DaimlerChrysler now groups the Chrysler Sebring, Dodge Stratus, the former Sebring, and the Chrysler Cirrus under the same name. The new Sebring is available in sedan, coupe and convertible versions. We tested the sedan, designed to compete with the Honda Accord and Toyota Camry.

Interior and trunk

The low roof makes it hard to get in and out if you’re tall. The front seats are very comfortable, and drivers get a very good driving position. It is hard to judge distances when backing up, but the view is clear to the front and sides. Front and rear head room is tight for tall individuals.

The low cushion makes the rear bench rather uncomfortable. Leg room is adequate. The 60/40 split seatback is a nice touch.

Liftover to the roomy trunk is high, and the narrow opening seriously restricts the size of items that can be stowed inside. The hinges are located so as not to squash things in the trunk.

Convenience and safety features

The cabin is well finished but poorly soundproofed against road and engine noise. The glove box is small, but there are plenty of other roomy storage compartments. Surprisingly from this builder, the cup holders are made for just one beverage container size.

Instruments and controls are well located, except for the radio buttons. These are placed low under the air conditioner, and the driver has to take his eyes off the road longer than necessary to tune the radio. The climate system is very efficient and has big, easy to use buttons.

Safety equipment includes dual air bags, optional ABS, optional side air bags and bright headlights. The locking front head restraints can be adjusted to adequate height, but there are no head restraints at all in the rear. The ventilation grills reflect off the windshield.

Engine and transmission

The front-wheel-drive Sebring is powered by a 200-horsepower, 2.7-litre V-6. The engine is smooth and sufficiently powerful to provide lively, well-felt acceleration and safe passing. The V-6 is well adapted to the vehicle but noisy, particularly in acceleration.

The four-speed automatic transmission is very smooth, all the time. The transmission does not, however, let you start off in second gear.
On the road

The fully independent suspension is particularly well tuned. Rough sections are absorbed with a touch of firmness, and cornering is very good for a car devoid of the sporty pretensions of a Dodge Viper. The suspension has a solid, sturdy feel.

The well-tuned steering is stable, precise and relatively quick. It provides little information as to how the tires relate to the pavement. Braking is good all round.

An inspection at the CAA-Quebec technical inspection centre showed that the Sebring is well assembled. It has a block heater and a battery heater, the latter hard to reach behind the front left fender liner. Rustproofing could be better, however, and some joints are not sealed. The rear brakes have protective backing plates, but not the front.

Conclusion

The new Sebring is an interesting vehicle with a good price-quality ratio. To compete with its Japanese rivals, it will also have to prove reliable. As looks were prioritised over practicality, owners will have to put up with hard-to-reach seats.

FOR
Comfortable front seats
Pleasant ride
Road holding
Smooth transmission
Well-adapted V-6
Well-tuned steering

AGAINST
Difficult access
 Tight head room
Small trunk opening
Perfectible soundproofing
Low radio controls
High trunk liftover

2001 CHRYSLER SEBRING

| Engine: 16-valve, 2.4-litre 4-cylinder; 24-valve, 2.7-litre V-6 | Horsepower: 150 h.p. @ 5,200 rpm; 200 h.p. @ 5,900 rpm |
| Torque: 167 lb.-ft. at 4,000 rpm; 192 lb.-ft. @ 4,300 rpm | Transmission: 4-speed automatic |
| Suspension: fully independent | Brakes: 4-wheel disc |
| Length: 484.4 cm | Width: 179.3 cm |
| Height: 139.4 cm | Wheelbase: 274.3 cm |
| Weight: 1,479 to 1,507 kg | Tires: P205/65R15; P205/60R16 |
| Towing capacity: 450 kg | Air bags: standard front plus 4 optional side |

Fuel consumption:
- Transport Canada rating: city: 11.9 L/100 km (24 mpg); highway: 7.8 L/100 km (36 mpg)
- Test result: 11 L/100 (26 mpg)

Fuel tank capacity: 61 litres
**Acceleration:** 0-100 km/h : 8.8 seconds  60-100 km/h : 5.3 seconds

**Competition:** Daewoo Leganza, Honda Accord, Hyundai Sonata, Maza 626, Nissan Altima, Oldsmobile Alero, Pontiac Grand Am, Toyota Camry

**Maintenance (amount may vary from dealer to dealer):**
Frequency: 3 months/5,000 km; total cost to 100,000 km: $925

**Warranty:**
- Full basic coverage: 3 years/60,000 km
- Powertrain: 5 years/100,000 km
- Surface corrosion: 3 years/60,000 km
- Perforation damage: 5 years/unlimited mileage
- Emissions control system: 3 years/60,000 km (full coverage); 8 years/130,000 km (catalytic converter, electronic control module and onboard diagnostic device)

**Factory replacement parts:**
- Rear bumper: $514
- Brake pads: $253
- Front fender: $435
- Front brake disk: $48
- Muffler: $339 (including tailpipe)

**Average insurance premium** (Quebec City, replacement cost endorsement, claim-free insurance record, female driver or male driver 30 to 40 years old): $686 to $926

**Price according to trim line:**
- LX: $23,240
- LXi: $27,195

**Main options:**
- Option packages: $1,280 to $1,325
- ABS brakes: $515
- Sun roof: $895
- V-6: $930 (LX)
- Side air bags: $390

**Price as tested:** $26,450

**Freight and preparation:** $775

**Dealers:** Quebec: 157; Canada: 595

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