

2013 Motor Trend Car of the Year

2013 Tesla S P85



The 2013 Motor Trend Car of the Year is one of the quickest American four-doors ever built. It drives like a sports car, eager and agile and instantly responsive. But it's also as smoothly effortless as a Rolls-Royce, can carry almost as much stuff as a Chevy Equinox, and is more efficient than a Toyota Prius. Oh, and it'll sashay up to the valet at a luxury hotel like a supermodel working a Paris catwalk. By any measure, the Tesla Model S is a truly remarkable automobile, perhaps the most accomplished all-new luxury car since the original Lexus LS 400.

The Model S takes advantage of the packaging opportunities afforded by the compact EV powertrain. The cabin is roomy, though the raked roofline impinges on rear-seat headroom. With no engine up front, the "hood" covers a useful luggage space, and the rear hatch opens to a cavernous load area that gets even bigger when you fold the rear seats flat. Total load capacity is 63.4 cubic feet, not that far shy of the 63.7 cubic-feet in a Chevy Equinox, and despite its rakish looks, the Model S is the first hatchback in the world to offer third-row seating.



Tesla offers three lithium-ion battery packs for the Model S –40-kW-hr, 60-kW-hr, and 85-kW-hr – that are claimed to provide ranges of 140, 200, and 265 miles, respectively. The base 85 kW-hr powertrain delivers a stout 362 hp and 325 lb-ft of torque, while the performance version makes 416 hp and 443lb-ft. The battery packs are assembled at Tesla's plant in Fremont, California, using Panasonic cells with nickel-cobalt Aluminum cathodes. Situated under the floor, the battery pack is a stressed member that further improves torsional rigidity, and helps lower the car's center of gravity to just 17.5 inches, about the same as a Ford GT's.

The Tesla Model S nails the formula established by the German brands that currently dominate the midsize luxury sedan sector. It's fast and great to drive. It's well-equipped and high-tech. It won't look out of place rolling up the drive of a leafy country club or at the curb of a hip hotel. It's a credible alternative to a Mercedes, BMW, or Audi for someone who lives in metroplexes such as Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, and Atlanta.

