

THE ALFA ROMEO 156 GTA:

THE RETURN OF A LEGEND

One of the most famous names in motoring, the Alfa Romeo GTA, is once again available in Australia in the shape of the new 184 kW 250 kmh Alfa Romeo 156 GTA and in its latest incarnation the new GTA offers the same exhilarating performance, race-track tuned handling and subtle performance orientated style that made its predecessor so famous.

The original Alfa Romeo GTA was developed to offer a unique combination of every day usability and, at the same time, the ability to win at weekends on the race track. And win it did, taking the honours around the world, including in Australia where it was a regular winner in the late 1960s.

The new Alfa Romeo 156 GTA takes the same formula, with a new high performance version of Alfa Romeo's legendary V6 engine pumping out 184 kW and 300 Nm of torque from 3.2 litres, enough to send the 156 GTA to 100 kmh in just 6.3 seconds and on, where law permits, to a top speed of 250 kmh. And, like its predecessor, the new GTA is already winning on the race track; with victories already in its debut European Touring Car season.

But the Alfa Romeo 156 GTA is considerably more than just straight line performance. From the racetrack quick steering – just 1.7 turns from lock to lock – to the fully re-designed suspension and the unique to the GTA Brembo brake system and Michelin tyres designed specifically for the GTA, this is a car that has been honed for performance driving.



While the 156 GTA's performance demands respect, the style of the 156 GTA does not scream for attention.

The Alfa Romeo stylists have taken the award-winning styling of the 156 and given it a new edge, but it is an edge that it's totally integrated with the performance aspirations of the GTA. In other words, nothing is added that isn't required.

For example, note the absence of a rear wing, the normal addition for any car that is looking for a sporting image, so much so that it is almost a pastiche of a performance car. Alfa Romeo have used an under body splitter at the front and the rear to do what the wing is meant to do, reduce body lift at speed, with both greater effect and styling suitability. For those in know who spot the aerodynamic splitter, this is a true sign that this is a car that means business.

It's the same inside the Alfa Romeo 156 GTA. Changes to the already stylish and acclaimed 156 interior have been kept to a minimum. The seats are, of course, clad in fine Italian leather, but it is the horizontal bar style that has spelt performance Italian cars for generations. And the seats themselves are designed to be comfortable for day to day driving, yet provide sufficient lateral positioning so that the 156 GTA may be used on the race track. The other obvious change to the interior are the drilled aluminium pedals, another feature that has meant racetrack developed from the birth of motorsport.

Performance and style have clearly not changed between the two GTA generations. Nor has value for money. The original GTA provided an extremely cost effective way to have access to benchmark performance. The 156 GTA is no different. At a recommended retail price of \$89,950, the 156 GTA not only comes fully equipped for performance motoring, it comes fully equipped, full stop. Every desired item of equipment from electric windows, mirrors and remote control locks, a superb Blaupunkt stereo system, cruise control, leather upholstery, unique 17 inch alloy wheels, body kit and much more is all standard.

"The Alfa Romeo 156 GTA is much more than a new performance flagship for Alfa Romeo," says Kevin Wall, General Manager for Alfa Romeo in Australia. "It provides



Australian enthusiasts with a car that offers a staggering breadth of ability.”

“It has the performance, handling and roadholding to take the battle to out and out stripped performance cars, yet at the same time it has refinement, sophistication and style to also provide a strong new competitor at the luxury end of the scale. And, at the same time, it does so with a unique Alfa Romeo spirit, that is clear in the way the GTA looks, the way it performs and even, with the glorious throaty burble of the new engine, the way it sounds,” says Mr Wall.

The Alfa Romeo 156 GTA: Performance and style as on Alfa can do.

Alfa Romeos are universally acknowledged to be stylish, sporting cars that combine a glittering racing pedigree with the cream of contemporary engineering. Alfa Romeo are cars that enhance everyday driving experience with a true racing feel and authentic driving satisfaction.

The Alfa 156 GTA offers all these attributes but also holds something extra in reserve: more performance, more handling, more braking capacity. All the dynamic performance of a car destined for the racetrack, in other words.

The credit goes mainly to the exuberant engine concealed beneath the bonnet of the GTA. The new 3.2 V6 24V with power output of 184 kW and a torque figure of 300 Nm. A power unit that is capable of exhilarating performance that also makes the GTA extremely satisfying to drive even during everyday use. The torque curve reaches such high levels at low speeds that the car can be driven along in sixth gear at less than 2000 rpm yet still sprint away without the need to change gear.

The 3.2 V6 24V power unit fitted to the Alfa 156 GTA

	Capacity (cc)	Maximum Power (kW)	Maximum Torque (Nm)	Top speed (kmh)	0-100 kmh (sec.)	Litres/100 km
3.2 V6 24V manual	3179	184/6200 rpm	300 at 4800 rpm	250	6.3	12.1
3.2 V6 24V Selespeed	3179	184 (250) at 6200 rpm	300 (30.6) at 4800 rpm	250	6.3	12.1



Yet sports cars need much more than excellent engines. For this reason, Alfa Romeo's engineers have made more deep-seated changes to the already excellent base offered by the thoroughbred Alfa 156 saloon. Changes were made to all the parts that affect the car's dynamics, with the suspension first on the list. The lower beam of the high double-wishbone configuration front suspension adopted on the previous version has been reinforced. The specially designed wheel strut features a different steering link fastening position and the suspension also offers lower ride, new shock absorber spring settings and a bigger diameter anti-roll bar.

The rear is fitted with a MacPherson strut system with particularly advanced geometry and construction details, different body attachment points, bigger diameter anti-roll bar and a special spring, shock absorber and bush settings.

A more sporting feeling has been assured by a more direct steering ratio that provides the driver with better control of the car and lets them do everything with pinpoint precision at the slightest turn of the wheel.

Then added two particularly effective gearboxes, a six speed manual and – arriving in Australian 2003 – Selespeed; brakes that are powerful and effective even under the harshest conditions (305 x 28 mm ventilated front discs with twin-plunger Brembo calipers and 276x10 mm rear discs; an ABS with electronic brakeforce distributor (EBD); Anti Slip Regulation (ASR) system and everything was in place.

The result is a car capable of thrilling performance and truly scintillating responses in terms of dynamism, ride and handling. All in all, a car for those who demand the very best when it comes to performance driving. And want it to be known without ostentation.

Hence the decision not to make radical changes to the much-lauded shape of the original saloon and Sportwagon but simply tweak a few features that add extra oomph to the model's sports appeal.



All the stylistic changes are deliberately designed to enhance the functional appearance of the car and reflect technical changes to the chassis and mechanicals.

The car is still therefore recognisable from the outside and simply looks like a more beefy Alfa 156: wider, lower to the ground and more evidently glued to the road. This is partly due to the tyres fitted: 225/45 tyres on 17" wheels.

Inside, the GTA offers the same opulent specification developed for the new Alfa 156 but add certain decidedly sporty details that are exclusive to the GTA. The main ones are: high-containment, sports configuration seats with an adjustable thigh support; steering wheel spokes with Peltro grey metalluro inserts; leather gear lever knob and gaiter; aluminium pedals with rubber inserts.



ALFA ROMEO 156 GTA: THE RETURN OF A LEGEND

The GTA name blazed a trail of success through the race tracks of Europe and Australia in its day and deservedly occupies a proud position in the annals of motor sport.

The first GTA came about when Autodelta made radical changes to the engine and mechanical units of a Giulia Sprint. The year was 1965 and the Giulia Sprint GTA then went on a winning spree: the Sebring 4-hour race, the 6-hour Nürburgring race, a host of races in Germany, Great Britain, Holland and France – and three consecutive wins in the European Makes Challenge for Touring cars in 1966, 1967 and 1968. At the same time, the Alfa Romeo GTA carved a spot in Australian motor racing history with wins across the country.

Now, 37 years later, Alfa Romeo is providing the chance to experience the GTA legend afresh with a new car. Now, as then, both cars represent a veritable distillation of everything Alfa Romeo stands for, its values, its heritage and its style that has made Alfa Romeo a legend.

Alfa Romeo is acclaimed the world over for its ability to produce good-looking, sporting cars that combine a glittering racing pedigree with the cream of contemporary engineering. Cars that enhance everyday driving experiences with a true racing feel and authentic driving satisfaction.

The Alfa 156 GTA offers all these attributes but also hold something extra in reserve: more performance, more roadholding, more braking capacity. In other words, the dynamic behaviour of a car that adds spice to everyday driving experiences with racetrack responses and sensations.

This philosophy is encapsulated by the slogan used to advertise the original Giulia Sprint GTA: 'The car you drive to work is a champion'.

The designers who created the Alfa 156 GTA were given a very specific brief: to create a car for everyday use that could, under the right circumstances, ensure customers the performance, behaviour and driving sensations of a car built for racing. Although no constraints were set, the designers preferred to highlight functional aspects of the car and made radical changes to the already excellent base offered by the Alfa 156.

In other words, they altered all the parts that affect the car's dynamism. These changes included a brand new 3.2 V6 24V engine, completely new suspension geometry and settings, a much more powerful braking system, more direct steering, new gearboxes (a manual and a Selespeed with F1-derived technology), and new alloy wheels in a new, sporty design.

The result is a car capable of thrilling performance and truly scintillating responses in terms of dynamism, ride and handling. All in all, a car for those who demand the very best when it comes to a sports driving experience. And who want it to be known without



ostentation.

Hence the decision not to make radical changes to the much-lauded shape of the original 156 but limit exterior changes to a few features that add extra oomph to the model's sporty appeal.

All the design changes emphasise the functional appearance of the car and are the result of uncompromising technical alterations to the frame and mechanical units without a spoiler or flashy add-on in sight.

The GTA is still therefore recognisable from the outside and simply looks like a more beefy Alfa 156: wider, lower to the ground and more evidently glued to the road. This is partly due to the tyres fitted: 225/45 tyres on 17" wheels.

The Alfa 156 GTA: Mechanicals

Suspension

The Alfa 156 GTA needed a suspension system that could ensure great dynamic performance coupled with outstanding comfort. The choice fell on the configuration that brought such success to the Alfa 156: high double wishbone at the front and an advanced MacPherson strut layout at the rear.

From this basis Alfa Romeo's engineers set to work to adjust the suspension to the car's specific characteristics and the specific weight distribution on the Alfa 156 GTA. The aim: to achieve the highest level of handling, ensure maximum dynamic performance and offer behaviour typical of a great sports model. In terms of vehicle performance, the results are outstanding and may be summarised as follows:

- Smooth, precise steering;
- Prompt responses;
- Excellent stability and ease of control even at the grip limit;
- Highly contained body movements;
- Great comfort under all service and road surface conditions.

Front Suspension

The high double wishbone layout meets the ambitious aim of ensuring this sports saloon a driving quality that combines the great control typical of front wheel drive cars with the exceptional sportiness and precision that is so useful over mixed routes.

The Fiat Research Centre and Fiat Auto Design and Development Department developed



a new front suspension specifically for the Alfa 156 GTA. Compared to the suspension adopted on the new Alfa 156, the system features a reinforced lower beam, special wheel strut with a different steering link fastening position, lower ride, new shock-absorber and spring settings and a bigger diameter anti-roll bar.

All this obtains a more sporty performance from the high double wishbone suspension – known as a quadrilateral suspension because the arms (two overlapping triangles with their bases hinged to the car body and their tips to the wheel unit) create a four-sided figure.

In geometrical terms, this is the best possible arrangement for reconciling extensive wheel travel with excellent control of tyre working conditions. Because the upper arm is located higher than the wheel centre, this solution allows effective use of the area between wheel and power unit accessories.

From a structural viewpoint, the device consists of a cast iron lower arm, a steel strut and a light alloy upper arm. The coaxial spring-shock absorber unit is connected to the body via a flexible mount and to the lower arm via a light alloy fork. For reasons of space and structural stiffness, the upper arm is jointed to an aluminium shell (anchored to the body, which acts as a support to the upper spring-shock absorber attachment).

This type of configuration offers many advantages. The double wishbone geometry adopted on the Alfa 156 GTA:

- Optimises tyre grip; on corners the double wishbone configuration tends to make up for the car's external tilt by recovering the camber. It also reduces yaw while braking by allowing the steering axle to tilt toward the front of the car (caster angle);
- Improves traction even under the most difficult conditions;
- Ensures a self-alignment effect proportional to lateral acceleration while cornering;
- Ensures gradual effort on the steering wheel, which increases gradually up to the grip limit;
- Ensures greater steering precision and sensitivity even with sharp angles (tight, twisting bends); during the suspension damping stage, the wheel diverges slightly and this ensures that the driver's steering action is slightly countered as the car approaches the bend;
- Prevents the front end diving during braking (anti-dive effect). The bases of the two overlapping triangles are tilted toward the front of the car so that the braking force on the tyre tread stretches the suspension;
- Prevents lift during acceleration (anti-lift effect) because the pulling force delivered through the half-axle pair is applied to the wheel centre and compresses the suspension.

The Alfa Romeo engineers have worked to reduce friction and absorb minor roughness more efficiently by choosing: fluid dynamic bushes to hinge the upper triangle to the shell; split gaskets and bushes in Teflon loaded with fibreglass for the shock absorber stems – plus a Teflon seal for the shock absorber piston.



Correct stiffness of the quadrilateral hinge bushes and steering arm ensures:

- Great steering precision;
- Good grip on the ground (because the tyre angle in relation to the ground reduces on bends);
- Excellent capacity for stress absorption (and hence comfort) due to the increased longitudinal flexibility of the suspension;
- Excellent directional stability (the wheel moves without a steering effect when it meets an obstacle);
- Effective absorption of vertical impact due to optimisation of the upper damper attachment unit to the shell;
- Reduction in steering wheel vibration because the steering arm centre lines contain a flexible element;
- Good stabilising action because the steering arms divert the wheel on the outside of the corner during over-run.

Rear Suspension

The rear suspension features a MacPherson configuration with particularly advanced geometry and constructional details. Compared to conventional devices, the Alfa 156 GTA rear suspension displays certain new features that may be summarised as follows: different body attachment position; special spring setting; different shock absorber and bush stiffness; anti-roll bar with bigger diameter. Not forgetting also that the MacPherson suspension system used on the GTA also includes innovative constructional solutions.

The coil springs not only offer a different stiffness and lower ride to those of the New Alfa 156 but also rest on a lower and upper plate with an interposed rubber ring to reduce noise levels.

The other new features include an upper end stop in Cellasto (closed-cell polyurethane that maintains its elastic properties in time); anti-roll bar connected directly to the damper via connecting rods made out of structural plastic and jointed to steel ball joints; pressurised double-acting hydraulic shock absorbers in high strength steel of reduced thickness. Lastly, the side levers, suspension arm and rear beam arms are all made especially for the Alfa 156 GTA.

The upper shock absorber attachment also displays a new tapered block fastening system. Assembly is easier and the system is more reliable because the attachment need not be bolted to the body.

These significant technical innovations and features are bound to improve rear suspension performance still further because they ensure:

- Increased ability to absorb obstacles because the wheel retracts longitudinally without induced steering effects;
- Maximum directional stability when the car meets obstacles such as tram lines,



- dilation joints on motorway bridges and so on;
- Very prompt, smooth steering response;
- Great driving stability;
- Great capacity for self-alignment, even in extreme conditions, because the wheel steers consistently even under a lateral load.

The Alfa 156 GTA rear suspension also ensures a negative wheel camber gain during roll. As far as the motorist is concerned, this means increased grip on corners and a more correct roll centre position that optimises overall car balance.

ASR

The Alfa 156 GTA sets out to ensure the driver is free to enjoy his or her individual driving style while also ensuring outstanding safety during car dynamic control.

The Alfa 156 GTA is fitted as standard with an ASR (Anti Slip Regulation) system that optimises traction at any speed with the aid of brakes and engine control.

The device computes degree of slip on the basis of wheel rpm calculated by the ABS sensors and activates two different control systems to restore grip. When an excessive power demand causes both drive wheels to slip (e.g. in the case of aquaplaning or when accelerating over an unsurfaced, snowy or icy road), it reduces engine torque by reducing the throttle opening angle and thus air flow; If only one wheel slips (e.g. the inside wheel following acceleration or dynamic load changes), this is automatically braked without the driver touching the brake pedal. The resulting effect is similar to that of a self-locking differential.

The ASR maintains vehicle safety as much as possible and is particularly useful when grip is lost (icy multi-storey car park ramps are one example) and whenever the asphalt does not guarantee even friction.

Another not inconsiderable advantage of the ASR is the lower stress exerted on mechanical parts such as the differential and gearbox due to more effective control of low speed take-off and traction.

The ASR is activated automatically whenever the engine is started but may be turned off by means of a switch on the central console to cut out. When the ASR is active, a warning light on the control panel flashes. A control panel warning light comes on to indicate system faults or irregularities.

ASR deactivation is required when snow chains are used because the wheel must be able to slip by tiny amounts to pile up the snow so that force can be transmitted to the ground and the ASR tends to avoid this type of action.



Steering and brakes

On a sports model such as the Alfa 156 GTA, direct steering and brakes that are able to withstand the car's powerful performance are expected. The Alfa engineers therefore altered the steering ratio and steering box to increase car response precision and speed. Response is measured in terms of the steering ratio, i.e. a value that indicates the relationship between steering wheel and wheel degrees of rotation. The lower the ratio, the more immediate and precise the car response. The Alfa 156 GTA offers a steering ratio of 11.3 (each 11.3 degrees of steering wheel rotation corresponds to one degree of wheel rotation) compared with a market sector average of 15 – 16. And this is achieved beginning with a car of the calibre of the New Alfa 156 that already offers an outstanding steering ratio: 13.7.

The new model's brakes also offer improved features. The ventilated front discs measure 305 mm in diameter and come with double-acting Brembo calipers. The rear discs are only slightly smaller at 276 millimetres. The brake servo is more powerful and the system is fitted with an antislip braking system (ABS) with electronic brakeforce distributor (EBD).

The designers worked particularly hard to achieve shorter stopping distances and also to increase brake fade resistance. Because this important aspect is often overlooked, not merely on the track, thus the brakes come with special linings and hydraulic ports that are stiff as possible: this solution does away with spongy braking when the brakes are hot to improve efficiency and increase safety.

The Alfa Romeo 156 GTA: Engine and gearboxes

The Alfa 156 GTA power unit is derived from the now classic three litre V6 24 valve unit fitted to top-of-the-range Alfa 166 and GTV versions: the vigorous and, most important of all, well-rounded power unit one expects of a six cylinder engine. The engineers changed the crankshaft and pistons on the GTA to increase the cylinder capacity to 3.2 litres and lengthened the stroke to 78 millimetres. This change speaks volumes about the type of performance required because the power could simply have been increased by adjusting the timing, fuel system and electronics.

The fact that cylinder capacity has been increased by lengthening the stroke means that the aim was not simply to obtain out-and-out performance coupled with high power and torque peaks but also smooth, gradual power delivery from the lowest speeds. As befits a car capable of thrilling performance that is suited for driving on ordinary roads as well as on the track.

The increase in cylinder capacity is naturally accompanied by a whole set of changes. The intake and exhaust ports have been tuned by applying a new timing pattern, the control unit software has been rewritten and the cooling system has been upgraded with the addition of an engine oil radiator.



The result? Power output is 184 kW at 6200 rpm with a maximum torque of no less than 300 Nm at 4800 rpm. These figures are all it takes to achieve exciting performances and are complemented by a torque curve that permits high values at low speeds. The car can also travel in sixth gear at less than 2000 rpm and unleash speed spurts without changing gear. Extremely satisfying behaviour, therefore, even during daily use. The self-confessed goal of the GTA is this: to offer sensations unique to a racing car yet still be perfectly serviceable for everyday use.

The transmission has also been reinforced to cope with the upgraded engine. The half-axles are new, while the clutch is bigger and the six-speed gearbox offers new, sturdier components. The manual gearbox may be replaced by a Selespeed version – available in Australia from mid-2003 – with a Formula 1-derived operating system that makes for swifter gear shifts at low and high speeds.

The Alfa Romeo 156 GTA: Style

Exteriors

This sophisticated mechanical configuration had to be complemented by styling that could convey an impression of the model's greater strength and sportiness in a few economical strokes without altering the original shape so appreciated by customers. The changes to the appearance were therefore limited to the components affected by technical changes to the chassis and mechanicals.

The front end is dominated by wide guards that are able to accommodate the generous 17 inch wheels (225-45 type). The fog lamps have also been shifted toward the outside of the car to free the air intakes and allow the powerful engine to take in more air. A black background to the headlamps also helps the 156 GTA to look more aggressive.

New five-hooped rings on the wheels dedicated to the GTA create a spare, very high-tech profile while a new air dam provides a visual link between the two broad wings.

The new rear bumper also blends effectively into the side despite its bigger size. This feature is hardly noticeable from the side but crucially changes the car's rear view.

Compared to the basic model, the GTA's rear end looks completely different in the lower part, from boot floor level downward. This is partly because the bumper now incorporates a large fin that is known as an extractor because it is an aerodynamic element that conveys the airflow from the front part of the speeding car to the rear (i.e. extracts it).

The two exhaust tail-pipes are slightly oval and chrome-plated in classic brand tradition.



Interiors

As is natural for a sports saloon created for thrilling performance, the whole interior of the Alfa 156 GTA hinges around the driver's cockpit. The aim: to ensure the person behind the wheel a position that guarantees the best possible control of the car in all circumstances. Compared to the already opulent and exclusive specification offered by the new Alfa 156, the 156 GTA cars offer certain extra out-and-out sporty features that are exclusive to the version.

The steering wheel displays a special spoked design (with metalluro inserts) while the gear knob and leather gaiter are also exclusive. All this plus a sports pedals: The user-friendly pedal covers and foot rests are in drilled aluminium with rubber inserts and combined with a mat in the central compartment of the metalluro glove compartment that also features rubber inserts.

On the Alfa 156 GTA, these details are complemented by sports configuration seats with adjustable thigh support that are trimmed in top-quality leather. These are exclusive to the model and come in four colour combinations: one in solid black and three in three shades. The latter offer black leather side bands while the central cushion and backrest insert may be in natural, grey or blue as required by the customer. The seat design displays the horizontal ridged design typical of so many Italian sports cars of the past. The front seats come with heating, built-in head-restraints and an adjustable headrest. The rear seat offers the same sports configuration and all the comfort of five real seats.

The door panels come with leather inserts that reflect the same motif and colours as the central part of the seats. The ceiling is grey-black in colour, while the boot trim is completely black to match the pillars, grab handles and sun blinds. One last distinctive feature of the Alfa 156 GTA is its floor mats. These come as standard, are secured to the carpet and bear the wording GTA hand-stitched in Peltro grey.

The control panel of the Alfa 156 GTA also offers some new features: these include special gauges with black backgrounds, new-look gauges and an engine oil temperature trend screen on the multifunction display.

The Alfa Romeo 156 GTA: How to drive the GTA

To see it is to love it: wide tyres, low-slung ride and styling of poised aggression. To die for, in fact. Hear the engine and weep: a full, convincing throaty roar. Now all you have to do it sit behind the wheel engage first gear and set off to try this most Alfa of Alfas. You are left with one doubt: how will you drive an Alfa sports model whose bonnet conceals a 3200 cc six cylinder engine and that unleashes 184 kW of power and 300 Nm of torque when you touch the accelerator.

The unexpected answer is: with great ease - even more easily, simply and instinctively



than your normal car in fact. Provided you allow yourself the time and satisfaction (because this is about pleasure, after all) of getting used to the more direct controls and more immediate responses.

Something you should know about the on-road car: despite its pronounced sporty personality, it is quite at home over cobbled city centre streets and ultra-stable during high speed motorway trips and rapid lane changes. The thoroughbred racing Alfa, on the other hand, will give you the sort of sensations you could only expect from a true sports car on mixed routes or the track, where speed and transverse acceleration are much more controllable.

On the track, you will fully appreciate the racing-car steering (the most direct of all mass-produced cars) that allows you to keep a firm grip on the car and manoeuvre with millimetric precision while hardly turning the wheel. You will discover the pleasure of feeling the grip and safety of a braking force far superior to the average. You will learn to modulate the very direct accelerator and the best way to press and release it quickly to help the car round corners.

Sporting drivers will begin to enjoy the satisfaction of driving a car with reactions that are always immediate, predictable and gradual, a car that knows nothing of power lags and instinctively finds the fastest and clearest trajectory round every bend.

To achieve this, the Alfa Romeo engineers worked hard on the Alfa 156 suspension – it was no easy task to improve on excellence – and ended up by changing the front suspension and steering. The result, on the Alfa 156 GTA, was a car with great traction at the front and a rear suspension that holds its own as you would expect from a car with such direct steering. All in all, a car that even professional rally drivers would describe as truly balanced.

That means oversteering on approaches to bends so that they can be taken more easily and understeering on the way out of bends to ensure faster realignment and more effective acceleration.

On the 156 GTA, Alfa Romeo engineers have essentially eliminated the understeer typical of front wheel drive cars. This is the trait that allows you to corner instinctively. Thus, if the approach speed is too fast you ease off the throttle a little and the car's front end points to the inside of the bend instead of the outside.

This allows sporty drivers to enter a bend at speed, release the accelerator and deliberately induce a loss of grip in the rear end so that it sweeps round the bend. Then the car can be countersteered by giving it more throttle. You will be aided in these manoeuvres by the steady, understated reactions of a car you will soon learn to recognise and master.

You can, of course, drive the Alfa GTA in a more sober manner yet still enjoy its exuberant performance: acceleration, pick-up, top-speed. In this case, it will take you a few dozen kilometres to get used to the new more direct feel and easily operated controls (accelerator, steering, brakes) and respond more swiftly and decisively.



The Alfa Romeo 156 GTA: The GTA story

During the Sixties, the Touring category was one of the areas of motor sport most followed by the public and consequently also by the Manufacturers. Cars derived from standard production models battled it out on the main circuits watched by crowds of fans. And the best drivers were not ashamed to race in this category. Great names included Jim Clark, John Whitmore and Andrea de Adamich.

Alfa Romeo wanted to be part of it all and the company decided to commission an up-and-coming workshop to prepare its cars: Autodelta, headed by Carlo Chiti, a world-famous designer from the Ferrari stable. The resulting marriage between engineering and motor sport has become the stuff of legend.

On February 18 1965, Autodelta's first creation was presented at the Amsterdam Motor Show. The car was a development of the Giulia GT, rechristened the GTA (the A stands for 'alleggerita' (lightened)). The outer body was the same as that of the GT, but the interior trim was made out of Peraluman 25, a light alloy of aluminium, manganese, copper and zinc. The new car differed from its sister externally in the addition of front air intakes, handles and the triangular Autodelta badge. The 1600 Twin Spark twin shaft engine underwent rigorous reinforcement to increase the power output from 106 to 170 bhp.

The GTA triumphed even on its first outings. Seven GTAs took the first seven places, for example, at the Jolly Club 4-hour race in Monza. With Andrea de Adamich and other great drivers at the helm, the cars began to steal the thunder of the Lotuses that had previously reigned supreme. Adamich won over the Dutch circuit of Zandvoort to take the European touring championship.

The GTAs continued their domination of the European Challenge over the next few years and Andrea de Adamich was eventually called away by Ferrari to drive single-seater sports cars in Formula 1 races.

In 1968, Alfa Romeo presented on-road and racing versions of the GTA 1300 Junior. The car looked the same as the standard production Junior, but was made leaner and meaner by long white bands along the sides. The racing version delivered 160 bhp (the on-road version 103 bhp). It goes without saying that the new GTA swept the board as soon as it went out on the track.

Now there were two racing GTAs and their domination lasted until 1970, the year that saw the arrival of the GT Am, derived from the 1750 GT Veloce America. The body was completely transformed compared to the original version, as was the engine - a 230 bhp two litre unit. The car, with the Dutchman Tonie Hezemans at the wheel, won the European Touring Championship in 1970 and 1971, taking six first places in eight races.

In 1992 Alfa Romeo decided to return to racing with a version of the 155 Q4, renamed GTA, prepared according to the standards of the Italian Supertourism Championship. Like the others, this car retained very little of the standard production version: carbon



wings, a rear spoiler that could be tilted to different angles, a 16 valve turbocharged engine capable of 400 bhp (compared with 186 bhp of the normal version) plus an water-cooled intercooler. The four team cars were driven by Larini, Francia, Nannini and Tamburini. The new GTA won 17 of the 20 races it was entered for and Larini won the title. During the following year, this model stepped down to make way for the 155 V6 TI prepared for the German DTM. The new car also dominated in its category.

In Australia Alfa Romeo's racing heritage is inexorably linked with Alex Mildren, who created a fully professional Alfa Romeo racing team which included the Alfa GTA in the Alfa Romeos with which it contested Australian events. The team drivers are some of the most famous names in Australian Motorsport, including Frank Gardener, Kevin Bartlett, Ralph Sachs, John French, Doug Chivas, Max Stuart, Laurie Stuart, Len Goodwin and Brian Foley.

The first Alfa Romeo GTA arrived in Australia in August 1966 and raced by Dr Roberto Bussinelo for Alex Mildren Racing at Sandown in the November four hour race. It was leading when a mechanical failure caused its retirement. But in December of the same year it put Businelo on the winner's podium at Warwick Farm in Sydney. In 1967 the same car won at Warwick Farm and Sandown with Frank Gardener behind the wheel, while Kevin Bartlett won his class with the GTA at Longford in March. In April it took third place at the Bathurst round of the Australian Touring Car Championship, pipped to the post by a Ford Mustang and Chevy Nova. Back at Warwick Farm for two races the GTA beat the Mustang in the first race and came a close second in race two. By the end of the season the car went on to finish first in the Queensland Championship. This car was sold to Gordon Stevenson who raced frequently and successfully until 1969, gaining the Touring Gold Star in 1968.

The second Australian Alfa Romeo GTA arrived in December 1966 and it was put to work almost immediately by Frank Gardner who took it to third place at Warwick Farm and by February '67 it had had Gardner on the winner's podium at Warwick Farm, and again at Longford in March. Kevin Bartlett then took over and scored at first and a second at the Easter Bathurst meeting, setting a 2.0 litre record in his battle with Bob Jane's Mustang. Another first at Surfer's Paradise was followed by a third place at Warwick Farm and another first and second at Warwick Farm in a two race event in July, finishing the season in fourth place in the Australian Touring Car Championship.

Yet another Alfa Romeo GTA was driven at Sandown by Porsche importer Alan Hamilton and it went on to secure 12 national endurance records in the hands of Sid Fisher and Frank Porter, including the standing 50 kms and the standing 12 hours, which they covered 1391 km at an average speed of 115.92 kmh.

Kevin Bartlett also took the Alfa Romeo to a class in the Hardie Ferodo 500 at Bathurst in 1968 and 1969.

Not that Australian drivers were content with the Alfa GTA as it stood, with the GTA 1600 mutating first into a 2.0 litre, in which form it won the Singapore GP of 1973 with Brian Foley behind the wheel and then it ran at Bathurst with the Alfa V8 Type 33 that had previously been fitted to the Alec Mildren Brabham open wheeler.



The 2002 Alfa Romeo 156 GTA: TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

		Alfa 156 GTA	
		Manual/Selespeed	
ENGINE			
		6 in 60° V, front transverse	
Bore x stroke (mm)		93 x 78	
Capacity (cc)		3179	
Compression ratio		10.5 : 1	
Max power output kW/rpm		184/6200	
Max torque Nm/rpm		300/4800	
Timing system (drive)		2OHC per bank (toothed belt) 4 valves per cylinder	
Cylinder spacing (mm)		133	
Main bearings		4	
Cylinder block		Light alloy	
Cylinder head		Light alloy	
Number of valves per cylinder		4	
Valve position		In 37 degree V	
Timing gear		Twin overhead camshafts per bank with hydraulic tappets	
Timing control		Toothed Belt	
Ignition type		Static, electronic digital combined with injection with 2 knock sensors, 6 HT coils in the head, one spark plug per cylinder	
Lubrication		Forced feed with geared pump, water/oil heat exchanger, cartridge oil filter	
Fuel system		Bosch Motronic ME 7.3.1 electronic MPI electronic fuel injection with selective knock control.	
ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT			
Battery: capacity (Ah)		70	
Generator (A)		140	
TRANSMISSION			
Drive		Front	
		Manual	Selespeed
Gearbox: 1st		3.500 : 1	3.500 : 1
2nd		2.235 : 1	2.235 : 1
3rd		1.520 : 1	1.520 : 1
4th		1.156 : 1	1.156 : 1
5th		0.971 : 1	0.971 : 1
6th		0.816 : 1	0.816 : 1
Reverse		3.545 : 1	3.545 : 1
Final drive		3.733 : 1	3.733 : 1
Clutch Diameter (mm)		235	
Lining Dimensions		235 x 155	
TYRES AND WHEELS			
Tyres		225/45 ZR 17	
Wheels		Alloy 7.5 x 17	
STEERING			
Steering box		Rack and pinion with power steering	
Turns lock to lock		1.75	
Turning circle (m)		12.1	
SUSPENSION			



Front	Independent, double wishbones with double trailing arm and anti-roll bar on ball joints
Rear	Independent, MacPherson type with lower side rods and reaction struts, anti-roll bar on ball joints

BRAKES

Front: dia. (mm)	Disc 305 (ventilated)
Rear: dia. (mm)	Disc 276

BODY – DIMENSIONS

No. of seats	5
No. of doors	4
Length/width (mm)	4430/1765
Height (mm)	1402
Wheelbase (mm)	2595
Front/rear track (mm)	1522/1509
Luggage capacity (l)	378

CAPACITIES – WEIGHTS

Fuel tank (l)	63
Kerb weight DIN (kg)	1410
Max. towable weight (kg)	1400

PERFORMANCE AND FUEL CONSUMPTION

	Manual	Selespeed
Top speed (km/h)	250	250
Acceleration (s)		
0-100 km/h	6.3	6.3
0-1000 m	20.7	20.7

EU Fuel Consumption (l/100 km)

	Manual	Selespeed
urban cycle	18.1	18.1
out-of-town cycle	8.6	8.6
combined cycle	12.1	12.1

Australian Fuel Consumption ADR/81/00

	Manual	Selespeed
Fuel Index	13.5	13.5

Standard equipment and options

- standard o optional ~ not available

	Alfa 156 GTA Manual/Selespeed
EXTERIOR	
Alarm	o
Alfa CODE (Immobiliser)	♦
Body Kit with front and rear splitters	♦
Body-coloured bumpers	♦
Central locking	♦
Central locking with remote control	♦
Electric front windows	♦
Electric rear windows	♦
Heated, electric door mirrors	♦
Metallic paintwork	o
Polished stainless steel tail-pipe	♦
Sports spoiler	o
Sunroof	o
INTERIOR	
Analogue clock	♦
Audio system, Blaupunkt Digital CD player, six speakers	♦
Automatic climate control system	♦



Boot and fuel filler flap opening from inside	♦
Check control	♦
External temperature gauge	♦
Front Seat, electrically adjustable front seats	♦
Front seats with adjustable lumbar support and centre armrest	♦
Front, passenger-side courtesy light with reading spotlight and two rear courtesy lights	♦
Glove compartment with flap	♦
Height-adjustable driver's seat	♦
InfoCentre Readout	♦
Instrument panel lighting adjustable to three levels	♦
Leather steering wheel and gear knob	♦
Metallic gray instrument and control background	♦
Pouch on back of front seat squab	♦
Rear armrest with ski tunnel	♦
Rev counter	♦
Seats, high backed racing seats with side adjustment	♦
Steering wheel with height and axial adjustment	♦
Timed heated rear window	♦
Titanium effect centre console	♦
Upholstery, Momo leather	♦
Upholstery, Sports Leather	♦
Upholstery, Velour trim	NA
Velour carpets	♦
SAFETY/MECHANICALS	
ABS + EBD	♦
Airbag, Driver	♦
Airbag, Passenger	♦
Airbag, Side	♦
Airbag, Window	♦
ASR/MSR	♦
Foglights, front and rear	♦
FPS (Fire Prevention System)	♦
Front seat-belt electronic pretensioners	♦
Headlight alignment adjustment	♦
Height-adjustable front and rear head-restraints	♦
Height-adjustable front seat-belts	♦
Xenon Headlights	♦
Headlight washers	♦
Wipers, rain sensing	♦
Power steering	♦
Rear door child safety locks	♦
Third brake light	♦