# The 2024 Alfa Romeo Tonale is a confoundingly charming plug-in hybrid

Enlarge / Alfa Romeo has a new crossover called the Tonale.
Jonathan Gitlin

## reader comments

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I don’t believe that Jeremy Clarkson was right when he said that you could only be a true petrolhead once you’d owned an Alfa Romeo, but the oafish TV presenter wasn’t *entirely* off-base. I’ve just spent a week with Alfa’s latest creation, the unfortunately named Tonale, and it has left me scratching my head. Beset by gremlins and not exactly cheap, it nonetheless charmed me in a way that I really don’t think would have happened if I’d been driving, say, a Dodge.

Once upon a time, Alfa Romeo was Ferrari before there really was a Ferrari, building Grand Prix-winning race cars and drop-dead gorgeous road cars. That feels like a very long time ago now. A planned resurgence, set in motion while the brand was under the control of the late Sergio Marchionne, has fallen far short of its original ambitious sales targets—100,000 Guilias a year, we were told at the time.

But the brand lives on, and it has an all-new model out. The Tonale is a smaller crossover than the Stelvio, and here in the US it is only available with a plug-in hybrid powertrain. It pairs a 180 hp (135 kW), 1.3 L four-cylinder gasoline engine that drives the front wheels via a six-speed automatic

transmission with a 121 hp (90 kW) electric motor that drives the rear wheels, fed by a 15.5 kWh lithium-ion battery.

Enlarge / The distinctive Verde Fangio green paint on our test Tonale was a $2,200 option.
Jonathan Gitlin

Combined total output is 285 hp (213 kW) and 347 lb-ft (470 Nm), although there’s also a 44-hp (33 kW) integrated starter motor that can add some torque to the engine’s crankshaft if the car’s brain thinks it necessary.

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There are three drive modes, as is now traditional with Alfas. Mode A just uses the electric motor, and you should get about 30 miles (49 km) on a full charge. Recharging the battery takes about 2.5 hours when plugged into a level 2 charger, or

about seven if you only have access to a 120 V socket.

D, or dynamic, is where most Alfas feel their best. Not the Tonale—this mode keeps the four-cylinder MultiAir engine running the whole time, and the little 1.3 L lump is not the most sonorous thing in the world. No, confusingly, this Alfa felt far better left in N. This mode will start off under electric power, feeding in the combustion engine as and when necessary. It’s a bit slower away from a stoplight, but it’s also a lot smoother.

Enlarge / The rear taillights continue the 3×3 theme.
Jonathan Gitlin

N (and A as well) also give you the softer of the two settings for the suspension dampers. You can manually switch over to the softer setting once you’re in D, and on most American

roads you’ll probably want to. Regardless of engine mode, the Tonale provides you with direct steering that helps hide the crossover’s 4,133 lb (1,875 kg) curb weight.

Sadly, real-world fuel efficiency fell several mpg short of the EPA estimate of a combined 29 mpg (8.11 L/100 km), but we also didn’t begin every day with a fully charged traction battery.

I mentioned gremlins earlier, and there were plenty. Immediately after picking up the Tonale we had to drive it through a moderately heavy rain storm, which caused some of the advanced driver assistance system sensors to freak out, taking out forward collision warning and automatic emergency braking, which remained unavailable at random times over the next three or four days.

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