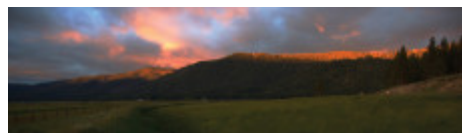


'July & Winter' – all about gardening in the Sierra

Third-generation farmer Gary Romano is sharing his secrets about growing food at high elevation in his book "July & Winter: Growing Food in the Sierra."



JULY & WINTER

GROWING FOOD IN THE SIERRA



Meyers publishing house Bona Fide Books is releasing the book Sept. 2.

Despite the challenging mountain climate and soil, Romano has successfully grown food on his 65-acre organic farm. He shares hard-earned tips in 10 essential chapters for home gardeners and small farmers. In this book readers will learn which varieties are right for which region, whether to use seeds or transplants, when and how to plant to maximize yield and the benefits of biodiversity.

Romano also discusses soil, water, and nutrients, pest management and how to extend the growing season.

Romano owns and operates Sierra Valley Farm in Beckwourth, and hosts the state's only certified organic on-farm farmers' market each Friday from 10am-2:30pm from June through mid-September. Romano also hosts barn dinners and concerts on the farm and can be found weekly at the Tahoe City, Truckee and Reno farmers markets.

“July & Winter” is available through **Bona Fide Books** and Gaia-Licious in South Lake Tahoe, The Bookshelf and Bespoke in Truckee, Sundance Books & Music in Reno, and Amazon.

Road Beat: Hyundai Santa Fe Sport top of its class



The 2017 Hyundai Santa Fe Sport may be the best in its class. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

First with respect to the Santa Fe Sport is its classification. While it rides on a 106.3-inch wheelbase, which is 1 to 3 inches longer than the RAV4 and CR-V, it is a half an inch shorter than the Nissan Rouge and identical to

the CX-5 wheelbase at 106.3 inches. But Santa Fe Sport is at least a couple inches longer (185 inches) and perhaps an inch or 2 wider (74 inches) than the aforementioned competition. But the EPA classifies them all as small SUVs.

Then there is the question of competition. Is the new class leader in small SUVs the new Santa Fe Sport, taking over from the Mazda CX-5? In a one-word answer, yes, as you will understand below.

While the CX-5 has world class looks, the continued refinement of the SF Sport makes it the new equal in this department. The SF Sport new front end is aggressive, well proportioned, tying in the headlights well in the new hexagonal shape of the grille and creating and implementing the theme or signature grille for most every new Hyundai. It is stunning. And then there is the dynamic window line putting the SF Sport in motion standing still while maintaining perfect proportions between the two box design of all SUVs. This is one good looking ride.

Powering my SF Sport Ultimate was a 2.0L four-cylinder turbo sporting a, high for a turbo, 10:1 compression ratio. Because of that there is almost no turbo lag. Being state of the art, it features DOHC, 16 valves and direct injection. Producing 240 hp at 6,000 rpm and a whopping 260 pounds of twist between 1,450 to 3,500 rpm means this engine makes prodigious hp at very low rpms, like about 100 hp at just 2,000 rpm and about 150 hp at just 3,000 rpms. Most normally aspirated 2.0L engines are lucky to make 150 hp even when wound out to 6,000 rpm. My tester drove only the front wheels through a six-speed torque converter auto tranny.



Specifications

Price \$25,350 to about \$40,000

Engine

2.0T DOHC, 16 valve, directed injected turbocharged inline four 240 hp @ 6,000; 260 lb.-ft. of torque @ 1,450-3,500 rpm

Tranny

Six Speed torque converter automatic

Configuration

Front mounted, transverse mounted engine/FWD/AWD

Dimensions

Wheelbase 106.3 inches

Length 185.0 inches

Width 74.0 inches

Height (w/o/with roof rack) 66.1/66.5 inches

Track (f/r) 64.1/64.5 inches

Weight 3,949 pounds

GVWR 5,004 pounds

Fuel capacity 17.4 gallons

Cargo capacity (behind front seats/second row) 71.5/35.4 cubic feet

Wheels 19X7.5 inch alloys

Tires 235/55X19

Tow capacity 3,500 pounds
with trailer brakes

Steering lock to lock 2.95
turns

Turning circle 35.8 feet

Co-efficient of drag 0.34

Performance

0-60 mph 7.17 seconds

50-70 mph 3.51 seconds

50-70 up a steep grade 6=7
percent) 5.65 seconds

Top Speed Well into triple
digits

Fuel economy EPA rated
20/27/23 mpg

city/highway/combined. I
recorded 27-28 mpg overall
with 50 percent in rural
country driving and 10
percent freeway. Highway
mileage should average 33
mpg at legal speeds.

Performance was outstanding equaling the CX-5 in its 0-60 mph run at 7.16 seconds (CX-5 ran a 7.17). And what turbo lag there was cost me a tenth or two off the line. But it was in passing performance where the rubber meets the road and turbo lag is non-existent. Fifty-70 mph passes averaged 3.51 seconds on level ground and up a steep grade that time only slowed to 5.65 seconds. Compared to the CX-5, the SF Sport was a half a second and a second quicker respectively in each performance parameter. The SF Sport will get it done in the flatland or in the Sierras. This is without question the best performing small SUV. And the ability continues in the mountains as the turbo SF Sport will continue to make full hp even as the altitude climbs where normally aspirated engines start to

wheeze a bit. (For every 1,000 feet of altitude a normally aspirated engine loses three percent of its hp. At Echo Summit, 7,382 feet of altitude, your 240 hp normally aspirated engine would be down 22 percent in hp or about down to 187 hp.).

But here is where it gets interesting, fuel economy. EPA rates the SF Sport at 20/27/23 mpg about average or slightly below average for its class even though Hyundai has improved the SF Sport's efficiency by an mpg or two over the 2016 model. However, in my testing it did way better than the EPA says. With the smart cruise control set at 70 mph on a two-way run it averaged a constant 33.2 mpg and if that isn't enough during the entire test that included all kinds of driving, but perhaps 50 percent in rural country driving, the SF Sport averaged 27-28 mpg. The reality is it basically equaled the non turbo CX-5 while besting it on the highway by 1.5 mpg. The SF Sport is having your cake, eating it, too and never getting fat. However, this FWD model tips the scales at a not so svelte 3,949 pounds (AWD will add about 150 pounds) and the co-efficient of drag is 0.34.

So what about handling which is the forte of the CX-5. Hyundai designed the SF Sport as a state of the art automobile so it comes with four-wheel independent suspension (MacPherson struts up front, multi-link in the rear, gas filled shocks, coils in all four corners plus stab bars at each end). In addition, the SF Sport gets wider 19X7.5 inch alloys and more generous rubber at 235/55X19 inch rubber. Other creds are 2.96 turns of the electrically powered rack from lock to lock, a front and rear track of 64 inches and a 36 foot turning circle.

All this adds up to one super nimble SUV with oodles of cornering power, good feedback, and balance, the kind of handling you expect from a good sports sedan or coupe. It is a point and shoot SUV with limited body roll, understeer or even head tossing, certainly equal to the CX-5.

But where we separate the two is in ride quality and that has to do with perceived noise and obvious smoothness. The SF Sport is the smoothest and quietest small SUV the Road Beat has ever tested. It is uncanny. Even on coarse roads noise is extremely subdued as the engine rpms are just 2,000 at 70 mph. There is no wind noise as well. This SF Sport would be a superb road vehicle, it has a supple and very compliant ride that is slightly firm, big cargo capacity, room for five, plenty of performance plus over 30 mpg. And the coup de gras is the larger 17.4-gallon fuel tank.

Brakes are strong with the ventilated front binders being over a foot in diameter. In this top of the line Ultimate is every electronic aid. ABS, TCS, etc is standard as well as LED adaptive lighting that turns night into day and a Multiview system that shows everything around the car when in a tight situation. Lane departure warning and auto emergency braking are part of a Tech package costing \$1,550.

Inside are comfortable leather seats and a well-organized instrument panel. Tach and speedo are front and center separated by the trip computer/info center. The center stack is well laid out as well as the sound system which can be mastered in five minutes.

Being a couple of inches longer and wider than the rest of the class adds to the SF Sport. Instead of about 65 cubic feet of cargo volume behind the front seats, the SF Sport will swallow almost 72 cubic feet and about exactly half that amount behind the second row seating.

Pricing for this top of the line SF Sport FWD Ultimate starts at \$38,500 and with the Tech package, \$125 bucks for fancy floor mats plus \$895 for the rail car from West Point Georgia, the total price of admission is \$39,070. But a SF Sport base with the peppy 185 hp 2.4 inline four, FWD starts at \$25,350 and a 2.0T starts at \$31,700. AWD adds \$1,750 to any FWD model. Santa Fe Sport is now at the top of this class.

Larry Weitzman has been into cars since he was 5 years old. At 8 he could recite from memory the hp of every car made in the U.S. He has put in thousands of laps on racetracks all over the Western United States.

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Squishy

Squishy is a very large boy. Our best guess is that he is some sort of Mastiff mixed with Lab mixed with shepherd mixed with Great Dane.

He is very shy when first meeting people, but he is quite affectionate once he gets to know them. He likes dogs of all sizes and didn't chase the cat that he met at the shelter. Squishy is 4 years old, house trained, and walks nicely on the leash. He was found tied up and abandoned and will need a patient new family to help him learn that people are nice.

Squishy is neutered, microchipped, tested for heart worm, and vaccinated. He is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes. Go to the Tahoe animal shelter's Facebook page to see photos and descriptions of all pets at the shelter.

Call 530.573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet.

For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go **online**.

– Karen Kuentz

'War Dogs' nails it with story, acting



'War Dogs'

4 out of 5 bagels

Rated R

By Howie Nave

Man, when did Jonah Hill grow up to become a serious, dramatic actor? I mean, he caught me off guard how good he was playing opposite Brad Pitt in 2011's "Moneyball" and opposite Leonardo DiCaprio in 2013's "The Wolf of Wall Street" but "War Dogs" solidifies it.

And just like in those roles he played in movies based loosely on true characters, Hill is so perfectly cast here it's almost uncanny. The year is 2005 and Jonah plays Efraim Diveroli, a stoner con artist who will scam anyone if it furthers his own well being. His latest adventure that of a small time arms dealer during the Bush-Cheney invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. His love of high powered guns in a wall sized poster of "Scarface" hanging in his office pretty much says it all.

Meanwhile, his former stoner school friend, David Packouz (played by Miles Teller) is a massage therapist who has a baby on the way with girlfriend Iz (Ana de Armas) and realizes being a masseuse (and seller of bed sheets on the side) just isn't cutting it. Both friends reunite at a friend's funeral and after playing catch-up with one another find a common denominator: both love money.



Based on the 2011 *Rolling Stone* article, "The Stoner Arms Dealer" by Guy Lawson, scriptwriters Todd Phillips (who also directed), Stephen Chin and Jason Smilovic had their work cut out for them creating not just the backdrop of a real war but also creating interest in their leading characters of two friends in their early 20s living in Miami Beach during the war. Director Todd Phillips (who directed the three "Hangover" movies") did an

exceptional job too balancing the movie with both dramatic and comedic effects to keep your attention span intact throughout.

Phillips also paints yet another absurd vision of that war giving us a dollar sign percentage on how much it costs on average to outfit each American soldier in the Middle East. Apparently it just wasn't the Halliburton's who profited from the war but also smaller, enterprising businesses who could also profit by exploiting a little-known government initiative that allowed small businesses to bid on U.S. military contracts.

Problems start to arise with Efraim and David when their company starts growing faster than they can both handle it and Efraim starts to spiral out of control. The more pragmatic David (who actually opposes the war but not the money) tries to reel his friend in but is naive with the reality not just of his friend's past but of the shady dealings and people who profited from this war (including the U.S. government).

"War Dogs" works not just because the story is contemporary but also because of its interesting characters. In addition to the acting capabilities of both Jonah Hill and Miles Teller, the supporting cast is top notch with a fine cameo by Bradley Cooper showing up mid-movie playing one of those shady characters. Comedian turned actor Kevin Pollack is also excellent playing the Jewish owner of a chain of dry cleaners who helps fund the young arms dealers' endeavors in order to make a little cash and convinced he's doing it to help Israel. It's always cool seeing Pollack on the big screen because I knew him when we both attended Temple Emanu-El in San Jose and would cross paths on the comedy club circuit during his time in the Bay Area.

"War Dogs" is rated R for language throughout, drug use and some sexual references with a running time of 114 minutes.

Howie Nave is host/emcee/manager of The Improv at Harveys. You can hear him Monday-Friday 6 to 10am on KRLT FM-93.9.

Workshop to help writers get published in magazines

Award-winning journalist and travel writer Ann Marie Brown will lead a two-hour workshop Sept. 28 about how to get published in a magazine.

Brown has been writing, editing and teaching writing classes for more than 20 years in the Bay Area and Lake Tahoe. She is the author of 14 travel guidebooks including the “Moon Tahoe” and “Yosemite Handbooks”, plus hundreds of articles that have appeared in *Sunset*, *Backpacker*, *VIA*, *Islands*, *Hemispheres*, *Travel & Leisure*, *Cross Country Skier* and other magazines.

In the summer, she leads hiking and backpacking trips in Yosemite and the Eastern Sierra. Brown has a master’s degree in journalism from Stanford University, and teaches journalism and travel writing at Sierra Nevada College.

The class is at Bona Fide Books in Meyers from 6:30-8:30pm. The fee is \$50. Go **online** to sign up.

The event is hosted by the Wordy Girls of which Brown is founding member. The South Lake Tahoe-based organization supports women writers and will host a writing camp for girls beginning in 2017.

Hotels embrace keyless entry

By Nancy Trejos, USA Today

Hotel companies are starting to conclude that guest room key cards are no longer the key to customer satisfaction.

The largest hotel companies in the world are experimenting with technology that allows guests to use their smartphones to open the doors to their rooms, bypassing the front desk upon arrival.

Many of the hotels require guests to become members of their loyalty programs in order to use keyless entry. The functionality is also tied to mobile check-in on the hotel's app.

Read the whole story

Radon poster contest for Nevada students

Nevada students are invited to showcase their artistic talents and promote radon awareness by entering the 2017 Nevada radon poster contest.

The deadline is Oct. 31.

The contest is open to ages 9-14 who are enrolled in public, private, territorial, tribal, Department of Defense and home schools. Children may also enter through a sponsoring group, such as art, computer, library, reading, science, scouting, youth or 4-H clubs.

Radon is a radioactive, colorless, odorless and tasteless gas that comes from the decay of uranium. It accumulates in homes and can cause lung cancer.

The poster contest is offered by the Nevada Radon Education Program and is sponsored by University of Nevada Cooperative Extension and the Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health. Cash prizes for the top three entries are \$75 for first place, \$60 for second and \$45 for third.

Posters should convey one of these messages: 1) What is radon? 2) Where does radon come from? 3) How does radon get into our homes? 4) Radon can cause lung cancer, and 5) Test your home for radon. Posters will be judged on content accuracy, visual communication of the topic, reproducibility and originality. They can be created with crayon, markers, paint, collage, pencil, photographs or computer graphics.

Contact Susan Howe at 775.336.0248 or robertss@unce.unr.edu for more information.

Donner statue on list to be upgraded



The Donner statue in Truckee
may be refurbished.
Photo/Sierra State Parks
Foundation

The Sierra State Parks Foundation is looking at refurbishing the historic Donner Pioneer Monument.

The Donner Pioneer Monument, a designated California Historic Landmark, was dedicated on June 6, 1918, at Donner Memorial State Park in honor of the pioneer families who crossed the Sierra Divide in search for a better life. The monument was an effort conceived by local community representatives who formed the Donner Monument Committee including a contribution from the Legislature and finally achieved by the Native Sons of the Golden West in 1918.

A study in 2006 suggested the general condition of the pedestal base, pedestal and sculpture are in poor condition.

The parks foundation has commissioned an updated assessment report as the first phase of an ambitious project to restore the monument. Partnering with the Native Sons of the Golden West and California State Parks, plans include the restoration of the monument base and bronze sculpture, sustainable landscaping, and the creation of an outdoor group pavilion to host education and community events.

Fred Graham – 1936-2016



Fred Graham

Frederick Artman Graham died July 27, 2016. He was 79.

Fred was born Aug. 21, 1936, in Butler, Pa., to Robert Humphries Graham II and Jennie Marie Schottenheimer.

At 15, he met and fell in love with Shirley Ann Ramelli. Their story began with him walking past her home on his way from work at Friedman's Grocery Store. Their early years included flirting on the stoop outside Shirley's home, a nationwide separation, a passionate reunion, an elopement to Maryland in 1955 and taking up residence in the swept-up and wallpapered chicken coop of Fred's older sister until they got on their feet. In the decades that followed, they took well-calculated risks, made great choices and enjoyed some good luck. The couple had a long and trusting companionship, enriched by four children, 11 grandchildren, and nine great-grandchildren. Fred and Shirley lived in Pennsylvania, California, Nevada, Oregon and Washington throughout their 61 years of marriage.

Fred was a natural entrepreneur, making savvy business deals even as a young boy. As he matured, he was driven by his work ethic, strong values and desire to provide a good life for his family. Fred loved to drive and explore new places. When he was 25, he loaded his 1959 Chevy with his young family and took off from western Pennsylvania to southern California in search of new opportunities. More road trips took the family along countless blue highways and through many mountain

passes.

On one such occasion Fred fell in love, once again. This time it was with the blue sky and crystal waters of Lake Tahoe, and he set his sights on relocating his family to the region. He reached that goal in 1977 by becoming the president and CEO of Tahoe Valley Electric Supply. He soon hired his wife and son to help him run the business. Fred was a successful and well-respected businessman and employer who led the corporation with both integrity and candor until his retirement in 2002.

In recent years, Fred continued to enjoy road tripping. Boating and fishing were also favorite pastimes and earned him the nickname "Fred of the Lake". Always practical, Fred was "green" long before it was stylish as he delighted in acquiring, reusing and repurposing cast away or pre-owned items at great bargain prices. He forever marveled at the beauty of natural landscapes, revered all wildlife, and had a deep appreciation for the perfectly grilled steak with a thick slice of sourdough bread and a chunk of cold butter.

Fred leaves behind his wife, Shirley; their children Debby (Darell), Diane, Dan (Debbie) and Denise (Steve); grandchildren Dan (Kim), David, Danielle (Brian), Kari (Jackie), Casey, Jessica, Bryan (Stephanie), Darren, Amanda, Jason, and Graham; great-grandchildren Danica, Dylan, Damion, Trey, Dominic, Faith, Ryleigh, Braylon, and Aiden; brother Bob; and numerous nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews. Fred was preceded in death by his sister, Theola (aka "Toady"), and brother Jim.

There was a private service. The family declines flowers and donations, but is grateful for condolences. Cards and notes can be sent to reshirleygraham@gmail.com or Graham Family, c/o Chateau at Valley Center, 4450 Davis Ave. S, Renton, WA 98055.

Road Beat: Prius 4 mpg off the charts



The latest Prius improves upon previous models.
Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

First introduced to the United States in 1999 and now in a new fourth generation, the first hybrid and still leading hybrid, is the Toyota Prius. Except for the front end, the new Prius is almost unrecognizable from the 2015 third generation model. Now made in several distinct models starting with the lowest priced Prius Two (\$24,200), they share similar bodies and sheet metal.

My test vehicle is the popular Prius Four, which is sized comparable to the last generation Prius. Its dimensions all reflect an external compact size with a length, width and height of 179, 69 and 58 inches. Wheelbase is a long 106 inches. There is not only 93 cubic feet in the passenger cabin, but 27 cubic feet in the cargo hold totaling 120 cubic feet or the minimum size for a large car. But most large cars have well over 100 cubic feet in the cabin area, but let's call it mid-size room with a small CUV trunk.

While the front end is clearly Prius, as its hatchback character lines continue to the rear end and that is where things get interesting when the lines are used to create some pretty wild taillights giving the new Prius some pizzazz.



Specifications

Engine

1.8L DOHC, 16 valve,
Atkinson cycle inline four
95 hp @ 5,200 rpm 105 lb.-
ft. of torque @ 3,600 rpm

Electric Motor

Permanent magnet synchronous
motor 71 hp, 120 lb.-ft. of
torque (no rpm given)
probably 0-1,500 rpm

Combined system 121 hp

Battery

Lithium-ion Capacity 3.6

ampere hour, 600 volts

Transmission

Electronically Controlled
CVT

Configuration

Transverse front
engine/front wheel drive

Dimensions

Wheelbase 106.3 inches

Length 178.7 inches

Width 69.3 inches

Height 58.1 inches

Track (f/r) 60.2/60.6 inches

Ground clearance 5.1 inches

Weight 3,050 pounds

Cargo capacity 27.4 cubic
feet

Passenger volume 93.1 cubic
feet

Fuel tank 11.3 gallons

Turning circle 33.5 feet

Wheels (std/opt) 15X6.5/17X7
inch alloys

Tires (std/opt)

195/65X15/215/45X17

Co-efficient of drag 0.24

Performance

0-60 mph 9.91 seconds

50-70 mph 5.59 seconds

50-70 uphill 9.95 seconds

Top speed Not given but with
a 0.24 CD, well over 100 mph

Fuel economy EPA rated at
54/50/52 mpg

city/highway/combined.

Expect 50-54 mpg in rural
country driving and 55 mpg

on the highway at legal speeds.

But Prius is all about fuel economy and this new one, as well all the new Priuses, produce phenomenal EPA numbers. This new Four is rated at 54/50/52 mpg city/highway/combined. The Prius Two Eco numbers are an even more amazing at 58/53/56 mpg. In the past when I tested Prius hybrids they rarely achieved their EPA fuel economy numbers. Not any more, this new model achieves or beats some of the EP A numbers by about 10 percent.

In actual highway tests at 70 mph in two-way runs this Prius averaged 55.4 mpg. In overall driving during a 100-mile run including 30 percent highway, over two minutes at full throttle testing and rural two lane 55 mph roads with about 10 percent stop and go, the Prius averaged 54 mpg. These are by far the best fuel economy numbers ever recorded by the Road Beat in car testing, even besting most of the motorcycles I have tested except for my test of a super scooter, the Suzuki Burgman 400 which averaged about 62 mpg, upon which got you soaked when driving in the rain. Most if not all of my motorcycle testing generally averaged about 45-50 mpg for large sport and cruiser type bikes. Even my very economical 1000 cc Ducati ST4S sport tourer, which had 108 rear wheel hp, had a best day of about 52 mpg.

Fuel mileage of the Prius was beyond amazing during a 140-mile roundtrip to South Lake Tahoe and back to Placerville. The Prius averaged to Echo Summit (a 6,000-foot climb) 37.8 mpg and overall to the lake shore 42.6 mpg. The return trip averaged an unbelievable 78.5 mpg and an average of 60.6 mpg. Imagine a fuel cost to Lake Tahoe and back on \$5. If there is a negative, it's the small fuel tank of 11.3 gallons. But on a highway trip, your own "tank" will be full long before the fuel tank gets close to fumes.

It is mind boggling that a car could achieve this kind of fuel

economy. So how did they do it? It's powered by a 1.8L DOHC, 16 valve Atkinson cycle, super high compression (13:1) inline four-cylinder engine that cranks out a modest 95 hp at a low 5,200 rpm and 105 pounds of twist also at an even lower 3,600 rpm. In addition, there is a 71 hp electric motor also driving the front wheels with a combined total for both engine and motor of 121 hp. In the Prius Four there is a new 600V Lithium-ion battery pack to power the electric motor which is 35 pounds lighter than the previous generation's nickel-metal-hydride unit (an NMH battery is still used in the Prius Two). The Prius Four trips the scales at 3,050 pounds which is actually 25 pounds lighter than the model Two. The Two Eco is the lightest at 3,010 pounds.

If you are wondering why the combined hp is not 166 hp, it is due to the fact of a battery output that is limited to about 26 hp. The tightly controlled Prius batteries have shown to be reliable well beyond their warranty and have been cycled over 150,000 times without any significant loss of efficiency.

Performance is about averaged for compact cars with a 0-60 time of 9.91. Passing times from 50-70 mph averaged 5.59 seconds on level ground and 9.95 seconds up a steep grade (6-7 percent). Tip in was strong but when passing on Highway 50 at elevations of 5,000-7,000 feet the go-pedal got a little soft and you had to plan your passes, but otherwise the Prius Four will meet 98 percent of most driver's performance needs and wants.

Suspension is state of the art double wish bone in all four corners with stabilizer bars at both ends. Standard wheels and tires are 6.5X15 inch shod with 195/65X15 inch rubber, not exactly track ready. But there is an option (Prius Three and Four Touring) for 17X7 inch wheels and more handling friendly 215/45X17 inch shoes. While the wheels are alloys, they are covered with drag reducing hubcaps. Now that's an Interesting setup, anything (in this case hubcaps) for fuel economy.



Comfort is another selling point for the Prius.

Normal handling is good and while the 15 inch set up might seem lacking, the Prius has good grip and can be pushed in the twisties. Steering is a bit slow and numb and it requires your attention during aggressive driving, but its prowess will surprise you. Turning circle is a tight 33.5 feet and parking lot maneuvering is excellent.

While ride quality is good perhaps near the best in the compact world, on coarser roads there is tire noise, perhaps due to the high fuel economy tires. On most roads the Prius is quiet and smooth, especially when it runs on pure electric.

Safety systems include four wheel discs with all the braking acronyms including Smart-Stop Technology. In addition, blind spot monitoring and rear cross traffic alert are also standard. Lane departure alert with steering assist and an upgraded radar cruise and more come with the Advanced Technology Packaged (\$1,935). I am not a fan of the radar cruise system. Special mention needs to be made for the Prius headlights. They are fantastic especially on low beams.

Inside is comfortable seating for five done in Toyota's SofTex which is their excellent version of synthetic leather. The big rub is the centered instrument panel. It is designed for a

world market so left and right hand drive cars are essentially the same. I found it difficult to read. My tester with that Tech Pack had a helpful heads-up display. While the center stack (radio, Nav and A/C system) is easy to use, to access IP info and setting up the IP info center is not. That needs a fix or a simple explanation in the user manual.

Pricing starts at \$24,200 for the Prius Two. A great value with the higher aforementioned EPA economy numbers. The Four stickers at \$28,650. My tester had the only two option packages, the Premium Convenience Package (\$1,705) and the Advanced Technology (\$1,935). My tester also had an extra cost red paint color called Hypersonic Red. It definitely did not make the Prius quicker or faster, but it will lighten your wallet by \$395. The Four Season floor mats will ding you for \$364. The total bite with \$835 for the boat from Aichi, Japan is \$33,884. Fabulous fuel mileage will cost you a real premium. If you are an environmentalist, it will make you feel virtuous. If you are a penny-pinching accountant, buy the Prius Two or a base Four, the standard equipment is long and quite complete including a power driver's seat with power lumbar.

Larry Weitzman has been into cars since he was 5 years old. At 8 he could recite from memory the hp of every car made in the U.S. He has put in thousands of laps on racetracks all over the Western United States.