

PRESTIGE USED CAR

ALFA ROMEO
159

AT A GLANCE

ALFA ROMEO 159
2006-12

PRICE NEW

\$49,990-\$79,990

PRICE NOW

JTS \$8000-\$15,500,

JTS Ti \$10,500-\$16,500,

JTD \$9000-\$25,000,

V6 Ti \$14,500-\$31,000,

TBI \$15,000-\$18,000,

TBI Ti \$15,500-\$21,000

SAFETY

5-star ANCAP

ENGINES

1.9 litre 4-cyl turbo diesel,

110kW/320Nm,

2.2-litre 4-cyl,

136kW/230Nm,

2.4-litre 5-cyl turbo

diesel, 147kW/400Nm,

3.2-litre V6,

191kW/322Nm,

1.7-litre 4-cyl turbo,

147kW/320Nm

TRANSMISSION

6-speed auto/man/

seq man, FWD, AWD

THIRST

6.8L-11.5L/100 km

ALSO CONSIDER

BMW 3 SERIES

2006-13

★★★★★

A great driving mid-sized car with the ultimate badge but can be expensive to own long term

Pay \$11,000-\$53,000

LEXUS IS250

2006-13

★★★★★

Ticks all the boxes. It's well built, safe, drives well and looks quite good

Pay \$11,500-\$54,000

SUBARU LIBERTY

2006-13

★★★★★

Doesn't have the style and panache of the Alfa, but it's a good car and reliable to boot.

Pay \$7500-\$40,500

COMING UP

Do you own or have you owned a Lexus GS? Share your experience with other Carsguide readers by writing to Graham Smith at grah.smith@bigpond.com or write to Carsguide, PO Box 4245, Sydney, NSW 2010.

Mixed grille

The 159 is a great looker with ample character – but it is not without quirks



GRAHAM SMITH

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NEW

Mention Alfa Romeo in conversation and you're sure to get a mixed response. The Italian brand has plenty of admirers willing to wax lyrical about its sensuous styling and fabulous handling but there are probably as many who would condemn it for poor build quality and dodgy reliability.

There's no question the brand has had its issues over the years and has left many owners disappointed but it's also fair to say there's something very appealing about it.

It's beyond argument that Alfas look beautiful with their sleek lines, sexy curves and distinctive grille.

Slip behind the wheel and it's impossible not to be impressed by the responsive handling and willing engines that make an Alfa such a joy to drive.

Alfas problems have long been build quality, reliability and back up. They were sloppily

built, regularly broke down and when they did there was no one to pick up the pieces. But with improved distribution and the factory backing of Fiat there's every reason to think the ownership experience shouldn't be as frustrating as it once was.

The 159 was a mid-sized model sold in sedan and wagon variants with a choice of petrol and diesel engines, manual, automatic and self-shifting manual gearboxes, and the option of an all-wheel-drive V6.

Inside, the front seats were comfortable and supportive and there was ample head, leg and elbowroom. The rear wasn't quite as generous and it could feel a bit of a squeeze for those out back.

There was a range of diesel and petrol engines on offer. The diesels consisted of a 1.9-litre four and a five-cylinder 2.4-litre, both turbocharged, while the petrol engines were a 2.2-litre four and a 3.2-litre V6.

Depending on the model the transmission choices were a 6-speed manual, 6-speed auto and a 6-speed Selespeed self-shifting manual.

All models with four-cylinder or diesel engines were front-wheel drive, but those with the lusty V6 were AWD.

A 1.7-litre four-cylinder turbo engine became the entry engine in 2011.

NOW

Given the checked history of the brand, be cautious when buying an Alfa and have a mechanic who is familiar with them check your chosen car. That won't guarantee that you won't have any issues but it should reduce the chances.

Ask for a service record to be sure that the car you're about to buy has been cared for. If you can, talk to the mechanic who has been doing the work on it.

The feedback we've had from owners is reassuring with virtually all of them heaping praise on their cars, and few reporting any problems.

There are things to watch out for though. The electrics regularly crop up in criticism of the 159, so take the time to check that everything is working, the windows, door locks, air, radio etc. Give everything a workout.

Check the interior for broken plastic trim parts as they can break and fall apart.

If you're buying a diesel you should be aware that they can have problems with regeneration of the diesel

particulate filter. They don't always do it automatically, as they should, and it can mean a trip to the dealer to have it done.

The petrol engines have timing chains, but the diesel engines have cam belts, which should be changed every 100,000km or four years, so make sure it's done. A broken belt can mean expensive internal engine damage.

OWNERS SAY

Roger Clark: I bought a 2011 diesel 159 Ti Auto 12 months ago. It was a one-owner car with 33,000km on the odometer. The tie-rod ends had to be replaced to get it roadworthy but I've done 10,000km since and it has been totally reliable, economical and a joy to drive.

Matthew Coyle: I own a 2009 JTS Ti manual. Despite my concerns about the frailty of Alfas I have had absolutely no issues with it. Once I get well into second the engine kicks in and away we go. I get people admiring it everywhere I go. The only drawback is the fuel consumption, which is about 10.5L/100 km, but as it's an Alfa and most of my driving is in the hills I just don't care!

Richard Jamieson: I owned a 159 1.9 JTD. I was attracted to the Alfa badge and also the looks. I found the 159 to be a stylish, well-made car, although it was a little heavy and not as fuel efficient as others. It was beautiful inside. The problems were a failed electronic steering lock, power window motor and high front tyre wear, not bad for a car with the Alfa's reputation.

John McDonald: My 2007 2.2 JTS 159 has now done 120,000km. It's a great car, it still looks as good as new and I have no intention of selling it.

Craig Humphrey: I owned a Ti manual from 2010-2014. I love the look of the 159, it's classically Italian. The engine was the 1750 TBI, which I found to be strong and lively. On the negative side the electrics were a constant bugbear and I only got 25,000 km out of the tyres.

Eddie Stopaynik: I bought my 159 diesel new in 2010. It's stylish inside and out. Fuel economy is more like 13.0L/100 km than the claimed 8.0L. I've also had some problems with the engine and the dealer appears unable to fix them. Now that it is five years old I'm taking it to an old fashioned independent Italian car specialist who delivers on service, properly repairs the car and charges reasonable prices.

James Panas: My dad and I bought a diesel in 2008, and it's been phenomenal. I was initially drawn to the beautiful Italian exterior and stylish, comfortable interior. Additionally, the car has and continues to offer great fuel efficiency and performance. In some circumstances the car's hard steering and wide turning circle is a challenge but it's these imperfections that makes the 159 a true Alfa Romeo.

SMITHY SAYS

★★★★★

Stunning looks can deceive. Wonderful to drive, but not necessarily to own.

