



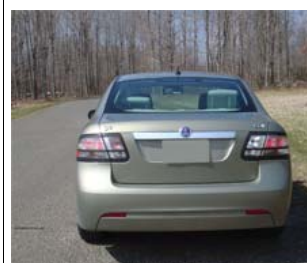
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2008 Saab 9-3 Sport Sedan

The Good :) Peppy and smooth turbo charged engine. Smart and sporty exterior design. Fun to drive. Long list of standard equipment. Good fuel economy.

The Bad :(Seats lack bolstering. Some low quality interior parts. Lacks soundproofing insulation.

| | | |
|-----------------|--|---|
| Engine | 4Cyl 2.0 Liter | Videos: A Video of this vehicle can be found at the bottom of this page. For higher quality click on the links below. Watch this vehicle in Quicktime format and watch on your iPod or watch our Podcast (.mov format) Click Here   YouTube Channel - Click Here To download this article in pdf format to your computer, click here. |
| Output | 210 hp @ 5500rpm 221lb-ft @ 2500rpm | |
| Top Speed | 140 mph | |
| 0-60 mph | 8 sec (est.) | |
| Weight | 3175 lbs | |
| Price As Tested | \$28,995 | |



Saab was founded in the 1940's as a subsidiary of a swedish airplane manufacturer and now is owned by GM. Its recent new product introductions will hopefully set the stage for a comeback of what could have become another lost cause. Total redesigns are what the customer demanded and now they are getting what they asked for. Recently the 9-3 was totally redesigned. Designers took a few pages from the past and made over 1000 exterior design enhancements for 2008 which should bring smiles to the faces of the most enthusiastic owners. Saab states that the design cues were taken from the Aero X concept that was awarded best-in-show in the 2006 Geneva auto show. However, anyone who has seen the Aero X concept will not see many similarities with the 9-3 except on the front end. Instead we feel that Saab has tried to go back and bring the essence of a Saab back to life. Sales have picked up by 12% this March for Saab telling us that making new products helps most when selling cars.

Going back in time to get design inspirations has been done very successfully with iconic brands such as Porsche, and Saab is in the same league with a hard-core fan base that is spread around the world. With the all new 9-3, Saab is back with an impressive package that includes a smart sporty exterior and a comfortable well appointed interior. Combine this with a responsive turbo charged engine and we got a very compelling package that takes on premium brands such as BMW and Audi.

Perhaps what is best about the new Saab 9-3 is the 4-cylinder 2.0 liter engine. It may appear small however it is very potent and responsive thanks to the turbo charger which has a maximum boost pressure of 12.3 PSI. The engine produces 210 horsepower and 221 ft. lb. of torque at only 2500 RPM. Shifting into first and steeping on the gas reveals just how quick and smooth this engine is. We found ourselves going at highway speeds quickly with a quiet and silky smooth ride. The only drawback to changing gears manually is that you better be sure you're in the right gear otherwise you may find yourself steeping on the gas without any response from the engine. The turbo works well over 2500 RPM so we rarely found the need to use 6th gear unless we were cruising on the highway over eighty. The sound of the turbo charger is quite nice and gives the driver a sense of driving a sports car as opposed to a mid-size sedan. The shifter on the transmission is a bit notchy and does not have the short throws that we would like for sporty driving and perhaps this should be changed. Fuel economy is listed at 19 city and 29 highway and our mixed driving gave us about 25mpg overall which was descent.

The power assist rack and pinion steering was precise and provided good road feedback. The front suspension is a McPherson strut setup with gas shock absorbers and an anti-roll bar. The rear suspension is an independent four-link setup with coil springs and gas shock absorbers as well as an anti-roll bar. We felt that the suspension was set perfectly for everyday driving. For the sportier driver body lean is controlled and dive and squat are relatively low for such a comfortable car. The swedish must have some long and wide open roads to make a vehicle that is this relaxed inside. Only a bit of road noise enters the cabin though we did not like the air that would leak in from the door handles and window switches. Stopping power comes via the four-wheel disc brakes that have 11.14 inch rotors in front and 10.87 inch in rear. The car stops quite well with little dive and best of all there is little brake dust on your wheels. The car rides on 16 inch alloy wheels in a 14 spoke design which are wrapped in 215/55 R16 all-season tires.

Completely redesigned for 2008, the 9-3 is modern with cues of the iconic Saab heritage that so many people have come to love. The front now has a prominent semi-overwrap hood, a tradition that started with the 1967 Saab 99. The new three-port front grill is bold and attractive. For anyone looking in their rearview mirror, the new 9-3's front-end clearly makes a statement that this is a performance oriented car. The headlights have thin eyebrow lighting on top of the main beams, a design cue being introduced in many makes now. Here it looks particularly simple and good. The curved front headlamps are very attractive and feature projector beam halogen headlamps that stare down at you like eyes. They provided good night time visibility and somehow looked like xenon lights even when our car wasn't equipped with them. However, Xenon cornering headlamps are available as an option and they provide an additional beam that lights up when turning to brighten

up dark spots on the road.

Viewing the body from the side shows a beautiful profile with smooth door panels and a perfect proportion from front to back. The doors now have body color door handles which look really nice. The wraparound windshield is classic Saab and resembles an aircraft windshield but is less rounded than in the older models. The 9-3 sits low to the ground which gives it a more aggressive and sporty look and feel. The 16-inch wheels have a 14-spoke design and are very fitting on the 9-3. There is very little wheel gap and this makes the wheels look much larger than they really are. The rear has what Saab calls Ice block like tail lamps to give it a Nordic feel. The clear tail-lamps are surrounded with black borders which we did not like. The large one piece bumper is attractive and features rear fog lamps as well. The muffler and exhaust tips are not visible in our model and this is something we haven't seen before. If you upgrade to the 9-3 Aero version then there are two large exhaust tips protruding through the lower section of the rear bumper. We prefer the smooth rear end of the 9-3 Sport Sedan which conceals all pipes.

The interior has a pleasant driver oriented layout. The color scheme is also attractive with ivory leather seats contrasting with the black steering wheel and dash. The driver's seat is 8-way power adjustable but unfortunately someone left this out on the passenger seat. Power windows, power door locks and powered and heated outside mirrors are all standard. The steering wheel has a nice sporty grip but is a little too smooth and slippery. It is both tilt and telescoping to fit every type of driver. There are also volume and station control buttons on the right side on the steering wheel and computer information and phone buttons on the left side. The computer shows ambient temperature, fuel mileage, and estimated distance on remaining fuel. It also includes distance to destination, estimated time of arrival, and speed warning.

Something unique in the 9-3 is the position for inserting the key. This is located right in the center in-between the seats, instead of on the steering column. Just insert the pug nosed electronic key into center port to start the car. We wonder why the key has to be inserted at all since it's electronic; why not just have a start button and keep the key in your pocket. However this is a 'Saab thing' loved by all old time Saab enthusiasts and we thought it was great. The instrument cluster is nicely designed with a large center speedometer surrounded by two smaller circles on each side. To the left is a RPM gauge and to the right is a gas, engine temp and turbo boost gauge. At night the interior instruments glow in a soft green color. There is a night panel button that turns off some of the interior lights except for the center speedometer, something akin to what airplane pilots do when flying at night.

The center dash is very straightforward and all the functions are easy to use. There is chrome trim around each dial which gives an upscale look, however, a wood or aluminum dash would have been nice in this price range. The AM/FM/CD stereo system puts out 150 watts of power and has seven speakers. The system also has an auxiliary input jack so you can plug in your iPod or MP3 player. Another nice feature is the cup holder that pops out of the dash with a push of a button. Below this are three dials for the automatic dual zone climate control and the fan speed. The 9-3 also has heated seats that worked pretty well. We like the overall design of the interior as its pretty unique and stands apart from all other cars on the market today. The glove box is simply huge and almost double the size of that found in the BMW 3-series. It is also cooled using the climate control system and can be chilled to 45 degrees. This is a fantastic idea and very useful during this long hot summer days on the road.

There are certain parts of the interior that felt as low quality as typical GM vehicles, such as the door handles, the plastic trim around the interior door frame that shakes, and the squeaky windows that make noise when you raise and lower them. We also found air leaks in the door and noticed that air also came into the car from the interior door handle and power window switch. This was very strange and we have never seen something like this before. Perhaps GM got too much control and started adding low cost parts into what should have been a well-built luxury mid-size sedan that competes with BMW and Audi. Another negative was that the seats are very soft, almost like a sofa, and this doesn't "sit" well during long trips or sporty trips.

Rear passenger legroom at 35.1 inches is slightly better than in the BMW 3-series. Rear headroom is listed at 37 inches. There is only about two inches of headroom in back for an adult 5'10" as the roof slightly slopes downward towards the rear. The headrests are just way too hard and feel like a brick. There is a center armrest that makes it somewhat comfortable in back. An interesting design element is that the cup holder is built into the seat in the center as opposed to being in the folding armrest. The rear seats are split folding and the center armrest has a pass-through which makes it convenient to fit long items like skis. The trunk is very large and could fit about three large hard-shell suitcases. Cargo volume is listed at 15 cubic feet.

The Saab 9-3 Sport Sedan in 2007 was awarded as a top pick by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. The 9-3 comes with a host of safety features that makes it one of the safest cars on the road today. Included are Electronic Stability Program (ESP) and traction control. Also included are driver and front passenger airbags with head curtain side impact air bags on both front and rear. Tire pressure monitoring system is also standard and displays a light on the instrument cluster if it senses low pressure. The 9-3 comes with anti-lock brakes with mechanical brake assist which helps the driver keep control of the car. There is a 5-year/100,000 mile powertrain limited warranty and a 4-year/50,000 new vehicle warranty. Also included is a no charge scheduled maintenance for 3-years/36,000 miles.

Most parts for this vehicle come from Germany, taking 37% and Sweden offering 23%. The final assembly point is Trollhattan, Sweden. The engine and transmission both are from Germany.

The Saab 9-3 Sport Sedan starts at \$27,640 and our car had the Moonroof Package for \$1200 that includes the power tilt/slide moonroof, remote open for windows and moonroof with the key fob, and express up front windows. Also added was the Cold Weather Package for \$550 that includes heated front seats and high pressure headlamp washers. The Pepper Green metallic paint cost \$550. Destination charge is now \$745 thanks to the high fuel prices which brings the total to \$30,685. A surprising note is that many buyers have been able to get this for around \$1500 under invoice which brings the cost closer to \$28,000. There is currently a \$2500 cash-to-dealer rebate so the dealer still pockets money even if he sells it for invoice. If you are seriously interested in buying a 2008 9-3, ask for the full \$2500 off invoice which should get to you \$27000. This is



considerably less than a BMW 3 series which would have an MSRP of around \$36,000. The Saab is starting to look a lot better when you compare the two cars side by side. A savings of about \$8000 is a lot of money that you can set aside to get another toy like a brand new Ducati sport bike or a complete new home entertainment system. Why not enjoy life and be smart while you do it.



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| PRICING | INVOICE | RETAIL |
|--|----------|----------|
| Base Pricing | \$26,620 | \$28,080 |
| Destination | \$745 | \$745 |
| U3R Navigation System | \$2,528 | \$2,840 |
| PCM Premium Package | \$1,509 | \$1,695 |
| MM1 Sentronic 5-Speed Automatic Transmission | \$1,323 | \$1,350 |
| PCJ Moonroof Package | \$1,068 | \$1,200 |

| COMPARISONS | 2008 Saab 9-3 | 2008 Acura TL | 2008 Audi A4 | 2008 BMW 3 Series | 2008 Cadillac CTS |
|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| | 2.0T 4dr Sedan (2.0L 4cyl Turbo 6M) | 4dr Sedan (3.2L 6cyl 5A) | 2.0T quattro AWD (2.0L 4cyl Turbo 6A) | 328i 4dr Sedan (3.0L 6cyl 6M) | 4dr Sedan (3.6L 6cyl 6A) |
| MSRP | \$28,080 | \$33,725 | \$32,300 | \$32,400 | \$35,045 |
| Invoice | \$26,620 | \$30,991 | \$30,041 | \$29,810 | \$32,767 |
| Destination Charge | \$745 | \$715 | \$775 | \$775 | \$745 |
| Basic | 4 yr. / 50000 mi. | 4 yr. / 50000 mi. | 4 yr. / 50000 mi. | 4 yr. / 50000 mi. | 4 yr. / 50000 mi. |
| Drivetrain | 5 yr. / 100000 mi. | 6 yr. / 70000 mi. | 4 yr. / 50000 mi. | 4 yr. / 50000 mi. | 5 yr. / 100000 mi. |
| Roadside | 5 yr. / 100000 mi. | 4 yr. / 50000 mi. | 4 yr. / Unlimited mi. | 4 yr. / Unlimited mi. | 5 yr. / 100000 mi. |
| Rust | 10 yr. / Unlimited mi. | 5 yr. / Unlimited mi. | 12 yr. / Unlimited mi. | 12 yr. / Unlimited mi. | 6 yr. / Unlimited mi. |
| Base Engine Type & Cylinders | inline 4 | V6 | inline 4 | inline 6 | V6 |

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|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Base Engine Displacement | 2.0 liters | 3.2 liters | 2.0 liters | 3.0 liters | 3.6 liters |
| Valvetrain | 16 Valves double overhead cam (DOHC) | 24 Valves single overhead cam (SOHC) | 16 Valves double overhead cam (DOHC) | 24 Valves double overhead cam (DOHC) | 24 Valves double overhead cam (DOHC) |
| Compressor | turbocharger | Not Available | turbocharger | Not Available | Not Available |
| Horsepower | 210 hp @ 5500 rpm | 258 hp @ 6200 rpm | 200 hp @ 5100 rpm | 230 hp @ 6500 rpm | 304 hp @ 6400 rpm |
| Torque | 221 ft-lbs. @ 2500 rpm | 233 ft-lbs. @ 5000 rpm | 207 ft-lbs. @ 1800 rpm | 200 ft-lbs. @ 2750 rpm | 273 ft-lbs. @ 5200 rpm |
| Drivetrain | 9-3 | TL | A4 | 3 Series | CTS |
| Driven Wheels | front wheel drive | front wheel drive | all wheel drive | rear wheel drive | rear wheel drive |
| One-Touch Power Windows | 2 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Front Air Conditioning Zones | dual | dual | dual | dual | dual |
| Navigation System | DVD navigation system - Optional | Not Available | DVD navigation system w/voice activation - Optional | DVD navigation system w/voice activation - Optional | hard drive navigation system - Optional |
| Turning Circle | 39 ft. | 39.7 ft. | 36.4 ft. | 36.1 ft. | 36 ft. |
| Hauling | 9-3 | TL | A4 | 3 Series | CTS |
| Length | 182.9 in. | 189.3 in. | 180.6 in. | 178.2 in. | 191.6 in. |
| Width | 69 in. | 72.2 in. | 69.8 in. | 71.5 in. | 72.5 in. |
| Height | 57.1 in. | 56.7 in. | 56.2 in. | 55.9 in. | 58 in. |
| Weight | 3175 lbs. | 3623 lbs. | 3660 lbs. | 3340 lbs. | Being Researched |
| Wheel Base | 105.3 in. | 107.9 in. | 104.3 in. | 108.7 in. | 113.4 in. |
| Ground Clearance | 5.9 in. | 5.8 in. | 4.2 in. | Being Researched | Being Researched |
| Interior | 9-3 | TL | A4 | 3 Series | CTS |
| Front Headroom | 38.9 in. | 38.7 in. | 37.9 in. | 38.5 in. | 38.8 in. |
| Rear Headroom | 37 in. | 37.2 in. | 37.1 in. | 37.5 in. | 37.2 in. |
| Front Shoulder Room | 56.3 in. | 58.3 in. | 55.1 in. | 55.4 in. | 56.7 in. |
| Rear Shoulder Room | 55.1 in. | 55.7 in. | 53.4 in. | 55.1 in. | 54.7 in. |
| Front Leg Room | 42.3 in. | 42.8 in. | 41.3 in. | 41.5 in. | 42.4 in. |
| Rear Leg Room | 35.1 in. | 34.9 in. | 34.3 in. | 34.6 in. | 35.9 in. |

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|------------|--------------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Maximum Luggage Capacity | 15 cu. ft. | 12.5 cu. ft. | 13.4 cu. ft. | 12 cu. ft. | 13.6 cu. ft. |
|---------------------------------|------------|--------------|--------------|------------|--------------|

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