

## 2016 Cadillac CT6: Attention German Luxury Sedan Buyers -- Expand Your Horizons

*Karl Brauer January 28, 2016*



As someone who recognized Cadillac's newfound product proficiency years ago I've been rather frustrated at the general market's inability to do the same. Sure, automotive journalists are always a bit ahead of the pack compared to the average consumer. After all, we get access to all-new vehicles weeks or months (sometimes even years) before they arrive in showrooms.

But in my mind Cadillac started challenging German luxury supremacy with the all-new ATS in late 2012. Drive one with an open mind and you'll be forced to acknowledge a shocking fact: it's better than the vaunted 3 Series. The all-new, highly advanced CTS arrived in late 2014 and, again, received well-deserved accolades from the automotive press while struggling to meet sales goals (though admittedly, some pricing and production goofs on Cadillac's part exacerbated this issue).

Now comes the all-new 2016 Cadillac CT6, and after some quality seat time I can confirm it follows the ATS' and CTS' trend of delivering everything a German luxury sedan offers, and more, at a lower price. But this car isn't just a notch above the comparable German sedans, ala ATS and CTS, it's several notches up the performance/value equation. If nothing else I have to credit Cadillac for not only maintaining its efforts (despite continued market ambivalence) but substantially elevating its game.

And this time the result is as stark as a teutonic interior. Even the most biased German fans will be astounded by the CT6's capabilities...assuming they're wise enough to give the vehicle a chance. I drove the new CT6 along twisting mountain roads and at elevated highway speeds for several hours last week, where I confirmed Cadillac (and its parent company GM) are making sweeping strides in automotive engineering.

Take for example the CT6's featherweight status. At between 3,600 and 4,300 pounds, depending on trim and drivetrain, the CT6 has an approximately 1,000 pound advantage over comparable German sedans like the BMW 7 Series and Mercedes-Benz S-Class. The CT6 is actually slightly lighter than the Cadillac CTS, which also happens to be the lightest car in its class (Audi A6, BMW 5 Series, Mercedes-Benz E-Class, etc.).

So just to confirm, the CT6 is remarkably lightweight. It rides on an extremely stiff chassis utilizing a mixture of steel and aluminum. It also uses fewer parts in critical areas to keep weight low and increase stiffness compared to an all-aluminum chassis. The use of steel in key areas not only increases strength but reduces the need for heavy sound deadening material because steel provides better acoustic "sealing" compared to aluminum.

How do all this weight-reduction efforts translate into on-road behavior, and does it really give the CT6 more engaging driving dynamics and refinement than a comparable German luxury sedan? Here's the short answer: YES. Though, it's tough to find a comparable German sedan given the CT6's size and pricing structure. A starting price of \$54,490 puts the base CT6 on par with a base BMW 528i (\$51,195) and Mercedes-Benz E250 (\$53,575), but the CT6 offers more interior volume and rear legroom than a standard wheelbase BMW 7 Series and Mercedes-Benz S-Class.

And, again, the confidence and precision provided by the CT6's weight advantage compared to those German sedans can't be overstated. The standard multilink front and rear suspension is superb, and it can be enhanced with a \$3,300 Active Chassis Package, featuring Magnetic Ride Control and active rear steering (ARS). The base CT6 doesn't offer this package, and is powered by a 2.0-liter, turbocharged four-cylinder engine making 265 horsepower and 295 pound-feet of torque. It's rated at 22 city mpg and 31 highway mpg.

Old-school luxury shoppers may scoff at a four-cylinder premium sedan, but even in base form (and without the Active Chassis package) the CT6 delivers an exhilarating ride. Base models feature an 8-speed transmission, rear-wheel drive and 18-inch aluminum wheels. This version feels extremely balanced on twisty roads, with the 2.0-liter engine easily launching those 3,600 pounds up to highway speeds and around slower traffic on narrow two lanes.

A \$2,950 "Driver Awareness and Convenience" package adds forward collision warning, low speed automatic braking, lane keeping assist, front pedestrian detection, rear cross-traffic alert, automatic seat belt tightening, blind zone alert, a panoramic sunroof, automatic high beams, heated mirrors, heated seats and the CUE interface with navigation. That's a lot of performance, luxury and safety technology for \$57,440 (including the \$995 destination charge).

For an additional \$2,000 a buyer can add Cadillac's 3.6-liter V6 engine and all-wheel drive to the base CT6. This engine makes 335 hp, 284 lb-ft of torque and is rated at 19/28 mpg, yet the added weight of all-wheel drive (plus the drop in peak torque) makes this a dubious use of funds. Peak performance fans are better served by the CT6's top engine, a 3.0-liter, twin-turbocharged V6 making 404 hp and 400 lb-ft of torque. This engine is available on the mid-grade "Luxury" trim and also includes all-wheel drive for \$65,390. It's fuel economy is rated at 18/26 mpg.

Two additional high-end trims, Premium Luxury and Platinum, are available as well. Both include all-wheel drive and are available with either the 3.6-liter V6 or the 3.0-liter twin-turbo engine. The Premium Luxury trim can be upgraded with a \$2,025 "Enhanced Vision & Comfort" package. With this package a rear camera powers the interior rearview mirror, removing all blind spots created by roof pillars, rear headrests, rear passengers, etc. The package also adds heated and cooled front seats, heated rear seats and a panoramic sunroof.

A \$2,450 “Rear Seat Package” with reclining rear seats, quad-zone climate control, power-retracting dual high-definition display screens, a remote control and two wireless headphones is available on the Luxury and Premium Luxury trims. So is a 34-speaker Bose “Panaray” audio system for \$3,700 and the aforementioned \$3,300 Active Chassis package. A \$4,380 “Driver Assistance w/Night Vision” package adds a 360-degree camera system and night vision display within the gauge cluster. The Night Vision system identifies pedestrians and animals, then highlights them in red, yellow or green based on their proximity to the CT6 and likelihood to wander into its path.

The top-of-the-line Platinum trim includes all of these packages for either \$84,460 with the 3.6-liter engine or \$87,460 for the 3.0-liter twin-turbo engine. That’s a couple thousand dollars less than a comparably-equipped (but smaller) 550i, and around \$17,000 less than a comparably equipped 740i (with rear-wheel drive, not all-wheel drive). This strategy feels familiar, given the original Cadillac CTS offered about the same space and performance as a midsize luxury sedan (5 Series, E-Class) but was priced closer to an entry-luxury sedan (3 Series, C-Class).

Regardless of its cars’ quality and capability, Cadillac knows it still has a perception issue to overcome with many luxury buyers. Until that perception changes (and it can take awhile...) the brand’s only choice is to offer cars so clearly superior in performance and value that at least a portion of luxury buyers will give Caddy a try.

For those buyers capable of looking beyond the badge, kudos to you. In the 2016 CT6 you’re getting the better car.