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MARKET ANALYSIS TUSCAN

The weapons-grade Tuscan went from zero to classic status about as quickly as it hits 60mph, and unusually for such a young car,

they are actually fetching more today than they did four years ago. Good ones start at £19k, but you can pay twice that for the best.

Expected price in 2020: £35,000

TVR TUSCAN SPEED SIX vs MORGAN AERO 8

It's a battle of the Brits to find the hairiest, lairiest open-top of them all – for £30k or so

Even in subdued metallic colours, a TVR Tuscan looks wild. But here with its sculpted lines finished in Lamborghini Arancio Atlas and contrasting black go-faster stripes, it's visual dynamite. A sextuplet of headlights, perforated front grille and spectacularly rippled rear end lend it the look of a genetically modified Griffith. But that's nothing compared to the elephant in the room – the Morgan Aero 8's bug-eyed visuals. At launch, it received a right royal pummelling, with a certain BBC television programme's presenter repeatedly invoking *Deliverance* banjo music to cast aspersions on the purity of its bloodline.

The Morgan Motor Company finally relented and, in 2007, redesigned the front end to incorporate forward-facing MINI headlights, rather than the original inward-looking Beetle items. So where does that leave it today? Actually the Series-1's pre-laser correction aesthetics have mellowed and it doesn't appear as awkward as it once did. 'I actually prefer it to the later cars, with its rare centre-lock magnesium Oz alloys,' says owner Lee Fulford. 'I owned one and sold it, but immediately regretted it.'

So, for once, the TVR appears to be having sand kicked in its face. OK, it's not a true convertible, but it's a targa. And you could go on a month-long tour of Europe and take along enough clothes for two. And, lest we forget, it was the car in

TVR is ahead as you'd expect, with a 0-60mph time of 4.2 seconds and a 180mph maximum speed. The soundtrack is impressive, just as long as you like it very loud.

which Hugh Jackman and John Travolta mounted a guns ablazing getaway in the 2001 heist thriller *Swordfish*.

It's exciting when you crank up that straight-six. The gearchange is satisfyingly chunky and at low revs there's almost calming mechanical chuntering. Lay on the power and there's a visceral bellow, with instant throttle response and 310lb ft of torque allowing this 1100kg to hurl you forward maniacally. 'I'm thinking of tweaking the exhaust system,' says owner Mark Brown. 'As it's quieter than I'd like.' Only a TVR owner would say that with a straight face.

As a non-S, it has 360bhp, but it will still crack 0-60mph in 4.2sec, on its way to 180mph. With no driver aids, it's £

NEED TO KNOW TVR TUSCAN SPEED SIX

► 'You must check the Anderson connector,' says Dom Trickett of TVR Power (powersperformance.co.uk). 'They erode and the live wire falls onto the chassis. Replacements cost £42.'

► Chassis outriggers rust, and the area around the catalytic converters needs to be checked as they burn out and blow onto the steel tubing, causing it to rot. There are more parts available now than when TVR was trading.

► Improper servicing causes a lot of issues. 'History is important, especially if it's had an engine rebuild. We'll recondition an engine for £5400 and provide a three-year, unlimited mileage warranty, or if the customer comes to us for servicing for life, then it's five years and 100,000 miles.'

PARTS PRICES

Bonnet	£200
Clutch slave cylinder	£100
AP Racing twin plate clutch	£150
Rear screen	£100
Wheel bearing	£80

WHAT TO PAY

Concours	£25,000
Good	£17,000
Usable	£13,000
Project	£8,000

SPECIFICATIONS

Engine	3996cc/6-cyl/D
Power	360bhp@7000
Torque	310lb ft@5500
Maximum speed	180
0-60mph	4.2
Fuel consumption	18-22
Transmission	RWD, five-speed

'The TVR takes aural honours on the overrun, but under load, the bass of the Aero 8 wins easily'



MARKET ANALYSIS
MORGAN
AERO 8
There aren't a lot of Series 1 Aero 8s around, and that helps keep prices up. Almost all appear to have covered a limited mileage. Expect to pay £39k or more, and be prepared to travel for the right car.
Expected price in 2020: £37,500

proper old-school lairy boy, which in a straight-line means you can, and do, give it the full beans repeatedly. Even sitting at lights it causes engagement of your inner devil, as you

can't help but blip the throttle.

The Morgan is more sophisticated and the driving experience is dominated by inspiring dynamics. The sheer

width and structural rigidity of its aluminium chassis ensure it glides ferociously round corners. Get your

calculations wrong and huge AP Racing ventilated discs allow you to reel in speed in the blink of an eye.

Utilising BMW's 4.4-litre V8, there's 282bhp and 317lb ft available. Such is its flexibility you're able to minimise the

number of times you rattle through the Getrag gearbox's logs. Who'd ever have thought that big lump could sound so

glorious? The Tuscan takes the aural honours on the overrun, but on start-up and under load, the deep resonant

bass of the Aero 8 wins tailpipes down.

It's a raw, but always rewarding, driving experience. The transmission is bolted direct to the chassis, so there's a lot of

drivetrain noise. The cabin – beautifully finished with engine-turned dash, leather and wood – is pretty tight for

two, and you'll get a bag-and-a-half in the boot, while the hood is prone to water ingress. But who needs a roof?

The TVR is a rewarding drive, too. It's solid feeling, but quick steering allied with twitchy chassis characteristics

mean that, when things gets twisty, a more cerebral approach is required. Changes in camber are unerring,

and you're never sure quite where its limits lie. Is a tree-lined track the place you'd want to find out? No, thank you.

I know that TVRs have a bad reputation for reliability; says Mark. But I've never had any issues. There were

NEED TO KNOW

► 'Early SIs had OZ alloys,' says Nick Carr of Brands Hatch Morgans. 'They're prone to stress cracks and can even be bent. Replacements are not available, and originals can cost £1000 per set.'
► The mechanical coupling on the power steering pumps can fail. An upgraded electric steering kit was available but has been discontinued, so parts now have to be sourced individually, meaning costs vary due to what's available.
► 'Some cars have minor corrosion issues around the front end and rear lamps,' says Nick. 'Replacement hoods are not available for the Series 1'.
► Mechanically they're very strong. 'You get Morgan-type issues,' adds Nick. 'Gauges that don't work and rattles, but they're very good.'

SPECIFICATIONS

Engine	4398cc/V8/DOHC
Power	282bhp@7000rpm
Torque	317lb ft@3900rpm
Maximum speed	151mph
0-60mph	4.8sec
Fuel consumption	18-22mpg
Transmission	RWD, six-speed man

WHAT TO PAY

Concours	£45,000
Good	£40,000
Usable	£35,000
Project	£30,000

PARTS PRICES

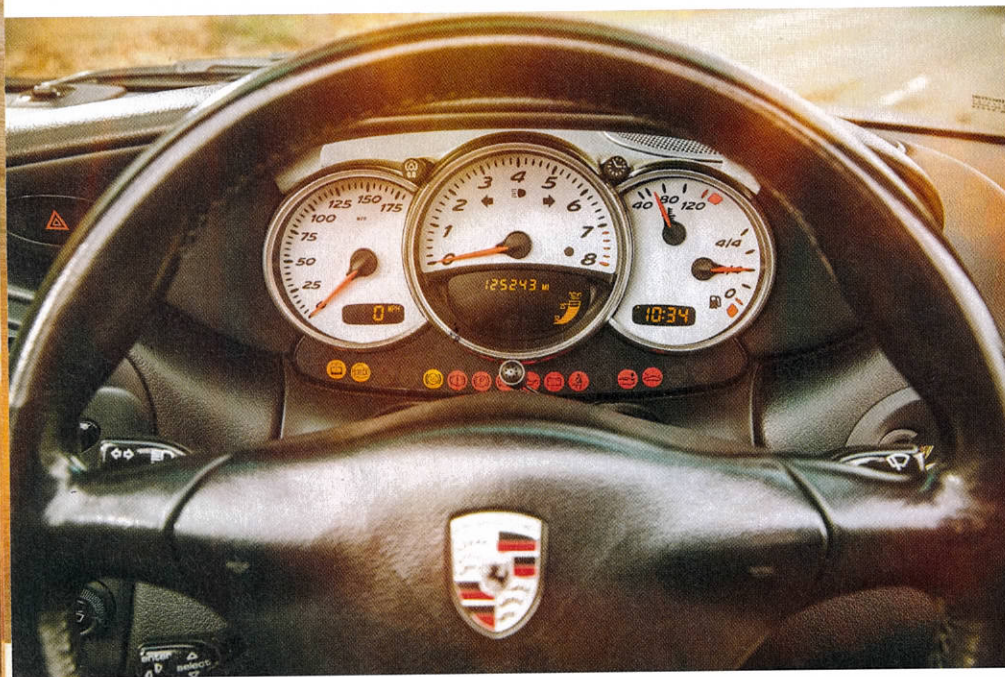
Brake pads (front)	£125
Service (small)	£600
Service (large)	£1000
Handbrake shoes	£202

problems with some engines when new, but most have been rectified by now. He budgets around £750 per year for servicing, and loves the sound, power and general look of the Tuscan. 'I certainly get a lot of attention in it.'
As for the Morgan, this 21st-century Malvern marvel will take touring and track days in its stride, and as with other models in the range, depreciation barely registers. With modern BMW running gear, it's supremely reliable, yet inevitably it all comes back to how it looks. 'My friend's daughter calls it my Cruella De Ville car,' says Lee. 'Quite. As for calling a winner in this pairing, that's down to how much you want to really stand out from the crowd.'

There are 1930s styling cues here, but we say that the Morgan goes round proper corners like a GT-style race car. It doesn't sound half bad either.

THE FINER POINTS

These eight convertibles are a million miles away from your humdrum saloons and hatches. But it's the details that will truly delight you – and here are the best bits

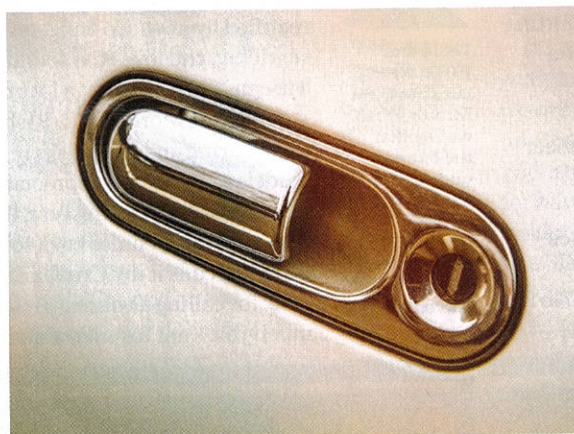


Light of your life

The Boxster's dash is a delight to behold, with overlapping gauges, stylised script, and a playfully curved bank of warning lights.

The big AP stoppers

The Morgan's race-developed brake discs and callipers not only look good, but have astonishing stopping power.



Parts bin joy

The MGF's interior is a surprisingly cohesive piece of design considering most of it was sourced from elsewhere in the Rover Group's portfolio.

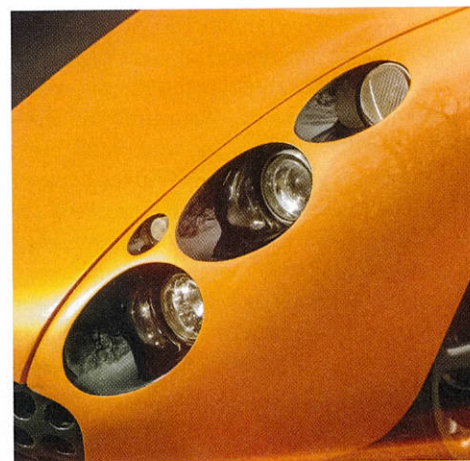


A good fingering

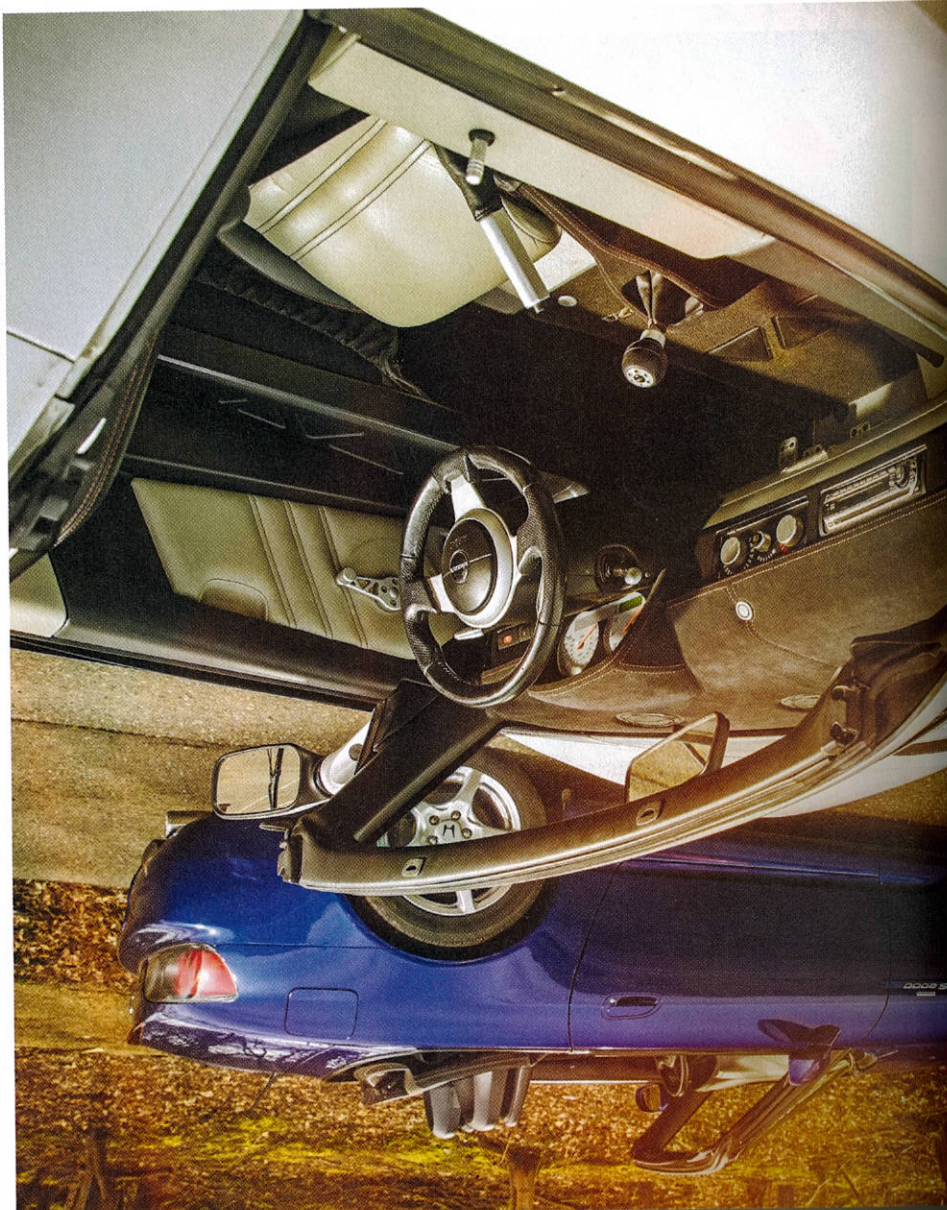
The Mazda MX-5's exterior door handles are among the most elegant units you'll ever come across. They were inspired by the delicate items you'd find on 1960s sports cars.

Let there be light

Why make do with a pair of headlights when six will do. The TVR looks like the devil's own work, and it'll undoubtedly scare small children.

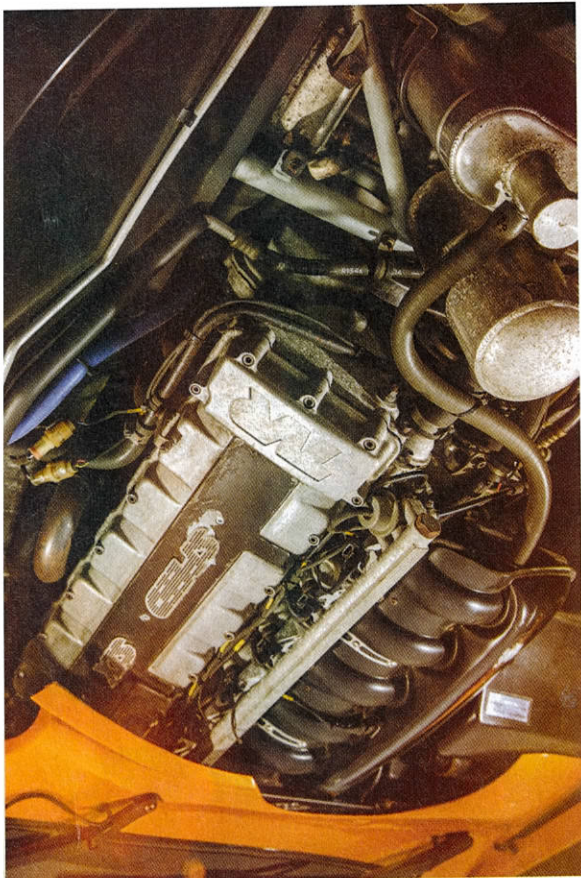
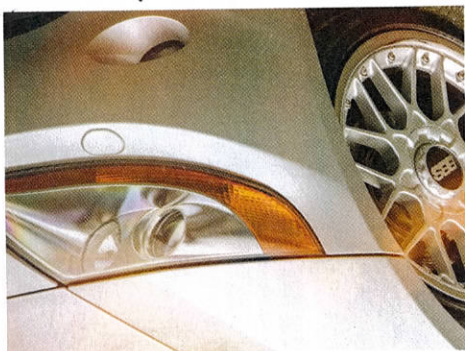


Bespoke Love
The Morgan Aero 8's dashboard reflects the car's low-volume, hand-built origins. The hand-turned aluminum looks fantastic, and the old-school dials buried in it look fantastic. Here's power, noise and drama in a singular package.



Pure 'n' simple
It's hard not to adore the VX220T's pared-back interior. There's not an ounce of unwanted weight, trim or equipment in there. You'll also enjoy feeling your bottom almost scrape the tarmac.

Bangle jangle
Chris Bangle's daring BMW designs have aged well – the Z4's headlamps were daring when new, but look quite routine now. Who'd have thought it?





The Modern Classics view

Never have drop-tops been so accomplished and, in some cases, inexpensive. Each of our selected cars offers a distinctive and heady experience, but the one you choose will depend on budget, taste and personal preference. What do you covet: get in and go reliability, relaxed cruising, nut-job performance or badge-kudos?

The Tuscan, Aero 8 and VX220 Turbo are all fierce, 'special-occasion cars. They'll excel at weekend blasts, road trips or track days, but are a little too compromised for everyday use. The remainder of the mass-produced Japanese, German and lone Brit offerings live up to their accepted stereotypes with incredible reliability, Teutonic build quality and quintessential links to a bygone era.

So which to go for? In the from-£1k shoot-out, both choices have excellent spares back-up and club scenes, but it has to be the MX-5, as it's just so slick and enchanting. The surprise is that the MGF isn't that far behind, especially when you factor in prices.

In the from-£4k German faceoff, both cars offer exceptional build quality and stunning dynamics, but be prepared to pay the parts prices. The Boxster S can be had for silly money, it's equivalent to a top-of-the-range BMW and it's damned good. The clever money says the Porsche is a great long-term bet and dynamically brilliant to boot.

At £10k, it's more difficult. These two are niche buys and it's definitely down to what you want. The Honda is a fizzer that'll still do the daily commute with aplomb, while the VX220 Turbo is quite simply mad, bad and distinctly dangerous to know. Factoring in investment makes this an easy victory for Vauxhall.

At the top level, the best Aero 8 examples are considerably pricier than equivalent Tuscan. Both cars attract phenomenal levels of attention and reward you with perfect heartrate-pounding, adrenaline-secreting ratios. No matter the speed, the Morgan always feels assured, while the TVR lives on a serrated knife-edge. Life's short, so we'd plump for the Tuscan, especially in that colour.

Overall winner? No doubt about it: the Mazda MX-5. It never fails to elicit a smile, as it's just a sweet, perfectly balanced machine. Buy the earliest one you can find, cherish it, and remember: top always down.

'Each offers a distinctive experience, but the one you choose will depend on budget, taste and personal preference'

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