This new car is the first front-wheel-drive Mercedes available in Canada. Similar to a Mazda5 but a bit shorter, the B-Class comes in B200 and B200 Turbo versions. Its innovative sandwich architecture slants and positions the engine and transmission partially beneath the passenger compartment. Thanks to this layout, nearly 70% of the body length is dedicated to occupants and their cargo.

**Interior and trunk**

The sandwich structure makes the floor rather high, reducing the door opening height and requiring tall people to bend more than usual. Once inside, a comfortable front seat awaits, but one that would be more comfortable if the seat angle could be adjusted. In addition, the forward-and-back lever should be located on the door side to enable seat adjustment before getting in. The driving position would be better if a telescopic steering wheel were standard, since the driver is a bit far from the wheel when the legs are properly positioned.

Both front and rear door sills are wide, and collect dirt. Rear access is easy, and the bench can seat two adults. Head and legroom are generous. The seat and backrest split 60/40, and the seat must be lifted before folding the back down flat.

Trunk cargo capacity is a pleasant surprise. The liftgate opens wide, and the trunk floor adjusts to two different heights.
Convenience and safety

The interior features carefully assembled, good quality materials. Soundproofing is excellent. Apart from a refrigerated glovebox, a small drawer in the central console, and door pockets, there is little storage space, and total storage capacity is not particularly impressive. There should be seat pockets in the front seat backs. The cupholder in front of the shifter is not very practical.

The instruments and controls are well placed except for the windshield wiper control, which is on the turn signal lever, requiring the left hand to leave the steering wheel to activate the wipers. Note that the speedometer only displays kilometres. The heating system is a bit sluggish but provides good heat.

The horn works only when the key is in the ignition and in the accessories position. If the key is left in the ignition by mistake, the only warning is three timid chime sounds. Because the front roof pillars are much higher than the windshield, they trap snow. Accumulated snow can strain the wiper motor and prevent the wipers from completing their entire course.

As regards safety, the B200 boasts two front airbags, four side airbags, two front curtain airbags, two front side airbags for the head and chest, active front head restraints, four disc brakes with ABS, and an antiskid and traction control system. In addition, the bulk of the metal body structure consists of high or ultra-high resistance alloy steel, while the structural seam technology increases resistance to buckling. Thanks to the sandwich construction, occupants sit 20 cm higher than in a conventional sedan. In a side collision with a typical car, impact would occur at the sturdiest point of the B200. Visibility is good in all directions, but the rearview mirror creates a blind spot on the right side for tall people. Headlight power is good.

Engine and transmission

The 2 litre 4 cylinder puts out 134 hp and 136 pounds of torque. Acceleration is a bit slow off the mark but becomes better, as the engine revs up, providing quite adequate acceleration and pickup. At medium acceleration and higher, the engine is noisy. With the turbo engine, which puts out 190 hp and 206 pounds of torque, performance can be described as lively. In both cases, the engine keeps up the pace effortlessly.

The continuously variable transmission generally works very well. At times, especially when the engine is cold, the B200 shudders on starting and occasionally vibrates at constant speeds and when stopping. Sport mode really has no effect on acceleration. Manual mode lets the driver have fun shifting through seven virtual speeds. Acceleration is smoothest and most pleasant in comfort mode.
On the road

The suspension is firm but does not compromise occupant comfort, even on bumpy surfaces, delivering a smooth ride without jostling. The B200 provides the combination of flexibility and firmness that is the secret of German engineering. In light sports driving, the B200 maintains its course with ease on turns. Unfortunately, it is sensitive to side winds.

The power steering is well calibrated but a bit imprecise at the centre. Unlike in other Mercedes products, it returns to centre itself after a tight turn at low speed. It transfers fairly little road feel and has a rather short turn radius. The four disc brakes deliver average power but resist fading well.

An inspection at a CAA-Quebec technical centre showed that the underbody is sturdy and well protected from rust. However, the placement of the alternator under the engine raises concerns as to its longevity.

Conclusion

Comfortable, versatile, spacious, and fun to drive, this little Mercedes should easily find fans. However, first-time Mercedes owners will soon discover that the list of options can be long and surprising. For example, the intermittent windshield wiper cycle is fixed. To be able to vary the interval, the rain sensor option must be selected. A telescopic steering column and heated seats are also optional.

**PROS:** Roomy interior, smooth ride, comfortable seats, solid construction, peppy turbo engine, handling

**CONS:** Front seat access, wide door sills that can soil clothes, insufficient storage space, windshield wiper control to be reconsidered, high A pillars, many options

**MERCEDES-BENZ B200 2006**

**Engine:** 8-valve, 2.0-litre 4 cylinder; 8-valve, 2.0-litre 4 cylinder  
**Horsepower:** 134 hp at 5,750 rpm; 190 hp at 5,000 rpm  
**Torque:** 136 lb-ft. from 3,500 to 4,000 rpm; 206 lb-ft. from 1,800 to 4,850 rpm  
**Transmission:** 5 or 6 speed manual; CVT (continuously variable transmission)  
**Suspension:** Independent/semi-independent  
**Brakes:** Disc/disc  
**Length:** 427 cm  
**Width:** 177.7 cm  
**Height:** 160.4 cm  
**Wheelbase:** 277.8 cm
Weight: 1,270 kg
Tires: 205/55R16; 215/45R17
Towing capacity: not recommended
Air bags: Standard, plus four side and two curtain airbags

Fuel consumption with basic engine and CVT:
Transport Canada rating:
- City: 9.2 L/100 km (31 mpg)
- Highway: 7.2 L/100 km (39 mpg)
Test result: 9.3 L/100 km (30 mpg)
Test temperature: 12°C to −10°C

Fuel tank capacity: 54 litres

Fuel requirement: Super grade

Acceleration:
- 0–100 km/h: 9.8 seconds
- 60–100 km/h: 6.1 seconds

Competition: Audi A3, Volvo V50

Warranty:
- Full basic coverage: 4 years/80,000 km
- Powertrain: 4 years/80,000 km
- Surface corrosion: 4 years/80,000 km
- Perforation damage: 5 years/unlimited km
- Emissions control system: 4 years/80,000 km (full coverage);
  8 years/130,000 km (catalytic converter, electronic control module,
  onboard diagnostic system)

Factory replacement parts:
- Rear bumper: $666
- Front brake disc: $74
- Brake pads: $89
- Muffler: $360
- Front fender: $267

Average insurance premium (Quebec City, replacement cost endorsement, claim-free insurance record, male or female driver 30 to 40 years old): $918 to $1,249

Price according to trim line:
- Basic: $30,950
- Turbo: $34,950
Main options:
- Option groups: $1,200 to $2,000
- Electric-control front seats: $1,590
- Telescopic steering wheel: $235
- Navigation system: $3,685
- Heated front seats: $750
- CVT: $1,500

Price as tested: $33,650

Freight and preparation: $1,500

Dealers: Quebec: 8 Canada: 41

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