

Automotive Answers

Automotive Experts List Cool New Rides Under \$18,000

(NAPSA)—With the average price of a new vehicle passing \$25,000, it's easy to fall into the trap of believing you have to spend a small fortune to drive anything worth writing home about. Unless you're all about impressing your friends, neighbors and co-commuters with the size of your monthly payment, the entry end of the market is filled with a higher concentration of cool cars, trucks and SUVs than ever.

After putting together a list of all the vehicles available for less than \$18,000, the editors of Kelley Blue Book's kbb.com then picked the 10 coolest. Instead of reporting based on vehicles' Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Prices (MSRPs), the list is based on each model's New Car Blue Book value, the price buyers are typically paying in the market. Your actual payment will be determined by the down payment on the vehicle and the finance rate.

The Top 10 Coolest New Cars Under \$18,000

- **Toyota Yaris**—With a long history as a best-seller in Europe, the Toyota Yaris migrates to the U.S. as the least expensive vehicle in the Toyota lineup. Sporting unusually cool styling, Toyota quality and a 34/city and 40/highway MPG rating, the Yaris' value more than exceeds its under-\$12,000 starting price.

- **Scion xB**—The xB has proven to us that, these days, it's cool to be square. Not only does its slab-sided styling set it apart, but its boxy dimensions also mean



There's no denying the allure of the flawless, warranted, inimitably scented new car.

this diminutive and fuel-efficient vehicle is a surprisingly commodious hauler of people and stuff.

- **Dodge Caliber**—Caliber changes the small-car game by offering a larger, more flexible interior filled with way-cool features like an air-conditioned storage bin to keep drinks cold, rear speakers that flip down to project outward from the open tailgate, a 110-volt outlet for powering small electronics and a self-charging flashlight.

- **Kia Sportage**—When buying your first SUV, bang-for-the-buck is a very cool thing to find. Pricing out the Kia Sportage is almost fun when you get to include a sunroof, a great stereo and a tire pressure monitor all for under \$16,500.

- **Chevrolet HHR**—As cool as the 1940s-style exterior is, the Chevrolet HHR is equally cool for its efficient use of space and worthwhile features like remote start and the increasingly requisite iPod connector. It offers hauling ability like a compact SUV, yet it handles like a car.

- **Ford Fusion**—Size does

matter, so getting a well-styled, contemporary midsize sedan with the roominess and comfort of the new Fusion is cool. Even better is the unexpected level of equipment for the price, including remote keyless entry, tilt steering wheel and cruise control.

- **Nissan Frontier**—Utility is in, and nothing's more utilitarian than a pickup. The Frontier backs up its sharp styling with excellent ride and handling.

- **Mazda3**—Available as a hatchback or sedan, the Mazda3 is a deft one-two punch to the compact-car segment. We can't decide which model we like better, but the combination of fine driving dynamics, upscale interior and arresting looks make this a "cool cars" list repeater.

- **Honda Civic**—You know how U2 were cool, then in the mid-90s they weren't so cool, and now they're as cool as ever? Well, the Civic has traveled a parallel path to regain its stature as arguably the finest economy car ever built—and cool once again.

- **Scion tC**—If you're cool enough to appreciate it, the slick styling and fashionable features in the tC deliver Lexus-like technology in an affordable package. This year, the improved audio features stand out, including steering-wheel gauges and iPod connectivity.

For more information on these and other new or used vehicles, vehicle purchasing advice and more, visit Kelley Blue Book's Web site at www.kbb.com.