

# Alfa Romeo 166

Featuring 2.0 Twin Spark



## SCORECARD

Overtaking / pulling power

●●●○

Fuel economy

●●●○

Handling / steering

●●●●○

Comfort / ease of control

●●●○

Interior space / practicality

●●●○

Accident / injury avoidance

●●●○

Costs in service

●●●○

Depreciation prospects

●●○○

**A**LFA ROMEO HAS ALWAYS MADE CARS that are something special – cars to stir the soul and ignite the passions. Trouble is, they've invariably been flawed geniuses up to now, with a long-arm/short-legged driving position, build quality to match their hot-headed Latin temperament and a mechanical frailty. All these formed part of the character that Alfa enthusiasts craved, *despite* the limitations.

Recently, though, Alfa has reinvented itself. First came the delectable GTV coupé and drop-top Spider, then the highly acclaimed 156, gunning for BMW's 3-Series. Now Alfa's executive flagship, the 166, aims to upstage the 5-Series and convince us that the "ultimate driving machine" doesn't have to be built in Bavaria.

Under the 166's sleepy-eyed nose, there's a choice of 2.5 or 3-litre V6 power (it wouldn't be an Alfa without them) or Alfa's two-litre Twin Spark gem. Aided by two spark plugs per cylinder (hence its name), variable intake geometry and valve timing, together with a pair of balancer shafts to tune out vibration, this technical *tour de force* pumps out a hearty but also highly civilised 155bhp. This proves

adequate, but never over-abundant, in propelling this 134mph, enthusiast-oriented executive express.

Packaging doesn't win any prizes for a big, front-wheel drive car. The cabin is stylish and well built, and the driving position thoroughly sorted. But weighty controls (the clutch in particular) make this very much a "man's car", while the sleek, high-tailed looks not only put headroom at a premium, but also make reversing an art form.

A sportingly solid ride combined with super-quick steering gives the 166 alert, agile composure, but its tremory tautness (in stark contrast to the Rover 75's soft, floaty style, for example), only really subsides on smooth motorways.

Once meticulous in shooting itself in the foot, Alfa has been missing that particular target a lot lately. The 166 Twin Spark may lack a little in headroom, outright urge and ultimate ride refinement, but it has quality stamped through it like no Alfa before. It has driver appeal in abundance, too, and even quite respectable fuel economy, provided you don't cane it. The ultimate driving machine? Almost.

HOW THE ALFA 166 COMPARES	Engine cap/power (cc/bhp)	Revs at 70mph (rpm)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	Fuel economy (mpg)	Brakes† best stop (m/kg)	Maximum legroom - front (cm)	Typical leg/kneeroom - rear (cm)	Steering turns/ (p) circle (m)	Overall length (cm)
ALFA ROMEO 166 2.0 TWIN SPARK	1970/155	3500	9.6	24.3/16.7	29	27½/18	110	103/76	2.3/11.9	472
BMW 520i	1991/150	3280	9.8	26.9/19.7	33	23½/18	116	103/76	3.0/11.0	478
Jaguar S-Type 3.0 V6	2967/240	2825	8.0	22.2/16.7	23½	24½/22	111	102/77	2.7/11.5	486
Rover 75 2.5 V6 (automatic)	2497/177	2540	9.3	N/A	28	24½/22	114	100/77	3.2/11.4	475
Saab 9-5 2.0t	1985/150	2560	9.5	30.7/16.3	31½	25½/32	110	103/78	2.9/11.0	481
Volvo S80 2.9 (automatic)	2922/204	2500	8.3	N/A	24	25½/20	112	114/80	3.0/11.6	482
						† all with ABS	(p) all power-assisted			

## PERFORMANCE

### Acceleration time in seconds

mph	30	40	50	60	70
<b>THROUGH THE GEARS</b>		1.7	3.9	6.5	9.6
<b>IN 5TH GEAR</b>		6.6	12.7	18.3	24.3
<b>IN 4TH GEAR</b>		4.5	8.3	12.6	16.7

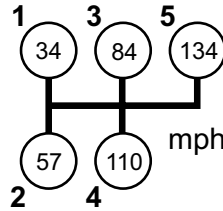
20 mph	30	40	50	60	70
<b>5TH/4TH SPEED RANGES</b>		13.8/9.5		11.7/8.1	
			12.7/8.		11.6/8.4

### Maximum speeds

REVS PER MINUTE	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
		7000*		7000	6710

\* for best acceleration

Gearing gives 20.0mph per 1000rpm in top = 3500rpm at 70mph



## FUEL CONSUMPTION

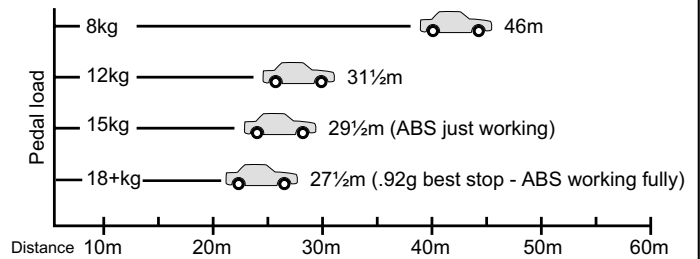
Fuel grade: 95 octane, unleaded Premium	
<b>Type of use - air conditioning off*</b>	<b>mpg</b>
In the city - heavy traffic	18
In the country - quiet driving	42
<b>Typical mpg overall</b>	<b>29</b>
Realistic tank range† litres/420miles	66

\*with air conditioning switched on, consumption will increase by 2–4% in winter and 4–8% in summer

## BRAKES

Pedal feel ●●○○○ Behaviour in an emergency ●●○○○ Handbrake ●●●○○

Dry road stopping distance from 50mph (with standard ABS)  
(A good-to-average best stop is about 26m at 15-20kg pedal load)

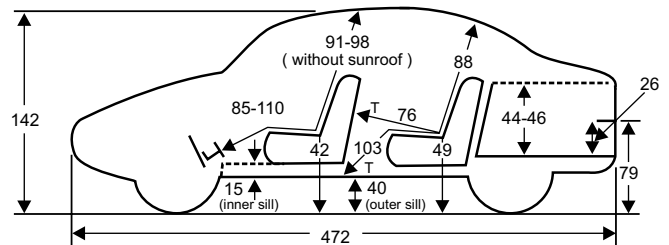


Fade test: pedal load required for a moderate (34m/.75g) stop:  
8kg at start of test, 13kg at end of test (Ideal brakes show no change)

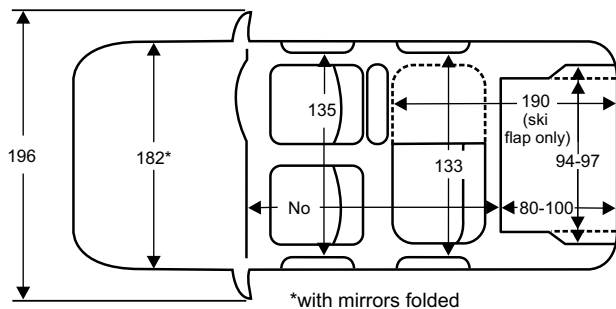
## MEASUREMENTS

Centimetres

Four-door saloon



T: typical back seat space behind medium-sized front occupants



\*with mirrors folded

## LIKES AND GRIPES

- Swift, smooth engine – quiet cruiser, too ... but it's doleful at lower revs
- Convenient switchgear ... but clutch pedal pad awkwardly angled
- Neat stowage areas in fascia and rear shelf ... but glovebox small and no drinks holders
- Comfortable seats for most people ... but not for the portly or short-legged
- Ski-flap caters for long objects ... but back seats don't fold for more boot space
- Neat boot lock ... but it's key-only opening