



A modified Porsche 911 runs the 1973 East Africa Safari

A Porsche 911 SUV?

Although not necessarily a utility vehicle in the true sense of the word, the rumored 911 variant would come with all-wheel-drive and more ground clearance, not unlike the competition 911s that were entered in the grueling East Africa Safari rally events back in the 1970s and early 1980s.

In fact, the car would likely tie into that heritage and be given the **911 Safari** name. Other likely features would include unique flared fenders, skid plates and other specialized gear.

The 911 Safari would likely have such a hefty price tag, however, no one other than a Middle Eastern potentate or professional rally race team would ever take it off-road.



Word is this Hyundai Santa Cruz concept pickup — or something very much like it — is bound for production.

The Santa Cruz is a still a go

Among the evolving hot categories is the midsize-pickup segment, practically launched when Ford brought the Ranger nameplate following a long absence. **Hyundai** teased truck buyers with a **Santa Cruz** small truck concept in 2015 and now sources say that it — or something quite similar — is definitely production-bound for the 2020 model year. What's more, corporate cousin **Kia** is expected to have its own pickup a year or two following the launch of the new Hyundai. The Santa Cruz is expected to stick with the sport-truck theme, which means it will come only in extended-cab format, while Kia's version would use the same platform but likely have totally different look. Both trucks would share the same powertrains that would likely include turbocharged four-cylinder and hybrid drive systems.



Gateway Bronco wants to sell you a brand new 1974 Ford Bronco.

Buy a new old Bronco

While you're waiting for the official reveal of the 2020 Ford Bronco, you can now put in an order for a new old model.

Illinois-based **Gateway Bronco** — which has made a reputation restoring first-generation Broncos — recently announced that now has an agreement with Ford Motor Co. to officially sell "brand new" 1966-1977 Broncos.

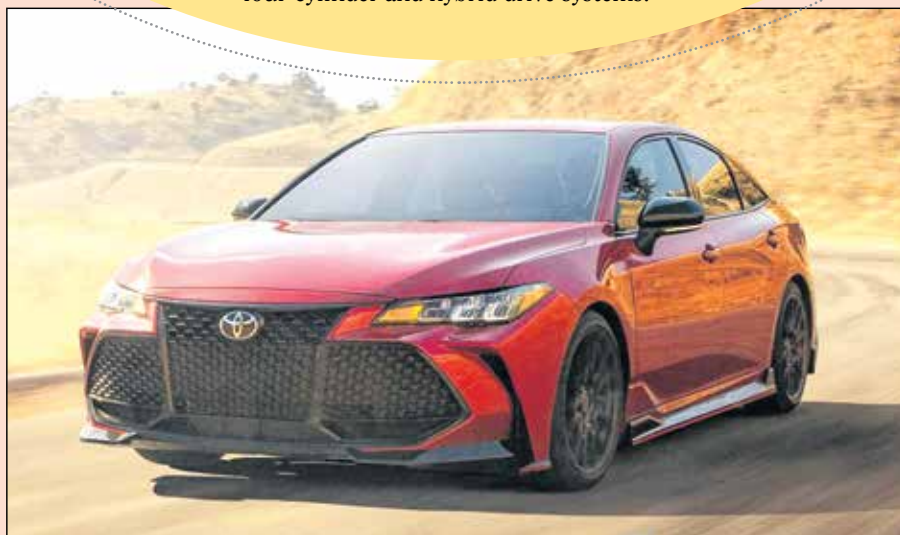
Sure, you'll be paying between \$120,000 and \$180,000 depending on which of the three models you order, but you'll be getting a hand-built, better-than-new Bronco chassis and mechanics.

The line-topping Modern Day Warrior edition, for instance, comes with the decidedly contemporary 5.0L Coyote V-8, a six-speed automatic from the last-gen Raptor, a premium Porsche leather interior, four-wheel disc brakes, reduced NVH and a five-year warranty. On the lower end, for \$120,000 you'll get a fuel-injected 347 stroker with a four-speed automatic or five-speed manual.

Underpinned by modern chassis components, Gateway's Broncos smoother ride is more comfortable on the road, and the vehicle will meet official Certified Reconditioned Vehicle standards set by Ford.

And in case you're wondering about skirting modern safety regulations, the 2015 Low Volume Vehicle Manufacturing Act allows makers who produce only a limited number of specialty vehicles to get a pass on certain National Highway Traffic Safety Administration rules.

Still, for a six-figure MSRP, even purists might not mind an airbag or two.



A sporty Avalon? Both it and the Camry will be available in performance TRD models.

Sportier sedans for Toyota

Reports are that **Toyota** is targeting Honda as it looks to increase the visibility of the **TRD** brand. Those initials, which stand for **Toyota Racing Development**, are currently attached to special-edition Tacoma and Tundra pickups with greater off-road capability.

For the 2020 model year, both the **Camry** and **Avalon** sedans — yes, Camry and Avalon *sedans* — will receive the TRD treatment, including sport suspensions, body cladding, front and rear spoilers, special wheels and interiors. Apparently, TRD models will eventually include all-wheel-drive and a bit more performance under the hood.

Ultimately, nearly every vehicle in Toyota's lineup will offer the TRD treatment... just as Honda is rumored to be contemplating with the Si designation that so far is only used for special-edition Civic small cars.

TEST DRIVE

2019 Nissan Kicks

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1.6L four-cylinder engine made 188 horsepower and 177 lb.-ft. of torque. Kicks is more mainstream subcompact; more practical in size, more comfortable riding, not as nimble, nor as quick. The non-turbo 1.6L four generates 122 horses, 114 lb.-ft. of torque.

That's runabout power, and just fine in 'round town driving. In high demand situations, with the pedal to the metal, the engine gets loud, but there's more sound here than fury, and drivers learn that passing takes planning. Kicks is more frugal than was Juke, with EPA mileage estimates of 31/36/33, compared to 28/32/29.

Prices start at \$18,540 for the S trim level, \$20,250 for the SV and \$20,870 for the SR.

Headlining the top-level SR models

are LED headlights, fog lamps upgraded upholstery trim and — unique in this segment - a bird's-eye camera system. The latter feature is a bigger deal on bigger vehicles with big, fat blind spots. But even here in a little hatch, it's a fast track path to parking lot proficiency.

Less Spartan than the base, S models, the mid-level SV is the Kicks value pick. SV includes a number of interior niceties, such as Android Auto and Apple CarPlay compatibility, blind spot and rear cross traffic alerts, keyless entry with remote start, an enhanced, driver alert display, and automatic temperature control with rear heating ducts.

A regular contributor to the Times Union for more than 25 years, Dan Lyons is the award-winning author of six books, and photographer of 180 calendars.



TEST DRIVE this vehicle at these preferred dealerships:

DESTINATION NISSAN
770 Central Ave., Albany, NY 12206
518-438-8461 www.destinationnissan.com

LIA NISSAN
2233 Central Ave., Schenectady, NY 12304
518-579-2000 www.lianissanschenectady.com

LIA NISSAN OF GLENS FALLS
373 Dix Ave., Queensbury, NY 12804
518-681-3800 www.lianissangf.com

LIA NISSAN OF SARATOGA
2906 Route 9 Malta, NY 12020
518-633-1133 www.lianissansaratoga.com