

The French are coming

The year 2026 seems like a long way off, but, based on intel, that's when the France-based automaker **PSA** plans to begin selling automobiles on this side of the Atlantic. Word has it that by next spring the company that makes Peugeot, Citroën, Opel and Vauxhall (the latter two were recently purchased from General Motors), will have formulated its launch strategy, including which brands and models will be introduced and how and where they'll be sold. However there's word leaking out that Opel will be the chosen one since it has some degree of brand recognition here (the previous-generation Buick Regal sedan was Opel-based). There's also a chance that Citroën could also get a shot with at least one of its luxury DS-brand models.



The DS Divine Concept: France-based Citroën launched its DS luxury brand in 2009



2019 Ford F150 SuperCrew Cab

Electrified F-150 is on the way

In the game of automotive one-upmanship, you have to hand it to **Ford** for staying ahead of the competition. In recent years, the automaker's launch of the **F-150-based SVT Raptor** (now simply called Raptor) caught General Motors and Fiat Chrysler Automobiles off guard and left them struggling to develop extreme off-road versions of their trucks. This was followed by the launch of the **aluminum-bodied** 2015 F-150 that solidified Ford's spot as a weight-reducing innovator. Now comes word that a **hybrid version** of the world's best-selling pickup will be available for the 2020 model year. Unlike the "mild hybrid" versions that GM briefly marketed a few years back (the electric motor supplied additional torque, but did not operate without the internal-combustion engine), the F-150's electric motor can operate as an external generator to provide power for a variety of work- and recreation-related tasks. As CEO Bill Ford said during a recent company centennial event at the Ford Rouge facility in Dearborn, MI, the future hybrid F-150 will "be a truck that takes you farther without sacrificing power and a truck that helps you do more when you get there, with electricity for everything from your tools to your camping gear." Ford also said the company is open to an all-electric truck, as well.



A flying car "transitions" for takeoff

The dream of flying cars still lives. Heck, even Uber is working on getting a prototype flying taxi service off the ground... literally, in this case. But sources are saying that **Terrafugia** is even closer. The company — which, like Volvo, is owned by Zhejiang Geely Holding Group of China — is currently accepting orders for the **Transition**, a vehicle that converts from a surface-bound car to a soaring airplane in less than a minute by unfolding its wings. The carbon-fiber bodied vehicle's top speed is also 100 mph in the air, with a 400-mile range that's accomplished with a rear-mounted 100-horsepower turbocharged four-cylinder engine that drives a propeller. Top speed on land is 70 mph. The two-seat vehicle requires a pilot's license to operate, but even so, as a precaution, there's a built-in parachute. On the road, the two-seat Transition travels using electric motors. Pricing starts at \$279,000 with deliveries to begin in 2019.



The upcoming redesign of the Mazda3 will take inspiration from Mazda's Kai concept.

Mazda3: radical in looks, powertrain

We have it on good authority that the next generation of the automaker's compact sedan and hatchback will be a game-changer. Physically, the **Mazda3** will resemble the Kai concept car, with an elongated nose that runs counter to the severely truncated rear end that appears both odd and attractive at the same time. Whatever the final shape, the 3's high-compression 2.0-liter gasoline engine will have what Mazda calls "Spark-Controlled Combustion Ignition" that works somewhat like a diesel engine. The result, says Mazda, is a cleaner and more efficient burn, resulting in much improved fuel economy compared to a similar-displacement conventional gasoline engine. The powerplant will be part of Mazda's new SkyActive-X system that should also see improvements in transmission and suspension tuning. The launch of the new Mazda3 is expected next spring.

TEST DRIVE

2018 Porsche 718 Boxster

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Plus driving modes sharpen throttle response and shift points, adding to the fun. Electrically-assisted power steering is no longer a novelty, and Boxster keeps the driver apprised of what's going on without being twitchy about it. Boxster shares the same steering ratio as its big brother 911. The amount of boost feels

To get the essence of the Boxster experience, you'll do very nicely with the base model.

proper in slow or fast driving, and the feel is nicely weighted. With its mid-engine balance and supple chassis, even the standard model is exceptionally capable for touring or the occasional autocross or track day. For those that want to dial up the potential (and we know you're out there), the option sheet beckons, and is limited only by the depth of your pock-

ets. As mentioned above, Porsche offers a number of things to up the handling ante as standard equipment in GTS. With the Active Suspension Management System, ride quality is fine in Normal mode. Sport mode is firmer to the point that you may want to reserve it for the track or autocross. The interior has a function-first design and is cleanly styled. Controls are generally easy to reach and figure out. The exception would be the temperature and fan controls for the HVAC. They're activated by small switches, the location is (too) low on the center stack and the cold/hot temperature display is a vertical line between the two extremes. A simple readout by degrees would make a lot more sense, and be less distracting. Like the 911, Boxster has an updated version of Porsche's PCM infotainment system. The 7-inch touchscreen is legible and easy to use. Cabin storage space is sparse, making it a challenge to find spots to park your phone, keys, shades, and whatnot. Larger cargo stores fore or aft — a benefit of mid-engine cars. The split is 5.3 cubic feet in the deep, front



The style of the 2018 Porsche 718 Boxster's interior is clean and fuction first, with controls generally easy to reach and figure out.

bin, and 4.4 in the shallow, rear space. The collective capacity is good by sports car standards, though if you want to play 9 or 18, the only space for a full set of clubs is the passenger seat. The weather during my mid-fall test drive wasn't too top down friendly, so I lowered my standards. Above freezing? Check. Not pouring? Check. I dropped the lid whenever practical. One long trip involved rotating periods of clouds, light rain and peeks of sun. Convertible owners know that, as long as you're moving, the rain doesn't find its way into the cabin, so I didn't stop to raise the top. The power, convertible lid folds quickly and neatly atop itself. The process takes about 10 seconds (up or down), and can be accomplished at speeds of up to 31 mph. The seating position is low, hence exiting gracefully is an automotive barometer of age. Windows down, there's a fair amount of wind buffeting at highway speed. Windows up and wind blocker deployed, it's quite agreeable. Rear visibility is somewhat limited, and

considerably more so with the top up. Blind spot monitoring (Porsche calls it Lane Change Assist) should therefore be considered a mandatory option (\$700). To get the essence of the Boxster experience, you'll do very nicely with the base model. With judicious restraint at the options snack bar, you should be able to stay near the starting sticker price of \$59,000. But, if you've got your teeth set on a more aggressive performance car and your budget allows, Porsche has simplified the selection process with the new GTS. The car's standard equipment list includes a desirable bundle of performance options, all wrapped up in one, tidy package. But for all that, the most desirable feature may well be the extra 15 horsepower, because you can't buy it on any other Boxster.

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