


Cruisin' IN THE SUMMER BREEZE

Convertibles Coast Down
Cy-Fair Roads

By Don Armstrong



Ford Mustang



Ask anyone if they'd like a ride in a convertible and they'll probably answer with an enthusiastic, "Yes!" Despite our blazing summer heat, there are still plenty of opportunities for fun riding with the top down. In this edition of Cy-Fair Magazine, we look at a few new cabriolets on the market that, with the touch of a button, will make you the envy of your neighbors.

Open-Air Luxury

Hardtop convertibles have been around for a long time, but nothing expresses today's version better than the Lexus IS 350 C. The aluminum roof's three-piece design allows for compact storage under the dual-hinged, clamshell-style trunk lid. When not swallowing the roof, the lid operates in a front-hinged conventional manner. Today's unibody construction doesn't typically translate well when a solid roof is removed to make way for the open-air experience, but Lexus managed to beef up the IS C's substructure to make it solid as a rock. Aerodynamics plays a big part in this car's look. The only body part shared with its four-door sibling is the hood; the rest of the sheet metal is specifically designed for the convertible.

Although there are a few unique elements found in the plush interior, it pretty much mirrors the coupe. Leather, wood, and a sprinkle of chrome accents give the IS C just the right amount of splash. Two V-6 engines are available: a 204-horsepower, 2.5-liter or a 3.5-liter delivering 306 horsepower. A six-speed manual is available on the former, while a six-speed automatic is your only choice on the 3.5. Pricing starts at \$44,890.

Bring on the Breeze

American born and bred, the Chrysler Sebring Limited Convertible offers what no other manufacturer does, a choice of either hard or soft tops and a price that makes those more frequent trips to the hairdresser a little more palatable. Top up or down, this is one good looking ride and not to be put in the same arena as its four-door hardtop cousin of the same name. Although there are quite a few shared components, it seems Chrysler put a little more thought, care, and quality in the convertible.

There are three trim levels. The LX and Touring models are fitted with a cloth top, while the Limited gets the slick, retractable hardtop. Both tops are stowed under a hard tonneau cover. The entry level LX is fitted with a 2.4-liter inline four-cylinder, the LX gets a 2.7-liter V-6, and the Limited comes with a 3.5-liter V-6 delivering 235 horsepower and getting 16 miles per gallon city and 27 miles per gallon highway.

The four-place Sebring convertible is one of few vehicles in the shrinking, reasonably priced category and starts at \$27,850.

King of the Road

What would a magazine article about convertibles be without a two-seat sports car in the mix? We think the Nissan 370Z Roadster epitomizes what a serious roadster should be. The 2010 Nissan 370Z convertible mirrors the shape of its coupe brother - sans the metal roof. The power cloth convertible top can be hidden under a body-colored matching tonneau cover in about 20 seconds with just the touch of a button.

The Roadster also gets the same, exciting interior as the coupe with optional leather seating that can be heated and cooled. An updated navigation system is also available, as well as a 9.3 gigabyte Music Box hard drive and a USB port for your iPod. Look at it as mom or

Nissan 370Z Roadster



Mini Cooper



dad's play toy when the kids are visiting grandma and grandpa's for summer vacation. The new 3.7-liter V-6 delivers 332 horsepower to the rear wheels through a six-speed manual or seven-speed automatic transmission and gets 18 miles per gallon city and 25 miles per gallon highway. Pricing on the base model begins at \$36,970.

More Cy-Fair Convertibles to Consider Volkswagen Eos

Volkswagen gets the one-upmanship award by offering a retractable hardtop with built-in sunroof. Haven't heard of the Eos? If you're in the market for fun in the sun, visit the VW dealer down the freeway for a convincing test drive. The Eos starts at \$32,390.

Ford Mustang

The original pony car gets even better with an all-new 305-horsepower V-6 that gets 30 miles per gallon. The new retro-look Mustang received an update last year with better looking and better fitting materials. The four-place convertible "Stang" starts at \$27,145.

Mini Cooper

What mom wouldn't want a cute, quirky convertible? For that matter, what kid wouldn't want to be seen in the car pool line in a Mini? The Mini Cooper seats four, with better handling than many sports cars. Pricing begins at \$24,250. Winner! CFM

DON ARMSTRONG'S knowledge and life-long love affair with motorsports has earned him the reputation of being one of the area's most respected automotive journalists. He's a member of the Texas Auto Writer's Association.



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