

AMERICAN MUSCLE IS HERE!

Right-hand Drive Corvette Now Available in SA

It had taken 72 years, but now, for the first time, the legendary Chevy Corvette is officially available in South Africa, courtesy of the CVH Auto Group, which is now importing the Corvette Stingray in both convertible and coupé form to the country.

Ten years ago, in July 2015, I had the opportunity to drive all seven generations of the iconic Chevy Corvette – from the C1 that debuted in 1953 at the GM Motorama as a fibreglass convertible with six-cylinder engine, the distinctive C3 Stingray of 1969, the completely redesigned C4 of 1985 and C5 of 1997, as well as the C7, the latest model at that stage – on Belle Isle during a visit to General Motor's headquarters in Detroit.

Although the primary reason for our visit was to get more insight into new generation GM drivetrain technology (mainly Opel developed), and the new Impala and Malibu sedans, the talking point inevitably was the upcoming C8 Corvette (slated for 2020) and whether this model would (at long last) be made available in right-hand drive.

From the information garnered here, it was clear GM was keen to follow Ford's example with the Mustang to develop a right-hand drive (RHD) version of the 'Vette, the personification of the all-American sports car...and this left me with high expectations for the future.

Unfortunately, history dictated otherwise, as two short years later, the General – after a presence of 104 years in South Africa (including a period of 11 years rebranded as Delta Motor Corporation) – decided to completely withdraw from the country. It was a massive blow to the country and loyal Chevy owners, especially since, in a groundbreaking move, RHD derivatives of the C8 generation (with its mid-engine architecture) began rolling off the Corvette assembly line in 2021.

While several Corvettes from all generations were imported to South Africa over the years (including some exquisite examples converted to right-

hand drive), the iconic sports car was never officially made available in the country, until now.

FACTORY-BUILT STINGRAYS

CVH Auto Group in Bryanston, Gauteng, has announced that it will bring the factory-built right-hand drive Corvette Stingrays – all of which come standard with the Z51 Performance Package – locally, with the even more aggressive Corvette Z06 set to follow.

The C8 is the first rear mid-engine Corvette ever, with a completely new aluminium architecture and coilover springs replacing the rear transverse mono-leaf spring used on prior models. In line with its GT3 and Le Mans racing ambitions, the exterior features more aggressive aerodynamics, such as larger air intakes and prominent side scoops.

A rear trunk and additional storage





space at the front provide 370 litres of luggage space, and compared to its C7 predecessor (and as a result of the switch to a mid-engine layout), the cockpit has been shifted forward by 420 mm. The C8 sports a new hexagonal steering wheel (with special Z button to activate customised performance setting), numerous controls mounted on the centre console, a 12" digital instrument screen and an 8" touchscreen.

Interestingly, the C8 convertible made its debut in October 2019 during a media event at the Kennedy Space Centre to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 mission (The Corvette has a strong association with American astronauts starting with a special leasing programme in the 1960s, and Apollo 13 commander Jim Lovell, who recently passed away, leased several Corvettes, including a silver C3 from 1968).

Local Stingrays will be available in two trim levels (2LT and 3LT), augmented by three suspension setups (FE1, FE3, and FE4), which correspond to the two Z51 Performance packages. In addition, three seat options will be

available: GT1, GT2 and Competition Sport. Pricing for the fully homologated Corvettes starts from R3,700,000 and includes a service plan and warranty, according to the CVH Auto Group. Finance and insurance are also available.

HYPERCAR PERFORMANCE

Endowed with the LT2 cross-plane crankshaft 6.2-litre V8, the latest in the LS-based GM small-block engine family, and an eight-speed dual-clutch auto transmission, the local Stingrays have a shorter final drive and enhanced cooling, NPP sports exhaust system, electronic LSD, and performance tyres, delivering 369 kW at 6,450 rpm and 628 Nm of torque at 5,150 rpm – good enough for a 3.5-second zero to 100 km/h sprint and a 312 km/h top speed.

The next-tier Corvette Z06 features the LT6 high-output, naturally aspirated 5.5-litre V8 engine producing 500 kW at 8,400 rpm and 624 Nm of torque at 6,300 rpm, paired with an eight-speed dual-clutch transmission and rear-wheel drive – giving it a zero to 100 km/h sprint time of 3.1 seconds and a top speed of 314 km/h.





In addition to the enhancements found on the Stingray, the Z06 is equipped with more performance features, including Magnetic Selective Ride Control, larger brakes (with available carbon ceramic options), and a dedicated track-focused aero package, which provides exceptional handling and stopping power for its class.

Although not yet available locally, the even more muscular C8 ZR1 is the most powerful production Corvette ever. Motivated by a 5.5-litre flat-plane crank V8 (LT7) with twin turbochargers delivering a monstrous 793 kW and 1,122 Nm of torque, the flagship 'Vette achieves a GM-estimated zero to 100 km/h time of 2.4 seconds, a quarter-mile in 9.6 seconds, and a top speed over 346 km/h. Key features of the ZR1 include significant carbon fibre aero that generates over 545 kg of downforce, as well as upsized brakes and tyres for enhanced grip.

IN CONCLUSION

Over the years, the Corvette has consistently broken speed barriers, including the first sub-seven-second

time in 1957, the first sub-four-second time in 1990, and the fastest-ever 2.6-second time in the 2024 E-Ray hybrid. The Corvette racing programme also has achieved significant success, with multiple championships in the IMSA SportsCar Championship and the American Le Mans Series, as well as nine victories at the 24 Hours of Le Mans.

Recently, the electrified all-wheel-drive Corvette ZR1X set the record for the fastest American car at the Nürburgring's Nordschleife, with a time of 6:49.275, while the ZR1 set a time of 6:50.763. And even more recently, Chevrolet displayed two Corvette concept cars, the Corvette CX and CX.R Vision Gran Turismo, at The Quail, a Motorsports Gathering, in Monterey, California, serving as inspiration for future Corvette designs... hopefully for models that will also be available here. ⑩

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