUV.

Call it (or them) what you want, it (or they)—the Toyota Crown and Crown Signia—are each and/or both intriguingly successful new vehicles.

Fundamentally the same build brings extra generous ground clearance to the Crown sedan, and a more ground-hugging overall profile to the Crown

Signia SUV, different advantages, by category, delivered via the same fundamentals. It's downright clever, really.

Classified as a midsize, the cabin feels almost full-size, inside, while from the outside, the upper form is quite tapered, emphasized by a high belt-line (adding to that shooting brake feel).

Drive experience, size, fit, performance and handling might be considered unremarkable toward the point of perfection—no blistering performance, but nice and steady, with all the power we needed for any sudden demands.

We don't always notice a CVT, to the degree some do, but this did have us wishing for a shift (and noticing its sound effects), at least for the

first couple of days, but then we got used to it. We played with sport mode quite a bit, in varying conditions, but didn't find it particularly different in power, shifts or general sportiness (which is fine—we prefer things best right out of the box, with no need to keep ducking into a phone booth and changing to Superman and back). Manual mode and paddles are right at hand if desired, but again, philosophically, we'd rather an automatic just perform its best automatically.

We realized that we probably only noticed the transmission so much because it was really most likely the only thing that wasn't 100 percent (for those who even notice it). With or without that, the new Crown Signia as a whole scores way higher than average.

Toyota Crown is already sort of an "end run" on the sedan concept, thanks to its added height and

stance. Crown Signia, in turn, is sort of an end run on Crown's end run, thanks to its added length and volume. Does this mean we've gone full circle? Or somewhere else? It's a decent rhetorical question, but it doesn't really matter, at all. Crown Signia takes us somewhere new, cool and useful.

Knowing it would bring a higher price point, we pondered a "crowning touch" that could address the two points we had noted—power and shifting—though the base powertrain is more than adequate and has notably higher fuel mileage. Crown sedan's top Platinum trim has a more potent 340-hp i-FORCE MAX and six-speed automatic, which together could make a nice version of the Crown Signia. Doing the math (see sidebar), this could run about nine grand higher than Limited, or two grand higher than Crown MAX, either way about \$57 grand. This may well be on the horizon. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Toyota, Aichi, Japan
ENGINE	2.5L Dynamic Force 4-cyl w EV mode, 16v, DOHC w variable valve timing-intelligent by elec motor (VVT-iE) and VVT-i
COMPRESSION RATIO	14.0:1
ELEC MOTOR	perm magnet synchronous
BATTERY	bipolar NiMh 5.0A
HP/TORQUE (ICE)	188 hp / 178 lb-ft
ELEC MOTOR	front 199 / rear 89 lb-ft
COMBINED	net 240 hp
TRANSMISSION	electronic control CVT
DRIVETRAIN	AWD
0-TO-60 MPH	(w 91-octane) 7.1 sec
SUSPENSION	F: indep MacPherson strut w 26.5mm hollow stblzr bar; R: multi-link w 21.0mm hollow stblzr bar
STEERING	rack parallel-type elec PS
BRAKES	F: 12.9 vented; R: 12.5 vented
WHEELS	(Limited) 21-inch alloys
TIRES	225/45R21
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	194.1 / 112.2 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	6.7 in
APPROACH/DEPARTURE	15.2 / 21.4°
TURNING CIRCLE	39.5 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	(pano snrf) 37.7 / 38.1 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	42.1 / 37.1 in
CARGO CAPACITY ..(pano snrf)	24.8 / 66.1 cu.ft
LENGTH BEHIND SEATS	31.9 / 79.5 in
WEIGHT	4210 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	reg unl or higher / 14.5 gal
MPG	39/37/38 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	\$47,990
ADVANCED TECH PKG:	pano view monitor, traffic jam assist (subscrip), lane change assist, front cross-traffic, front/rear park assist w auto brake, outer mirrors w puddle lights and reverse tilt-down
	1865
PREFERRED ACCESSORY PKG W/ CARGO MATS:	cargo tote, carpet cargo mat, carpet floor mats, first aid kit
	405
CONNECTED SERVICES TRIAL:	2 addtl years of Drive Connect & Remote Connect, in addition to 1-yr standard trial
	325
DASH CAM	375
WHEEL LOCKS	105
DESTINATION CHARGE	1450
TOTAL	\$52,515

2025 TOYOTA CROWN LINEUP

Crown XLE Hybrid AWD	\$41,440
Crown Limited Hybrid AWD	45,950
Crown Nightshade Hybrid AWD	48,765
Crown Platinum Hybrid MAX AWD	54,990

2025 CROWN SIGNIA LINEUP

Crown Signia XLE Hybrid AWD	\$43,590
Crown Signia Limited Hybrid AWD	47,990