

Road beat: Scion iA and iM fresh, refined



The sub-compact Scion iA is super fuel efficient. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

New nomenclature means all new cars from Scion. Stodgy is out and fun is in. And these cutting-edge vehicles are from Scion, an inexpensive, high value brand from Toyota. One of the models, the upscale iM is all Scion, but the other model, the iA, is a joint project from Scion and Mazda. Don't get upset as Scion has one other joint product, the FR-S, which is Scion/Subaru. If the FR-S is any indication, the new iA should be fabulous.

So let's start with the iA. Clearly a sub compact in size with

a 101-inch wheelbase and length and width of 172 and 67 inches, respectively, the new iA delivers large. Compared to the original xA, introduced 12 years ago, this new model feels incredibly refined in every way, starting with the stylish new body. No more is it an ugly box with four wheels. The new design is aggressive and sporty to the point you might think under the hood is a fire breathing 300 hp race engine. Besides the aggressive wide mouth snout grille (it has a slight resemblance to the new Mazda Takeri design philosophy), there are three main character lines, one defining the front fenders, another doing the same over the rear and a third above the rocker panel creating some lean muscle with a trim, coke bottle waist.



Specifications

Scion iA

Price \$16,495 to \$17,595 including destination of \$795

Engine 1.5L inline four, DOHC, 16 valves with DI 106 hp @ 6,000 RPM

103 lb-ft of torque @ 4,000 RPM

Transmission

Six speed manual

Six speed automatic

Configuration

Transverse front
engine/front wheel drive

Dimensions

Wheelbase 101.2 inches

Length 171.7 inches

Width 66.7 inches

Height 58.5 inches

Track (f/r) 58.9/58.5 inches

Ground clearance 5.5 inches

Weight (m/a) 2385/2416
pounds

Fuel capacity 11.6 gallons

Trunk capacity 13.5 cubic
feet

Passenger volume 85.9 cubic
feet

Wheels 16X5.5 inches

Tires 185/60X16 inches

Steering lock to lock 2.84
turns

Turning circle 32.2 feet

Performance

0-60 est 9.2 seconds

Top speed over 100 mph

Fuel economy

EPA rated
(manual//automatic) 31/41/35
mpg//33/42/37 mpg
city/highway/combined. iA
should meet those numbers

Scion iM

Engine

1.8L DOHC, 16 valve inline
four cylinder 137 hp @ 6,100
rpm

126 lb-ft of torque @ 4,000
rpm

Transmission

Six speed manual

Seven speed CVT

Configuration

Transverse front
engine/front wheel drive

Dimensions

Wheelbase 102.4 inches

Length 170.5 inches

Width 69.3 inches

Height 55.3 inches

Ground clearance 5.5 inches

Track (f/r) 59.6/59.3 inches

Passenger volume 90.4 cubic
feet

Cargo capacity 20.8 cubic
feet

Fuel capacity 14 gallons

Weight (m/a) 2,943/3,031
pounds

Steering lock to lock 2.59
turns

Turning circle 35.4

Tires 225/45X17 inches

Co-efficient of drag 0.30

Performance

0-60 mph est 8.7 seconds

Top speed over 100 mph

Fuel economy (m//a)
27/36/31//28/37/32 mpg
city/highway/combined. It
should meet or exceed those
numbers

Don't get too excited as it gets a super efficient direct injected 1.5L inline, DOHC, 16 valve four banger with all but a 106 hp at 6,000 rpm and 103 pounds of peak twist at 4,000

rpm. It's connected to the front wheels via one of two six speed trannies, a manual or an aggressive lock-up torque converter unit. The early and quick lock up makes the tranny more efficient. It also has tall gearing especially in fifth and sixth gear giving it very long legs.

While no exact performance numbers were extracted in my 100 mile drive from Santa Cruz back to San Francisco, it would be fair to estimate 0-60 mph times in the high eights to the low nines which is at least a full second better than my last xA and closer to the top of subcompacts and slightly better than most compacts.

But maybe the bad news is the small 11.6 gallon fuel tank, but don't fret, this iA averaged 38.3 mpg during that 100 miles of aggressive driving. Range equates to well over 400 miles which is well beyond most humans. That's even pushing into hybrid territory even though I couldn't find any hidden secondary electric power system anywhere. EPA rates the iA at 31/41/35 for the manual and a better 33/42/37 for the auto. Aggressive programming, early lock-up and ultra tall top gear ratios do pay dividends. RPMs drop to about 2,100 rpm at 70 mph.

Driving characteristics are impressive. Suspension is torsion beam semi independent in the rear and MacPherson struts up front, pretty standard in subcompact cars. But don't expect a subcompact type driving performance and it shows in the drive. Aside from the noticeable quiet, the ride and handling is certainly top of the class and equals cars substantially more expensive. Steering is also very quick at 2.84 turns lock to lock and the turning circle is a go-kart like 32.2 feet. One other point adding to iA's performance, fuel economy and handling is its low curb weight of 2,416 pounds with the automatic. Subtract only 31 pounds for the manual.

However, the first thing that you will notice aside from its great looking upscale design will be by your backside. While leather is not an option, the quality of the seats will be

readily noticeable once you are ensconced as they seem to form around you and provide great support with perfect foam densities.

If there is any complaint in the interior, it's the legibility of the ancillary gauges. They are too small and need more illumination. Everything you need is there, including a tach, but they are difficult to read except for the big round speedo which is front and center. One other note is the high quality of the appointments and most materials are soft touch. Trunk is a huge 13.5 cubic feet.

iA is basically sold one way, there are no factory options. Everything is standard like full power except the seats. Cruise, a great sound system, seven-inch display screen, Bluetooth, voice recognition, a pre-collision safety system, tilt telescopic steering wheel, TPMS and even a first aid kit and visor vanity mirrors are standard. Price for the manual is about \$15,700 and the auto is \$16,800. Add \$795 for destination. That's it. All you have to do is pick a color. Is there any rub? A slight one in that the standard alloys at 16X5.5 inches and the rubber is 185/60X16. The wheels are sharp looking, but if they were to offer an option it would be nice to see even a dealer installed upgrade to say a 17X6.5 or 17X7 inch alloy and 205/50X17rubber. It might even improve its already substantial handling and give it a more aggressive look. As with the iM below it is expected in dealer showrooms on Sept. 1.



Scion iM, a quality affordable AAV

While the iA and iM have almost identical dimensions as you will see, they are totally different cars with no relationship other than they are both motor vehicles with a Scion badge. Wheelbase of the iM is only an inch longer than the iA at 102 inches, but its length is actually an inch shorter at 171 inches. Remember the new iM is a hatchback; no trunk. But there are 21 cubic feet of cargo volume behind the second row of seats.

If the new iM design looks a bit familiar, don't think you are hallucinating, it does and that vehicle is the RAV4. If you study the iM's shape it has an almost identical window line, roof line, shoulder and character line and a nearly identical front end. The iM is almost a RAV4 redone to look sleeker (coefficient of drag is a very low 0.30 and sportier while offering utility and fuel economy with a good level of performance and handling.

Powering the iM is a powerful 1.8L 16 valve, DOHC inline four cylinder engine of 137 hp at 6,100 rpm and 126 pounds of twist at 4,000 rpm. It drives the front wheels through a seven speed CVT automatic. While its gear ratios are infinite, under full throttle you can detect it acting like a seven speed geared tranny as it accelerates up to its peak hp rpm and drops to about 5,000 rpm and do it all over again as if it upshifted. A CVT will normally accelerate to near peak hp rpm and then remain there as tranny ratios infinitely numerically lower themselves as the vehicle accelerates. Zero to 60 mph should be in the high eights.

EPA rates the new iM at 27/36/31 for the six speed manual and 28/37/32 for the CVT. During my 100 mile road trip of aggressive hilly driving with more than half a dozen full throttle passes the iM averaged 32.0 mpg or right at the EPA combined rating. And there were a few miles in downtown San Francisco. With the engine spinning just 2,100 rpm at 70 mph, highway fuel economy might be a bit better than advertised. Fuel tank is a larger than average 14 gallons.

Scion has put some high tech quality features in this small compact like double wishbone rear suspension along with the MacPherson front struts. Wheels and tires are big and beautiful 17X7 inch alloys shod with super wide (for this class) 225/45 series tires. They are not just calling it sporty, the data says it is. Besides having an extremely refined overall drive (very quiet and smooth), it also has oodles of cornering power. You want more? Steering is radically quick at 2.59 turns lock to lock. I can see a new class of SCCA type of race car here. It even comes standard with stabilizer bars front and rear.

Ride quality was excellent as this Scion is dialed in just right, plenty of sport without the punishment. Turning circle is a tight 35 feet.

Inside is another quality interior. If I liked and praised the

seats in the iA, the iM cloth seats are even better for the same reasons and they feel a bit larger. They feel like they were custom design for my backside. Materials are mostly soft touch. It does have a real two holer dash with a big speedo and tach. For a vehicle just one half an inch beyond 170 inches, 69 inches wide and just 55 inches tall it has a huge amount of volume with 90 cubes in the passenger area and 21 cubes in the cargo area. That is the volume of a midsize sedan.

Pricing is \$18,460 for the manual and just \$19,200 for the CVT plus \$795 for the boat ride from Japan. As with the iA, there are no factory options. Your choice becomes paint color and transmission. Get the auto and then pick a color (Electric Storm Blue). As with the iA, everything is standard, right down to the heated power mirrors with LED turn signals and back up camera. Everything standard in the iA is also standard here plus a driver knee airbag. Both vehicles do have some dealer installed systems such a NAV and there is a body kit for the iM to make it even sportier. Both are a lot of car for the money.

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.

Budding interest in growers' farm-to-toke pot salons

By Joe Garofoli, San Francisco Chronicle

In the days before medical cannabis dispensaries offered

dozens of strains, marijuana smokers blindly scored their weed on the street. Or, more likely, “from a guy I know.” Some still do.

But in this era of heirloom tomatoes and shade-grown coffee, a more discerning generation wants to meet the farmer who grew their bud – and they prefer their pot as pesticide-free as their kale.

“These are the people who shop at Whole Foods,” said Mendocino grower Nikki Lastreto as she mingled at a cannabis tasting party she helped organize this week at the Cole Valley home of a friend. “We want them to have the same experience with cannabis.”

In a backyard lit with the glow of fire pits and dusted with the smell of herb, elder statesmen like Frenchy Cannoli – a Frenchman who has been making hash for 40 years – extolled the virtues of Northern California terroir to young tech workers as he offered them a hit of his prized 5-year-old hash.

Read the whole story

Don't leave personal data in a rental car

By Kim Komando, USA Today

There are plenty of reasons to rent a car, from leaving an unreliable car behind on a vacation to getting around on a business trip. But there's a real hidden danger when doing so that you may not even realize – one that potentially puts you and your family at substantial risk.

Rental companies continually upgrade their fleets with newer-model cars, which means many now have the latest infotainment systems, which let you connect, or “pair,” your smartphone via Bluetooth with the car. This lets you take calls over the car’s audio system, dial from the center console, get directions or stream your music. Others include a USB connection so you can do all that and charge your phone.

When you connect your gadget to a car with Bluetooth, the car stores your phone number to make it easier to connect later. It also stores your call logs, including any contacts you dialed. Just one problem: All that information is saved inside the system and just sitting around for the next renter to find.

Read the whole story

Rowell book captures night sky

By Tom Stienstra, San Francisco Chronicle

It was close to midnight at remote Richardson Lake near Tahoe when Tony Rowell looked up from his campsite to see a meteor streak across the night sky, then explode into three pieces.

“As a kid out camping, seeing shooting stars was always one of my favorite parts of the trip,” Rowell said. “Camping that night, I looked up and said to myself, ‘I wonder if I could capture a shooting star on film.’”

That was 22 years ago. On Tuesday, the story comes full circle with the publication of the book “Sierra Starlight,” a

collection of 60 of Rowell's photographs that showcase the night sky and meteors above High Sierra landmarks. The images will take you back to your first campsites, starry nights and shooting stars.

Read the whole story

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Bridget

Bridget is a 3-year-old Dachshund-beagle mix. She is house trained and has good manners, and she walks nicely on the leash. Plus, she does well with other dogs.

Bridget was left in a shopping cart at a store with a note saying she is good with kids and needs a new home.

Bridget is spayed, microchipped, tested for heart worm, and vaccinated. She 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

Alcohol consumption can ruin summer fun

By Cate Neal

Summer around Tahoe is the perfect time for outdoor activities with family and friends. For some, drinking alcoholic beverages is part of the fun-in-the-sun experience. But excessive alcohol consumption and summer activities don't mix.

The American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma reports alcohol plays a role in half of all trauma-related injuries. According to the Centers for Disease Control, alcohol relates to 70 percent of water recreation deaths and 48 percent of pedestrian fatalities. Here are a few scenarios for how alcohol can lead to tragic consequences on the water, on the road, and in the outdoors – and how you can avoid a tragedy.



Cate Neal

The sensational swimmer

Alcohol decreases inhibition and impairs mental and physical capabilities, a risky combination for swimmers. In the frigid Lake Tahoe waters, a seasoned swimmer who's had a few drinks may foolishly venture out too far. A leg cramp makes it difficult to return to shore and even a chill can develop into hypothermia. Avoid going far from shore and stay within a beach's designated swimming zone.

The boastful boater

Boating and drinking are not a healthy cocktail. Alcohol impairs judgment, balance, and vision. It decreases reaction time and increases fatigue. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism reports 60 percent of boating fatalities involved alcohol and a boat operator with blood alcohol concentration of at least 0.1 percent is 16 times more likely to die in a boating accident than a sober operator. Drinking passengers are also more likely to slip on the deck or fall overboard.

The distracted driver

Summer vacation drivers are out in force. Many are unfamiliar with the roads and have other distractions, such as hauling a boat or camper, or dealing with children and pets in the backseat. Adding alcohol puts the driver and passengers as well as other drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists in harm's way. Thirty-one percent of vehicle crash fatalities, the CDC states, were connected to alcohol consumption in 2013.

The inebriated trail user

On the trail, heat exposure and alcohol can create trouble. Hot summer days increases sweat and alcohol causes additional fluid loss from increased urination. Together, excessive water loss can quickly lead to dehydration or heat stroke. Stay hydrated. Drink ample cold, non-alcoholic drinks when hiking

or biking.

The sober survivor

The easiest safety tip is to avoid drinking, particularly in the risky situations suggested above. Or, if you do drink, find a sober driver, drink plenty of water, and avoid operating any motorized vehicle.

Barton Health is committed to keeping our community and visitors safe. In the upcoming months, Barton is unveiling the Alcohol Screening and Brief Intervention (SBI) program. Patients admitted with a trauma-related injury, such as a concussion or broken limb, complete a brief questionnaire on their drinking habits. Depending on the score, patients receive a counseling session regarding drinking behavior and how it may be related to the injury.

“Teachable moments” like this following a trauma incident greatly reduce hazardous drinking habits. Alcohol SBI program participants experience less DUI arrests, healthcare costs, and hospital visits related to drinking. In the long run, less trauma incidents also make Tahoe safer for all to enjoy.

Cate Neal is a registered nurse and trauma program coordinator at Barton Memorial Hospital.

How to fight insect bites

By Amy Kraft, CBS News

Summertime is all about enjoying the great outdoors. But there is a pesky little threat that could spoil your fun: insects

like mosquitoes and ticks. The threats posed by insect bites are increasing, according to researchers, as climate change makes summers hotter and, in some places, wetter.

“One insect can spot you 150 feet away and actually zone in on you,” Clifford Bassett, medical director of Allergy and Asthma Care of New York, told “CBS This Morning.” “So you really don’t want to be a target.”

What attracts mosquitoes?

“There are 400 compounds in our skin that are attractive to mosquitoes,” Bassett said. Mosquitoes are attracted to carbon dioxide in breath, sweat, higher body temperature, certain perfumes and scents, and pregnant women because they exhale more carbon dioxide than other people and have more blood circulating through their bodies. Research shows that the bodies of some individuals produce natural repellents to mosquito bites, which are genetically controlled.

Read the whole story

Creative excuses for being late to work

By Teresa F. Lindeman, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

If being late to work were not a problem, no one would need to come up with an excuse.

But people do – trying to appease the boss with a reason for their tardiness – and that can lead to strange clues on what’s happening outside of the workplace.

"I had to wait for the judge to set my bail." "There was a stranger sleeping in my car." "I was drunk and forgot which Waffle House I parked my car next to."

CareerBuilder, a Chicago employment services firm, shared some of the findings from an online Harris poll of 2,100 human resource managers and 3,000 workers that found 23 percent of employees admitting to being late at least once a month. Fourteen percent said they were late at least once a week.

Read the whole story

Reflections on the atomic blast test in Nevada

By Joni Tevis, High Country News

Nevada Test Site, 1953

Put yourself in his shoes: cold, Army-issue, treads packed with sand. Rise before dawn, climb into the truck and bump down the road to Doom Town. As the convoy tops the last ridge, narrow your eyes at the rising sun's brilliant seam. Showtime. Up the ladder you go, sun already warm on your neck, roof shingles softening underfoot, nail heads gleaming silver.

The day wears on in pounding and shouts as you move down the line, lapping layers tight enough to turn any water, although this roof will never see rain. Down below, masons raise the chimney a row at a time, scraping excess mortar free. The painters spray the siding, not bothering to tape the windows; time is of the essence. Saltbrush shivers on the ridge and smashed jackrabbits stain the road as you ride back to Mercury

Camp, work done, clothes heavy with sweat and tar, paint and dirt, tacky with sap from lumber that was a tree six months ago.

Operation Doorstetp-Shot Annie, 1953

Full dark over a silent house. See how easy it is to make a family, twins sprawled on the floor, Baby in his high chair, Mother bending near, a spoonful of pears in her shapely hand. J.C. Penney provided the mannequins and wardrobe: rompers for the twins, footed sleeper for Baby, and Mother's sensible skirt, button-front blouse, clip earrings. (Daddy's at work, offstage.)

The bomb will detonate in a minute's time.

Read the whole story

Tech upgrades to enhance Valhalla experience



Technology at the Boathouse Theatre has been upgraded.
Photo/LTN

By Evangeline Elston

Valhalla Tahoe has upped its game when it comes to professional technical and production staff for the 2015 Valhalla Art, Music & Theatre Festival. For the festival to become known for excellent productions including concert sound, theater lighting, and play direction, it must have topnotch staff in place to help realize the vision.

This year Valhalla has hired Kevin Male of Kevin Male Audio as the concert sound engineer. Male has gone through Valhalla's audio equipment assessing and rewiring and modifying the technical production booth in the Boathouse Theatre to make sure everything is in great shape. He has than 20 years of experience as a sound engineer and so far the concert sound has been "the best we've ever heard at the Boathouse", according to one opening night couple of concert-goers who came to hear Alasdair Fraser.

Joe Barnett, a recent graduate of South Tahoe High School, is on staff for the summer as Valhalla's theater tech. Barnett gained his extensive knowledge and experience working in the STHS theater program under Liz Niven. Barnett has been able to assess some complicated lighting and technical issues at the Boathouse Theatre, implemented solutions, reprogrammed the lighting board and focused and re-gelled the theatre lights.

Though Valhalla has technical production limitations in the theater due to older equipment and limited resources, Male and Barnett have been able to maximize capabilities beyond what anyone thought possible.

Ethan Niven, a 2015 graduate of Southern Oregon University, is on staff as festival assistant and as director for Valhalla and the Dakota Foundation's production of "On Golden Pond", which opens July 2 at the Boathouse Theatre. Niven graduated with a BA in theater arts and a double minor in musical theater and stage management. He is a nationally ranked

performer in 2015 through the Kennedy Center. Locals may know him from his memorable performances at Lake Tahoe Community College over the years and as director of the 2014 Dakota/Valhalla production of "A Servant of Two Masters".

The Valhalla Boathouse Theatre will be the ideal venue for "On Golden Pond", a classic American comedy/drama that's every bit as touching, warm, and witty today as when it debuted on Broadway in 1979. "On Golden Pond", written by Ernest Thompson, is a work of rare simplicity and is the genesis of the much-heralded film starring Henry Fonda and Kathryn Hepburn. This play explores growing up, growing old and growing closer.

The cast of the play includes Pam Taylor, Stephanie Grigsby, Ryan Adams, Jody Paslov, Thomas Rayo and Dave Anderson.

On Golden Pond will run July 5, July 9-12 and July 16-18. Tickets and information are at www.valhallatahoe.com.

Evangeline Elston is director of the Valhalla Art, Music and Theatre Festival.