kbb.com Names Coolest New Cars Selling Under $18,000

Editors of Kelley Blue Book's kbb.com Pick Top 10 Cool, Affordable New Vehicles

With the average price of a new vehicle surpassing $25,000, it's easy to fall into the trap of believing you have to spend a small fortune to drive anything worth writing home about. Unless you're all about impressing your friends, neighbors and co-commuters with the size of your monthly payment, the entry end of the market is filled with a higher concentration of cool cars, trucks and SUVs than ever.

After putting together a list of all the vehicles available for less than $18,000, the editors of Kelley Blue Book's kbb.com then picked the 10 coolest. Instead of reporting based on vehicles' Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Prices (MSRPs), the list is based on each model's New Car Blue Book value, the price buyers are typically paying in the market. Consumers' actual payment will be determined by the down payment on the vehicle and the finance rate available to them.

"While everyone bemoans the fact that new cars are so expensive these days, we found a wide variety of cool, fun-to-drive vehicles that are still affordable," said Jack R. Nerad, editorial director, Kelley Blue Book's kbb.com. "We settled on the $18,000 price point, because it offers most buyers a monthly payment of less than $350 over the course of a five-year loan."

Whether you're drawn to performance, reliability, styling, versatility, economy, comfort or some combination thereof, Kelley Blue Book's 2006 list is diverse enough that you're bound to find something to fit your tastes. Buying a used vehicle is another good way to get something cool for under $18,000, but there's no denying the allure of the flawless, warranted, inimitably scented new car.

Top 10 Coolest New Cars Selling Under $18,000

Vehicle	MSRP	New Car Blue Book Value
2007 Toyota Yaris	$14,630	N/A
2006 Scion xB	$15,370	$15,524
2007 Dodge Caliber	$15,985	$15,985
2006 Kia Sportage	$16,490	$16,134
2006 Chevrolet HHR	$16,890	$16,472
2006 Ford Fusion	$17,795	$17,084
2006 Nissan Frontier King Cab	$17,530	$17,179
2006 Mazda3	$18,175	$17,646
2006 Honda Civic	$17,860	$17,860
2006 Scion tC	$17,640	$17,960

All vehicles are listed by their New Car Blue Book value. New Car Blue Book values represent transaction values, or what others are paying for this vehicle, during the week of April 3, 2006. New Car Blue Book values are updated weekly on kbb.com. Adding optional equipment at the time of purchase will increase the price of the vehicle.

Editorial Comments on the Top 10 Coolest New Cars Under $18,000

Toyota Yaris

With a long history as a best-seller in Europe, the Toyota Yaris migrates to the U.S. as the least expensive vehicle in the Toyota lineup. Sporting unusually cool styling, Toyota quality and a 34/city and 40/highway MPG rating, the Yaris' value more than exceeds its under-$12,000 starting price.

Scion xB

The xB has proven to us that, these days, it's cool to be square. Not only does its slab-sided styling set it apart, but its boxy dimensions also mean this diminutive and fuel-efficient vehicle is a surprisingly commodious hauler of people and stuff.

Dodge Caliber

Caliber changes the small-car game by offering a larger, more flexible interior filled with way-cool features like an air-conditioned storage bin to keep drinks cold, rear speakers that flip down to project outward from the open tailgate, a 110-volt outlet for powering small electronics and a self- charging flashlight.

Kia Sportage

When buying your first SUV, bang-for-the-buck is a very cool thing to find. Pricing out the Kia Sportage is almost fun when you get to include a sunroof, a great stereo and a tire pressure monitor all for under $16,500.

Chevrolet HHR

As cool as the 1940s-style exterior is, the Chevrolet HHR is equally cool for its efficient use of space and worthwhile features like remote start and the increasingly requisite iPod connector. It offers hauling ability like a compact SUV, yet it handles like a car.

Ford Fusion

Size does matter, so getting a well-styled, contemporary midsize sedan with the roominess and comfort of the new Fusion is cool. Even better is the unexpected level of equipment for the price, including remote keyless entry, tilt steering wheel and cruise control.

Nissan Frontier

Utility is in, and nothing's more utilitarian than a pickup. The Frontier backs up its sharp styling with excellent ride and handling.

Mazda3

Available as a hatchback or sedan, the Mazda3 is a deft one-two punch to the compact-car segment. We can't decide which model we like better, but the combination of fine driving dynamics, upscale interior and arresting looks make this a "cool cars" list repeater.

Honda Civic

You know how U2 were cool, then in the mid-90s they weren't so cool, and now they're as cool as ever? Well, the Civic has traveled a parallel path to regain its stature as arguably the finest economy car ever built -- and cool once again.

Scion tC

If you're cool enough to appreciate it, the slick styling and fashionable features in the tC deliver "Lexus-like" technology in an affordable package. This year, the improved audio features stand out, including steering-wheel gauges and iPod connectivity.

The top 10 coolest new cars under $18,000 were chosen based on the expert opinions of the Kelley Blue Book editorial team. Selection was based on price, design, style and performance as well as extensive research of each vehicle and test drives of vehicles selling at or below $18,000 during the week of April 6, 2006. For more information on these and other new vehicles, log on to www.kbb.com.

About Kelley Blue Book (kbb.com)

Kelley Blue Book's kbb.com is America's most used and trusted vehicle pricing, values and information resource. The top-rated Web site provides the most up-to-date pricing and values for thousands of new and used vehicles, including the Blue Book® New Car Value, which reveals what people actually are paying for new cars. Since 1926, car buyers and sellers have relied upon Kelley Blue Book for authoritative and unbiased information to make well- informed automotive decisions. The company also reports vehicle prices and values via products and

services, including the famous Blue Book® Official Guide and software products. Kbb.com also has been named the No. 1 automotive information site by Nielsen//NetRatings and J.D. Power and Associates seven years in a row. No other medium reaches more in-market vehicle shoppers than kbb.com; one in every three American car buyers complete their research on kbb.com.

SOURCE: Kelley Blue Book

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