

Behind the wheel: Testing the new Mercedes-Benz C Class - power, efficiency, and elegance

 By Imran Salie

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Look, you don't have to settle for an SUV. Yes, with an SUV there are added benefits of ride height and more space, but with sedans, there's a certain aura about it that still seems to linger long after its popularity has died out, particularly with luxury sedans. What is this aura? I'm not quite sure, maybe it's the longing for something that's deemed unpopular but still nice to have. This brings me to the latest Mercedes-Benz C Class, which I lived with for a bit, and which encompasses that aura with precision.







So, what is the new C Class all about?

The C Class was subject to a major interior facelift and some exterior changes in late 2021, with it launching locally in early 2022. The fifth-generation C Class comes in two derivatives: the C200, which is the model we had on test, and the C220d, which apparently offers a better range. The C Class is manufactured locally in East London and in two other places in the world.

According to Mercedes-Benz, 10.5 million C Class vehicles have been sold in more than 100 markets since its introduction in 1982.

In terms of competitors, the C Class goes up against BMW's 3 Series and Audi's A4, both of which I think are level in certain areas of performance.

What's the C200 like to live with?

The C200 is certainly comfortable and practical with a generous boot capacity for living with on a daily basis, even for families. The only hair in the soup is that the rear seats feel cramped for adults, and I imagine things being a tight squeeze for three adults. Then there's the rear window, which is a tad small and not the best for looking out of through the rear-view mirror.

The C Class is quite long (4,751 mm), not the longest of course, but long enough that parking in tight spots becomes a question of practicality. But thanks to parking sensors and great all-around cameras, parking is easy and capable for those that fret when having to manoeuvre a clunk of metal into a tight spot.

Then there's the question of efficiency and performance. The C200 is no slouch, It keeps up with traffic easily and has great fuel consumption (depending on driving behaviour) as it's equipped with mild hybrid technology. The C200 also has a range of 600+km on a full tank, which is good considering that a figure of 4-5l per 100km is well achievable.

What's it like to drive?

The C200 offers a reasonably comfortable drive. While it may not look like it can exert a lot of power because of its toned-down and opulent appearance, the C200 be punchy in Sport+ mode.

I imagine the C220d derivative to be even more potent power-wise. But the overall feel of driving the C200 is comfort with dynamic performance. Inside the cabin, there's little road noise that penetrates. The noise that does break through comes from wind, rain (when there is rain), and the tyres.

Features

The C200 comes equipped with the second-generation Mercedes-Benz User System (MBUX), an interactive voice assistant, a hi-resolution LCD driver screen in the driver area, Apple Car Play and Android Auto, a charging dock, and USB C ports.





The C200 features a 1.5 turbo-petrol engine with a 48V electrical system that can add 15kW and 200Nm. Total outputs are measured at 150kW and 300Nm. Mated to the turbo-petrol engine is a 9G-Tronic transmission.

Safety features include:

- Driving assistance package with advanced functions
- Reduced driver workload in day-to-day situations
- Enhanced response to impending collisions
- Support in hazardous situations
- Improved safety for more comfortable and safe driving

Verdict

While the C200 offers luxury, comfort, and power, I can't help but feel that it's a bit pricey. Its price doesn't of course take away the fact that it's a great car, but because some materials of the interior feel slightly on the cheap side, there's room for some leeway in a minor price drop.

However, the C200's peppy engine, tech features, and fuel economy still make it an attractive buy.

Retail price: R849,000

ABOUT IMRAN SALIE

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