
good epa for a car What car to get for 300 mile/week highway commute?

Posted by Cory Dunkle - 2008/05/13 18:55

My girlfriend is looking for a car... Both of us would like for her to get a classic car, but given her commute that may not be practical for mileage given today's gas prices. She decided she definitely doesn't like living at college due to the types of people living with her. She is considering getting a single dorm to not have a roommate, but would prefer to commute and wants a car either way. Her commute would be 100 miles a day (50 each way) 3 times a week, with 90% of that being highway driving at 65-80 MPH. So 300 miles a week, practically all highway. Depending on how much her parents contribute her budget is anywhere from \$2,500-\$5,000. Cheaper is always better... She originally (before deciding to commute to school) was looking at older Lincolns, in the '68-'80 range. With this commute, the mileage of such cars is not going to be that practical. I was thinking since we both like old cars something like a 200 or 240 cube I6 Mustang/Falcon/Comet would be a nice car. She likes the mid '60s Falcons a good bit. Any suggestions on classic cars in that price range that get good mileage (20+) would be appreciated. Also, any input on that would be great too. Probably not going to get a classic, but knowing the options and practicality is good, just in case a good deal comes up. On a classic I can do most repairs myself. The idea would be to spend more money now for a solid frame and body with minimal rust, and have a engine/trans in good condition. Something that would be practical, enjoyable as a classic, and would retain it's value whenever she sells it to get her Lincoln, or whatever suites her tastes in years to come. So now onto where I really need the help. New cars. I recommended to her that a newer compact sedan would probably be the best bet. Some import in the '85-'90 range with a 4 cyl would do good on mileage and be fairly reliable I believe. We are open to anything though. Mileage requirement of such a modern car would prefer to be 28+, but again, open to consider anything is it's a good car. She would prefer an automatic trans, though is willing to learn a manual. Personally I think it's best to stick with an automatic for the time being as she's still fairly new to driving and only recently got reasonably good at it. What relatively modern cars would be good for this commute within the given price range and have good mileage? Any suggestions are welcome, as well as any information. I'm particularly interested in what American cars would be practical and reliable for her use. Though I am personally leaning towards an 'older' econo-box type import for reliability and mileage reasons, I'd like to be educated about the American options. One option her mother was thinking about was giving her dad's car and having her dad get a newer car of his own liking. His car is a '93 Toyota Camry station wagon with the 3.0 V6. It has ~185,000 miles IIRC. Recently had axles replaced, has been taken good care of and been a reliable car. Has had practically no non-routine items to be fixed/repared. What sort of reliability issues might this car have at it's current age with the given commute? How about timing belt/chain? If it's a belt that is definitely a concern, if it's a chain then it may be fine for a while longer. But then again I know nothing about Japanese cars, let alone modern ones, so please let me know what concerns there might be with this one. Thanks a lot for any and all information... This is an area where I know nothing about. If it were me getting a new car for a commute like this I'd just get the cheapest 4 cyl I could find and drive it till it had a major failure, then get another one to replace it. But this is my girlfriend and I want her to have something nice that she will like, or at least not dislike, that will be reliable and not end up costing a fortune in eitehr repairs or gas. Thanks again. Cory

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Posted by Nathan Nagel - 2008/05/13 18:55

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leaning towards an 'older' econo-box type import for reliability and mileage reasons, I'd like to be educated about the American options. One option her mother was thinking about was giving her dad's car and having her dad get a newer car of his own liking. His car is a '93 Toyota Camry station wagon with the 3.0 V6. It has ~185,000 miles IIRC. Recently had axles replaced, has been taken good care of and been a reliable car. Has had practically no non-routine items to be fixed/repared. What sort of reliability issues might this car have at it's current age with the given commute? How about timing belt/chain? If it's a belt that is definitely a concern, if it's a chain then it may be fine for a while longer. But then again I know nothing about Japanese cars, let alone modern ones, so please let me know what concerns there might be with this one. Thanks a lot for any and all information... This is an area where I know nothing about. If it were me getting a new car for a commute like this I'd just get the cheapest 4 cyl I could find and drive it till it had a major failure, then get another one to replace it. But this is my girlfriend and I want her to have something nice that she will like, or at least not dislike, that will be reliable and not end up costing a fortune in eitehr repairs or gas. Thanks again. Cory I'd recommend a VW Golf, early (small bumper) A2 series, but I'm sure you'll get other opinions. Just happens to be what I grew up with so I can fix most stuff on them myself or at least know enough not to get shafted by whoever I pay to fix it. A Bentley shop manual (accept no substitutes) is a must have accessory if you do get one. Do not buy a VW with an auto trans unless it's been rebuilt by someone who knows what they're doing - they have a nasty habit of swapping fluids between the gearbox and final drive. Not good for either component. The Camry is a good car too, guy I work with had one that he drove into the ground and it lasted over 200K miles with iffy maintenance. I believe it does have a timing belt so you may want to look into that. good luck nate

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Posted by Timothy J. Lee - 2008/05/13 18:55

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Posted by Toastmaster - 2008/05/13 18:55

I'd suggest a Honda Civic coupe but I know how you feel about those inferior jap cars.... But I think if she wants a reliable car, giving good gas mileage and she can have at least some fun driving from point A to point B, I have to suggest pretty much any car in the Honoyota line-up =)

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Posted by Decimal Cat - 2008/05/13 18:55

snipped If you can find one around your area, a used Subaru from the early 90's would be good. A 90-94 Loyale is a fairly inexpensive car, doesn't rust out *too* bad in comparison to some of it's earlier GL counterparts, and aside from the normal stuff you'd expect from a car of that age (tires, brakes probably, CV joints, etc) they're good sturdy cars that last a long time, and go great in the snow if you get a 4WD model. One with under 150000 miles on the clock would be preferable. They're even fairly nice for an econo car - come with power windows, power door locks, cassette player and more all as standard equipment. Mine has 118K on it, and it gets about 28 MPG highway/25 MPG city. However, if you can afford a couple thousand more, go for a Subaru Legacy of that vintage - sturdier built, and most of them had AWD as a standard feature, rather than the on-demand 4WD the Loyales had (which I prefer over AWD, but to each his own). I used to drive 120 miles round-trip every day, mostly highway. My Loyale has only ever quit on me on the road twice, once when the fan belts snapped (my fault for not checking them for cracks, they were the originals on the car) and I had to pull over and call for help, and once a few weeks ago when the starter gave out (also the original one on the car) and it was still possible to start the car by jumping the relay. As someone else in this thread stated, yep, Hondas are good too, from what I've heard, but I've never owned or driven one. Anyway, like I said, if you can afford it, grab yourself a nice 93 or so Legacy with low miles. It'll last quite a while, gets respectable mileage, fits pretty well within your budget, and it comes in auto and manual flavors. Might want to have an independent mechanic who knows Subarus look the car over before you buy, though, to see if there are any major problems. I'd recommend getting a

new Subaru, but they're a bit pricey. . There you go. Free advice, and worth every penny. ;) Good luck!

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Posted by LauraK - 2008/05/13 18:55

Saab. Get a 1989-1995 900 or 9000 with the 4-cylinder turbo. Very economical (I get 30MPG plus on the highway in my 1995 9000; 27mpg around town); fun to drive (excellent handling, turbo is really, really good.) and holds a ton of stuff (hatchback). You should be able to find a good one in her budget. I went from a Lincoln Mark VIII to the Saab and the Saab is much more pleasant to drive, particularly on long trips. Very comfortable seats. Saab also has a great safety record which may cut her insurance rates. If you're doing the work on the car yourself, there's plenty of sources for parts and lots of help on the internet. Try www.saabnet.com lau...@madmousergraphics.com <http://www.madmousergraphics.com> web design, print design, photography

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Posted by Ricardo - 2008/05/13 18:55

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Posted by Bob G - 2008/05/13 18:55

way) 3 times a week, with 90% of that being highway driving at 65-80 MPH. So 300 miles a week, practically all highway. Depending on how much her parents contribute her budget is anywhere from \$2,500-\$5,000. Cheaper is always better... Somehow I think you are confusing the terms Classic and OLD... or maybe Collectable I own and drive..NOT DAILY... 5 older Corvettes and a mid 60's Chevelle... All honestly would satisfy your intended usage and would be completely reliable...BUT even after one year the value of the cars would be shot to hell... even if you never had to deal with wet roads not to mention snow sleet etc... If you really want this type of car fine...they can be maintained easily and can be just as reliable as a new car... BUT your budget is just not realistic... a project Mustang, Camerro, Chevelle, or Barracuda will bust your budget before you even attempt to put the key in the ignition... Just finding a Lincoln would become a full time job... Go look for a 10 year old Honda or something... when you get out of college or have dispoible income and want to play with classics, or collectable cars then go for it... BUT NOT NOW.... Your are however correct that these cars are extremely cheap to own... I have driven many for 3 to 5 years gotten a ton of pure pleasure from them and resold them for more then I paid plus what I put into them... Almost like being paid to own and drive a car... Lots of luck... Bob Griffiths

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Posted by Victor Smith - 2008/05/13 18:55

My girlfriend is looking for a car... Both of us would like for her to get a classic car, but given her commute that may not be practical for mileage given today's gas prices. She decided she definitely doesn't like living at college due to the types of people living with her. She is considering getting a single dorm to not have a roommate, but would prefer to commute and wants a car either way. Her commute would be 100 miles a day (50 each way) 3 times a week, with 90% of that being highway driving at 65-80 MPH. So 300 miles a week, practically all highway. Depending on how much her parents contribute her budget is anywhere from \$2,500-\$5,000. Cheaper is always better... For that price range a Chevy Corsica with the 2.2 is a good bet. @34mpg highway. Regular gas.

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Posted by Me - 2008/05/13 18:55

My girlfriend is looking for a car... Both of us would like for her to get a classic car, but given her commute that may not be practical for mileage given today's gas prices. She decided she definitely doesn't like living at college due to the types of people living with her. She is considering getting a single dorm to not have a roommate, but would prefer to commute and wants a car either way. Her commute would be 100 miles a day (50 each way) 3 times a week, with 90% of that being highway driving at 65-80 MPH. So 300 miles a week, practically all highway. Depending on how much her parents contribute her budget is anywhere from \$2,500-\$5,000. Cheaper is always better... Your GF should consider other options such as sharing an apartment with someone off campus, but not far off campus. If she's truly unhappy with her school environment, she might want to also consider transferring to a different school, perhaps one where she can live with you or her parents without having a ridiculously long commute because the last thing a busy college students needs is to waste time commuting.

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Posted by Mistercmk - 2008/05/13 18:55

gas. Thanks again. Cory

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Posted by Sam - 2008/05/13 18:55

Your GF should consider other options such as sharing an apartment with someone off campus, but not far off campus. If she's truly unhappy with her school environment, she might want to also consider transferring to a different school, perhaps one where she can live with you or her parents without having a ridiculously long commute because the last thing a busy college students needs is to waste time commuting. I was about to say the same thing. When I was in college I constantly had to go back and forth between wherever I was living at the time and school. All kinds of things pop up that require going to the library, profs office, meeting people for projects, etc. If I lived 50 miles away, that would just not have been possible, and it would've been a huge problem in the long run. Besides, when you're stressed, it is damn nice to just be able to get the hell away from school and go have lunch at your own home. The commute is not a good idea unless she's getting a degree in basket weaving or something... Sam

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Posted by Nicodemus Telrenner - 2008/05/13 18:55

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Posted by Cory Dunkle - 2008/05/13 18:55

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Posted by Victor Smith - 2008/05/13 18:55

According to the EPA they get 35-40 MPG highway depending on year and transmission. What do you guys think about Saturn? Is it a good reliable car? Cory Google the Saturn newsgroup. Some years/engines are oil-burners.

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Posted by Nate Nagel - 2008/05/13 18:55

Get a 1989-1995 900 or 9000 with the 4-cylinder turbo. Very economical (I get 30MPG plus on the highway in my 1995 9000; 27mpg around town); fun to drive (excellent handling, turbo is really, really good.) and holds a ton of stuff (hatchback). You should be able to find a good one in her budget. I went from a Lincoln Mark VIII to the Saab and the Saab is much more pleasant to drive, particularly on long trips. Very comfortable seats. Saab also has a great safety record which may cut her insurance rates. If you're doing the work on the car yourself, there's plenty of sources for parts and lots of help on the internet. Try www.saabnet.com lau...@madmousergraphics.com <http://www.madmousergraphics.com> web design, print design, photography

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Posted by Bear Trucker Lvr - 2008/05/13 18:55

Except for one problem my roomie had with his Saab: The Transmission and the Engine are inteconnected in the cooling system. He overheated his saab and it burnt out the transmission.

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Posted by Bear Trucker Lvr - 2008/05/13 18:55

For an economy beater, I'd seriously suggest her learning to drive a stickshift as operating costs over the long run will be less. I HIGHLY agree with this statement however :-)

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Posted by Bear Trucker Lvr - 2008/05/13 18:55

This weekend we are going to look at cars, and if we find the right car perhaps buy it. I'm planning on doing some more detailed research on some of the suggestions mentioned in this thread. I appreciate all the suggestions and advice, and it is of great help in deciding what is worth looking into. I was talking to my girlfriend earlier today about cars and such and mentioned to her that I hadn't even thought of Saturn... My friend had one a while back and it seemed like a fairly nice car. My girlfriend likes the way they look, she says it looks kinda sporty. We both seem to like the idea of her getting a Saturn, and neither of us have ever heard anything bad about them. According to the EPA they get 35-40 MPG highway depending on year and transmission. What do you guys think about Saturn? Is it a good reliable car? Personally i think they re underpoered and ugly as sin, but astetics aside, i have seen them run around and around, so they are at least fairly dependable. :-)

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Posted by Cory Dunkle - 2008/05/13 18:55

He overheated his saab and it burnt out the transmission. Most vehicles with automatics have the transmission cooler as a oil-to-water heat exchanger in the bottom radiator tank (or water pump side, for a crossflow rad) this is not an unusual setup. The easy solution to this problem, of course, is to not overheat the engine :) For an economy beater, I'd seriously suggest her learning to drive a stickshift as operating costs over the long run will be less. nate Well, we have had a few cars since (1995 Mitsubishi Galant (auto), 1988 Mazda 323(manual), 1980 Datsun 28zx (auto)) and have overheated the first two a few times (the mazda blew a coolant line, the galant's water pump impeller

shredded). Neither of them killed the tranny. the GALant overheated so bad currently the head was warped. I overheated my 289 Galaxie last week. I was driving down the expressway doing ~80 MPH for a good time and stopped for the toll booth and she stalled out. I turned on the heater and it took a couple tries to get it started back up. I got it started and pulled over to the side of the road by the toll booth plaza. Checked my coolant level and it was quite low. I guess when I filled it up there was a lot of air trapped in there. I had shaken the car back and forth with the heater on to dislodge air, which it did, then topped off, then went for a drive and topped off. Guess that didn't get it all out. Thank goodness for my prepared for the apocalypse kit! I had plenty of bottles of water in the trunk so I just filled it up and off I went. It must have been running low and overheating for almost a week though. Right after filling the coolant performance increased greatly. Before it maxed out around 85 MPH. Now it will briskly accelerate from 80-90. It's still slow as molasses with those lame low compression heads, but at least now I am faster than your typical 4 banger. I must have broke my coolant temp sensor when I was removing or re-installing the manifold. One of the prongs was loose. The HOT light still comes on when I turn the key, so I just assumed it would be fine, and if it didn't work we are past the 100* weather so no threat of overheating. What can I say... Oops. heh heh Still, it's amazing it put up with that abuse... 250+ miles of being run hot before it finally got so hot it decided to start stalling out. Runs fairly strong now... Those 289s just keep going... The forever engine. Oh, speaking of which... I missed her birthday by 5.6 miles! 5.6 freakin' miles! I missed my exit on the expressway (wasn't paying attention) and got totally lost trying to find my way back as every expressway entrance was headed the wrong way. While I was terrible, horribly lost the odometer rolled over. I knew it was coming, but didn't expect it until the return trip... I thought I would be able to enjoy the 200,000 mile mark around 0300 alone with my Gal on the expressway. So much for that idea. While I was lost I glanced down and saw it was 5.6 miles past. I even had a camera with me to take a picture... I feel like Hank Hill on that episode where the cop stopped him and he misses the odometer roll over. At least that's what it reminded me of, the way I said damn it! . Oh well. This car will be gone within a year or two probably. Maybe it'll be a fun first car for someone else too. In any case, my '68 has just shy of 98,000 on the clock so I won't miss it with that car. I'll get to enjoy the car's 100,000 with a brand spankin' new 408 Windsor if all goes well. It won't be the same as if it were with the original engine, but the original engine was abused to hell and back by my uncle for 7 years. Maybe I'm just too sentimental. lol I'll stop typing now.

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Posted by Cory Dunkle - 2008/05/13 18:55

but astetics aside, i have seen them run around and around, so they are at least fairly dependable. :-)) That's was my line of thought. Hopefully if she goes with a Saturn it will prove to be a dependable and comfortable car. I've been in one before, a '93 IIRC. It was comfortable, but I wasn't in it for an hour straight on the highway... But at 40 MPG I wouldnt' be complaining. Hell, I thougth 31 was good!

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Posted by Ricardo - 2008/05/13 18:55

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Posted by David Hillman - 2008/05/13 18:55

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Posted by Nate Nagel - 2008/05/13 18:55

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