

TESLA

From \$109,000;
248-hp 375-Volt AC
electric motor;
0 to 60 in 4 seconds

The experience: The company gave me lots of warnings that my test car, which turned out to be founder Elon Musk's personal ride, was a somewhat shopworn test mule. So I was more that astonished to feel the superb power of the world's first production electric sports car. As Randy said, "It isn't swank in the way the others are, but it sure is exclusive." The chassis is derived from the Lotus Elise platform, making the tiny Tesla, with its eerily silent ride and one-gear transmission, playful, easy to slide around corners (despite heavy steering), and surprisingly well behaved considering its 35 front/65 rear weight balance (it has 1,000 pounds of batteries behind the driver). As I whizzed around and around, with the sound of rolling tires the signal of my coming down the straight, I realized that I had to rely on pure instinct to sense how much acceleration was enough and when to brake-my hands never had to leave the wheel or fidget with paddles. It was odd, yet oddly satisfying, to find Zen-like peace at the track.

The verdict: You get a fabulously pure experience of speed-and gobs of torque. And the satisfaction of being uniquely green. Bravo!

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