



Europa

LOTUS EUROPA

It was inevitable, but somehow sad that the American buyer is restricted to just one model of Lotus . . . the Elan having vanished from our shores last year. However, the Europa Special is a dandy sports car, and fully qualified to wear the Lotus badge. Changes are truly minimal for the new year, and like most of the British cars importers, the Lotus people have little news and no photos of the 1974 model, but they expect no changes beyond the interlocks for safety belts and ignition, and similar stuff.

First introduced in this country in 1966, the Europa was instantly tagged by the buffs as Colin Chapman's bread wagon, in reference to its slab-sided body design. The Europa was the first mid-engined sports car offered for sale at a price (then under \$4000) that the general public could afford. It was a common market car with the fiberglass body and backbone chassis by Lotus coupled to Renault running gear. However, the racing version used the Lotus-Ford twin cam engine, but this nifty little engine was not the de-smogged version sold in the Elan. So, for several years Europa customers in this country were obliged to accept the Renault R-16 powerplant.

Over the years the Europa has been gradually refined from tip to toe, and the quality of assembly and workability of the drive train have improved a good deal. Presently U.S. buyers are offered just one model, the top of the line with the twin-cam Lotus-Ford 1600 engine. Fed by twin

Stromberg carburetors, the famous powerplant provides 113 SAE net horsepower at 6500 rpm and 104 lbs/ft of torque at 5000 rpm. The compression ratio here is lower than the European model engine, at 9.5 to 1, but the twin cammer, in California at least, should be fed premium gas. It requires 91 octane minimum. About the only hangover from the original drive train is the Renault based trans-axle/gearbox. Today it is a five speeds forward manual gearbox, and most of the vague feel to the linkage on the early Europa is long gone.

The fiberglass body has changed gradually over the years, and the rear styling has been streamlined to improve rearward vision. Twin bullet shaped outside mirrors also help the rear vision problem, and forward visibility is good for all but the tallest of drivers. The Europa Special received new and more comfortable bucket seats, and, although it takes some athletic maneuvering to enter the car, once you are inside it is quite comfortable. The dash is finished in varnished wood, and is complete with a full brace of instrumentation. The Lotus holds only a driver and passenger in the cockpit, but there is an open cubby box plus door pockets for inside storage of small items. The front trunk area combined with the space behind the middle engine will hold a total of 4.8 cubic feet of certain shaped luggage. The Europa is a sports car, not a Grand Touring device, but you can do long distance motoring by packing judiciously.

Performance is what the Lotus Europa is all about. It stops as well as it goes with big, servo assisted Girling disc brakes on the front. The all independent suspension provides a good ride quality too, but it is handling that is the forte of the Europa. It was designed to corner better than anything else legal for street use, and it does this task very, very well. It is, like the Elite and the Elan, a car built for fun driving . . . a real sporting piece of equipment, and the Europa does make driving a pure joy for those who appreciate its design sophistication. Lotus claims that the Europa is a race bred car, but it is really more of a racing car than a boulevardier. The interior accommodation is far from spacious, and there are no special extras for creature comfort. It is carpeted, has nice seats, and that's about it. No attempt at the usual air conditioning or automatic transmission business has been made in the option list, and it probably never will be. Lotus has always made streetable race cars for their production machines, and the Europa Special is more than typical of this breed. The car is high in price, over six grand, small in aspect and in actual size—a pure single purpose car—a real sports car. Only the devoted enthusiast would want the Lotus for his own, and he alone will put up with its little idiosyncrasies for the sheer joy of driving it.

LOTUS EUROPA SPECIAL

Data in Brief

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase	92 in.
Overall length	157.5 in.
Height	42.5 in.
Width	64.5 in.
Tread-front/rear	53.5/53.0 in.
Fuel capacity	15 gal
Steering type & ratio	Rack & pinion
Turning diameter	41 ft
Luggage capacity	4.8 cu ft
Design passenger load	2 passenger
Curb weight	1555 lbs

ENGINE—Standard

Type	4 cyl. in-line DOHC
Displacement	95.1 CID (1558cc)
Horsepower	113 (SAE net) at 6500 rpm
Torque	104 lb/ft at 5000 rpm

DRIVELINE

Transmission	5-speed, manual, all synchro
Drive axle ratio	3.77 to 1

BRAKES

Front	disc (power assist)
Rear	drum

SUSPENSION

Front	independent, unequal length wish bones, coil springs, tubular shocks, anti-roll bar
Rear	independent, trailing radius arms, transverse links, coil springs, tubular shocks

WHEELS & TIRES

Wheels	5½ J x 13
Tires	front 175/70 x 13 HR, rear 185/70 x 13 HR