

## **Tesla Motors opens electric car showroom in California to enthusiastic response**

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Proponents of greener automobiles have a lot to cheer about - Tesla Motors, a name to reckon with in the nascent world of commercial electric vehicles, opened its flagship store yesterday on Santa Monica Boulevard in Los Angeles,

California, and the response to its first product has been truly "electric".

The Tesla Roadster has already managed to garner well over a thousand orders, with 400 of these being on the waiting list. And this for a car that costs \$109,000, or a cool one-eighth of a million if you factor in the registration and other associated charges.

What's even more impressive than the sales numbers is the client list - California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, actors George Clooney and Kelsey Grammer and musicians Will.i.am and Flea. The Roadster has truly become the darling of the Hollywood crowd, and its success is reminiscent of the glowing reception enjoyed by the Toyota Prius a few years earlier. The next store, slated to open in San Carlos, California, in a couple of months, will be targeted at the Silicon Valley tech elite.

Tesla Motors CEO Elon Musk disclosed the inspiration behind the fancy

showroom near Beverly Hills - the Apple store. He said that the Apple stores provided fantastic customer experience in non-conventional settings, a feature he wanted to replicate in his showroom. He is already the proud owner of the first Tesla Roadster ever produced.

Of course, the question now arises as to what you get for all this money. For one thing, the Tesla Roadster is no adulterated hybrid - it's 100 per cent electric car. And unlike its predecessors that struggled to achieve decent performance, the Roadster's engine is a real powerhouse, accelerating the car from rest to 60 miles per hour (96.56 kilometres per hour) in less than four seconds with the help of 248 horses. To put things in perspective, the company claims that this proves that the Roadster "has better acceleration than a Lamborghini Murcielago".

Moreover, it tops the endurance charts as well, giving 220 miles (354 kilometres) on a single charge. Of course, the 135 miles per gallon (48 kilometres per litre) equivalent performance and the two cents per mile running cost make the vehicle extremely efficient as well. The recharge time is a mere 3.5 hours, which Tesla officials say should allow most people to drive it to work and back and recharge it at night like a cell phone.

The two main parts of the Tesla Roadster are its battery and motor. The former is one of the largest and most advanced battery packs in the world, where Tesla Motors has combined basic proven lithium ion battery technology with its own proprietary design to deliver optimum performance. It can provide enough power for sudden bursts of speed, as well as fuel sustained travel.

The motor, the company claims, is "about the size of a watermelon" and "weighs about 115 pounds", quite a contrast from "most car engines that have to be moved with winches or forklifts". Additionally, it is claimed to operate at unprecedented efficiencies of 85 to 95 per cent.



The company is understandably proud of the full-electric configuration. On its website, it describes how a car like the Tesla Roadster, like diamonds, is forever - "Electric cars equal freedom. Not simply from oil reliance, but from dependence on

any specific power source. Electric power can be generated from natural gas, coal, solar, wind, hydro, and nuclear sources - or a combination of all of them - without changing the design of the car. No matter how or when the world changes, the car adapts, making it immune from obsolescence."

This amazing vehicle and its maker are one of the frontrunners for the \$10-million X PRIZE announced at the New York International Auto Show in March this year, for building the most fuel-efficient commercially viable vehicle. (See: **[\\$10 million X PRIZE for the best, fuel-efficient car on the planet](#)**)

Of course, as with all things exclusive, the Tesla Roadster is very expensive. Keeping aside the \$125,000 on-road price, even a test drive will necessitate a \$30,000 deposit. In other words, if you don't order the vehicle, you can't even take it for a trial spin.

However, keeping in mind the amazing performance parameters and the relief to one's conscience of contributing towards lessening global warming, it seems a small price to pay. Also, the company's publicity department has played upon the US citizens' fears of rising oil prices and over-dependence on oil-producing nations, saying, "The instability of the Middle East makes our 58 per cent dependence on foreign oil a dangerous and costly proposition".

In a smart marketing move, Tesla Motors also outlines several cost-saving reasons on its website for owning an electric car. These include:

- Income tax credit (awaiting new legislation)

- Owning a luxury car that's fully exempt from the luxury car tax
- Free parking at charging stations at LAX
- No parking meter fees in an increasing number of major metropolitan areas

Meanwhile, Tesla Motors is not content to rest on its laurels. The company plans to make a luxury sedan next year called the Whitestar, which will come in two versions - an all-electric model that will run entirely on its lithium ion battery pack, and a range-extended vehicle that will also use liquid fuel to extend its range.

The second generation of the Roadster is rumoured to be even more powerful at or over 300 hp, with a 13,000 rpm redline and a single speed transmission. Moreover, the company plans to open dealerships in Chicago and New York later this year.

Style	2-seat, open-top, rear-drive roadster
Drivetrain	Electric motor with 2-speed electrically-actuated-manual-shift transmission with integral differential
Motor	3-phase, 4-pole electric motor, 248 horsepower peak (185kW), redline 13,000 rpm, regenerative "engine braking"
Chassis	Bonded extruded aluminum with 4-wheel wishbone suspension
Brakes	4-wheel disc brakes with ABS
Acceleration	0 to 60 miles per hour (mph) in under 4 seconds
Top Speed	125 mph
Range	About 220 miles (based on EPA combined city/highway cycle)
Battery Life	Useful battery, 100,000 miles
Energy Storage System	Custom microprocessor-controlled lithium-ion battery pack
Full Charge	About 3.5 hours