



Maserati 3200 GT



AT A GLANCE

considering size, price and rivals

Controls/displays	★ ★ ○ ○ ○
Handling/steering	★ ★ ★ ○ ○
Comfort	★ ★ ★ ○ ○
Space/practicality	★ ★ ★ ★ ○

THE 3200 GT RANGE

body 2-door sports coupé
trim levels one only
engine petrol: 3.2 V8 370bhp/362 lb ft
drive rear-wheel drive, 6-speed manual
auto option 5-speed electronic
notable features twin turbochargers, air conditioning, electric front seats (memory extra), leather, normal/sport suspension, traction control. Options: alarm, cruise control

LIKES AND GRIPES

lack of temperament at low speed
 easily tailored driving position
 shapely individual back seats
 "what is it?" rarity value

no spare wheel, just an aerosol inflator
 driveline shunt - automatic better
 limited rearward vision
 reflections in instruments



THE GIUGIARO-STYLED 3200 GT is the first genuinely new Maserati since the Biturbo of the early 1980s, and is built in Modena under Ferrari's watchful eye. While the Prancing Horse parent company concentrates on ultra high-performance sports cars, its trident-toting protégé concerns itself with the more elegant and conservative motorway mile-eating *gran turismo* models.

Not that there's anything conservative about the coupé's performance, thanks to its gorgeous-sounding 3.2-litre twin-turbo V8 engine that pumps out a mighty 370bhp. Mated to a positive-cum-notch six-speed gearbox and a weighty, firm-biting clutch, it slingshots the Maser from 0 to 60mph in just under 5sec and (they say) will scorch on to 174mph. We couldn't confirm these figures on just a brief test drive, but it does feel startlingly quick beyond 2500 revs.

Acceleration is, in fact, decidedly abrupt because the drive-by-wire throttle lacks fine progression – this also makes it easy to stall the engine. The automatic model proves helpful in providing a more cushioned driveline and eliminates the longish reach for the gear lever. It has an altogether more genial nature.

We couldn't feel any difference between the suspension's normal and sports settings. Around town the ride is uncomfortably firm and thumpy – the ultra low-profile tyres don't help – but once the car's up to speed on the open road, the driver appreciates the taut feel, tenacious

grip and brisk steering. The brakes would be impressive, too, if it weren't for the disconcertingly long pedal travel before they bite in earnest.

Inside, the climate-controlled cabin is elegantly trimmed with leather and alcantara suede. Headroom is just adequate for six-footers and the driving position can be electronically adjusted to suit most tastes. The cushions could be a little larger, however, and the pedals are a bit too close together for size 10s.

Surprisingly, considering the coupé's flowing fastback styling, this is actually a genuine four-seater – just, and provided neither the passengers nor the journey is too long. Trying to shoehorn four lots of luggage into the sensibly shaped boot isn't on, though.

In September, the car's warranty is being extended from two to three years, or 60,000 miles. At present there are just 16 dealers in the UK.

VERDICT

The 3200 GT has all the right grand touring car credentials, so more's the pity that it's flawed by several mechanical shortcomings (the throttle and brakes, for example) that detract from what is otherwise an admirable car. Until the rough edges are smoothed away, the more affable automatic will remain our favourite of the two models available.

VITAL STATISTICS (cm)

length x width (exc mirrors)	451x182
front - legroom	84-108
- headroom (<i>no sunroof</i>)	89-93
rear - typical legroom	83
- typical kneeroom	60
- headroom	86
- hiproom	126
load space (all seats in use) (litres/cu ft)	245/8.6
load length	35-60
load width	101-127
load sill (inside/outside)	14/63
boot height	45