

## Nissan enters the small-car performance race

Not to be outdone or left behind by a horde of big-power compacts hitting the market, **Nissan** has given its in-house tuner division, **Nismo**, the green light to create a performance version of the **Sentra** sedan.

Previously a prototype Sentra was shown at the 2013 Los Angeles Auto Show, saddled with a turbocharged 1.8-liter four-cylinder engine. It was rated at 240 horsepower, which is 110 horses more than the Sentra's non-turbo 1.8. However, given the competition's 300-plus-horsepower turbos, Nismo will have to up the ante to keep up with the pack.



The 2013 Nismo Sentra concept at the 2013 L.A. Auto Show



All the functionality and hundreds of pounds lighter. That's the future for vehicles such as the GMC Acadia.

## Lighten up already

The trend-spotters here see a shift in building full-size wagons with three rows of seats — so-called crossovers — and that's to significantly lighter construction methods. Off the top of our heads, we can think of three prominent examples: the **2017 Audi Q7**, **GMC Acadia**, and **Mazda CX-9**. Collectively, this trio has dropped 1,700 pounds compared to their 2016 counterparts, with the Q7 and Acadia leading the way with a 700 lb. reduction each.

Much credit goes to the use of lighter platforms and body panels, but installing smaller and lighter engines also plays a role. And it's not just the bigger rigs that are dieting. For instance, General Motors also initiated major slim-downs of the **2016 Chevrolet Cruze** and **Malibu** sedans and **Camaro** coupe and convertible. With the imposition of stricter government mpg regulations looming by the mid-2020s, the weight-loss movement will only accelerate.



The French government would love all its citizens to buy an electric Renault Zoe.

## Cars banned in Paris and Norway? Here's the scoop.

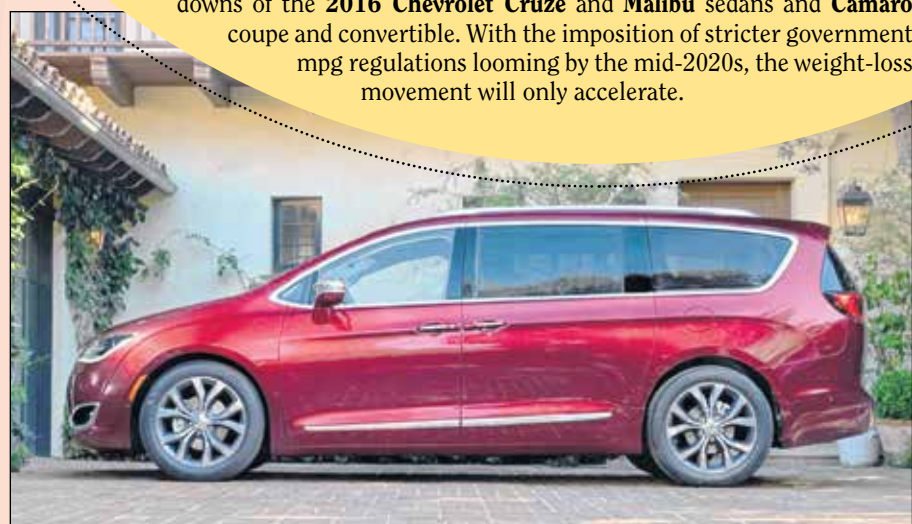
**True:** The municipal government of **Paris, France**, has banned vehicles made before 1997 from entering the city between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. on weekdays. Diesel-powered vehicles made before 2011 will also face tougher regulations. The rule took effect on July 1, and is estimated to affect 10 percent of the city's cars. (Classic vehicles registered 30 years or more ago are exempt: So Pierre can cruise his '86 Citroën 2CV straight down the Champs-Élysées.)

While Beijing gets the smog reputation, **air pollution** is now a major problem in European capitals as well, in part due to the prevalence of diesel vehicles. Once touted as a clean alternative because they produce less greenhouse gases than gasoline engines, diesels emit a greater amount of nitrogen dioxide, a contributor to respiratory problems such as asthma.

**False:** Contrary to media reports, **Norway's** Climate Minister confirmed that the green-friendly Scandinavian country will *not* be banning new petroleum-fueled car sales. Rather, the country will use tax breaks and incentives to encourage the switch over to electric vehicles. In short: No Norwegian ban.

"I am a liberal politician and don't support the use of force to get rid of petrol and diesel cars," said parliament member Ola Elvestuen. "The goal is to make zero/low-emission cars so attractive that people choose them."

Already, France is suggesting a \$11,075 incentive to encourage owners of diesel vehicles to switch to electrics.



The new 2017 Chrysler Pacifica minivan is rumored to be getting Google's self-driving software.

## FCA ogles Google

One of the hottest news items on the automotive front concerns a cooperative arrangement between **Fiat Chrysler Automobiles** and **Google**. The latter has invested big-time bucks in autonomous (self-driving) systems, which is something that FCA could certainly put to good use.

The second part of the rumor has the new **2017 Chrysler Pacifica** minivan becoming the recipient of Google's **self-driving software**. That would seem to make sense since the Pacifica's passenger capacity makes it an ideal vehicle for ferrying people to and from schools, offices, sports events and other urban activities where congested roads are the norm.

FCA boss Sergio Marchionne has promised to reveal more details regarding a possible joint venture with Google by the end of the year.

### TEST DRIVE

## 2017 Toyota Camry XLE

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The Special Edition has been dropped from the lineup for 2017, leaving four available trim levels: LE (MSRP: \$23,070), SE (\$23,840), XLE (\$26,310) and XSE (\$26,310). Though the top-trim cars are well equipped, there are still options for the taking. Specifically, XLE buyers can add on Safety Connect (emergency assistance, stolen vehicle locator, roadside assistance, automatic collision notification, \$515), Blind Spot Monitoring with Rear Cross Traffic Alert (\$500), and the Technology Package (pre-collision system, dynamic radar cruise control, lane departure alert, automatic high beam, \$750). In addition, four-cylinder buyers can opt for a power tilt/slide moon roof, which is standard on six-cylinder Camrys.

All Camrys are equipped with a six-speed automatic transmission and front-wheel-drive. The standard engine is a four-cylinder (178 horsepower, 170

lb.-ft. of torque), which is expected to return 24 miles per gallon in town and 33 on the highway. A six-cylinder engine is available on XLE and XSE models. Power ratings are 268 horsepower and 298 lb.-ft. of torque, and EPA says you can expect 21 mpg's city, 31 highway, 25 combined. My XLE test car was V-6 equipped and I logged 26.5 miles per gallon overall in mixed driving.

The smooth power of the six is easy to get used to. It's quick, too (low six second range from 0-60 mph) which comes in handy when you need to pass or merge. And it's quiet going about its business.

Camry's suspension (in LE/XLE) is biased towards ride comfort. It feels stable, corners easily. Sporty, it is not. That figures, because Camry's core buyers value comfort and stability more than sport. Those who seek a car that will tug on your sleeve and ask to take the twisty roads home are most likely looking else-



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURER

TEST DRIVE this vehicle at this preferred dealership:

**LIA TOYOTA OF COLONIE**  
2116 Central Ave., Schenectady, NY 12304  
518-374-3700 [www.liatoyotaofcolonie.com](http://www.liatoyotaofcolonie.com)



The 2017 Toyota Camry's trunk space is about average for the segment — large enough to handle a typical family vacation's worth of stuff — and at 15.4 cubic feet is half a cubic foot shy of perennial rival Accord.

where in the midsize market, to models like the Mazda6 or Ford Fusion, which have a strong, performance minded bent.

And, too, Camry's SE and XSE models have a sport suspension tuned a skosh more stiffly than the other Camry models. While the difference in handling likely isn't dramatic, the package's non-mechanical bits may be more important. The XSE, for example, also gets model-specific alloy rims, black mesh grille,

chrome tipped exhaust and LED DRLs.

The package broadens Camry's appeal to take in those who like the sportier vibe and the smooth ride, but don't really care if their car is a corner carver.

A regular contributor to the Times Union for more than 20 years, Dan Lyons is the award-winning author of six books, and photographer of 170 calendars. Read Dan's recent reviews online anytime at [Timesunion.com/vehiclereviews](http://Timesunion.com/vehiclereviews).

Don't miss newweek's Test Drive:  
**2017 Acura RDX**

