

# how to BUY A LUXURY CAR

A super-smooth and quiet ride, supple leather upholstery, wood trim, power everything and chrome accents. These features used to be exclusive to luxury cars from Lincoln, Cadillac, Mercedes-Benz, Jaguar and others. Not anymore. You can find luxury cars with these features in just about every showroom you step into these days.

## What sets today's luxury cars apart?

In addition to all the above items, it is high technology that defines today's luxury cars. We're talking about such things as adaptive cruise control, which automatically keeps the car at a predetermined distance from the vehicle ahead, electronically controlled suspension systems, which make it nearly impossible to lose control of your car, a navigation system that gives you turn-by-turn directions to just about anywhere, a six-speed automatic transmission for better performance and fuel economy, and infrared night vision that projects the image of heat-emitting objects onto the windshield. Some cars even have voice recognition technology. You get the idea.

## Advanced technology

For some customers, all this technology can take a little getting used to. But it all adds up to a driving experience that is safer and less stressful. If you are not comfortable with so much computer power in a car, ask the salesperson to show you how to set the controls. Many automakers have worked hard to make this advanced technology simple to use, once you get used to

it. So don't be put off by unfamiliar switches and buttons. Once you learn how things work, using them will become second nature.

## Price points

If you are in the market for a true luxury car, then you'll be spending at least \$35,000, which is the price for most entry-level luxury vehicles. That amount will probably get you at least a 200-horsepower V-6 engine, a leather-trimmed interior, anti-lock brakes, traction control, numerous power accessories, side-impact air bags, automatic transmission and more.

Most V-8 powered luxury cars, domestic and imported, start at around \$43,000. A higher price usually means more horsepower, more room and more electronic gear. It may also mean exotic materials, such as aluminum body panels and carbon fiber or magnesium parts.



Don't expect to haggle too much over the price. Luxury cars are not mass produced the way other cars are.

And don't forget that luxury comes in many forms these days. There are luxury trucks, luxury SUVs, luxury minivans and wagons, and there are grand touring machines such as the Jaguar XK8 or Ford Thunderbird.

The National Automobile Dealers Association Web site, [www.nada.org](http://www.nada.org), is a good place to begin evaluating the luxury car market. The site not only offers specifications and prices, but also what the dealer pays for the car. This will help when it's time to make your luxury car purchase. ■



## TIPS

- Expect plenty of high-tech electronic gear. Ask the salesperson how to use it if you're unfamiliar.
- You can find luxury vehicles in just about every showroom. Many automakers' luxury vehicles are trucks or SUVs, but even Volkswagen now has a luxury vehicle, the \$75,000 Phaeton sedan.
- Expensive, exclusive luxury vehicles are usually the best ones to lease because of their higher resale values.
- Don't forget that luxury vehicles are going to be more expensive to insure and may have a bigger appetite for gasoline.
- Expect good service from high-end dealers.
- Don't expect to bargain down the price the way you would with an ordinary vehicle.