



Highland Hottubs & Spas

www.highlandhottub.com

(902) 295-1930

85 MacQuarrie Rd, Middle River, NS B0E 1B0

Mini Truck / KEI Information

What is a Kei Car?

Also known as "keijidōsha" (Japanese for light motor vehicle), Kei is a Japanese classification of small vehicles which encompass a wide range of categories including Sports, Retro-styled, Convertibles, trucks, minivans, mini SUV and hatchback.

All Kei Cars are manufactured to comply to government set regulations which dictate among other things, physical size and engine output and shown below.

Maximum Length - 3.3m

Maximum Width - 1.4m

Maximum Displacement - 660cc

Why do people in Japan buy Kei Cars?

Kei Cars are extremely popular in Japan for a few reasons. Firstly, substantial insurance and tax savings are given by the government as an incentive to owning these cars. Secondly, due to their compact nature, these cars are a perfect fit for driving in the city as they offer excellent maneuverability and handling. Thirdly, all Kei Cars are incredibly fuel efficient in both city and highway use. Typically 40-60 MPG is the norm.

Why would I want to buy a Kei Car?

Obviously all the points listed above apply to us as well. But the main reason why most of us would want a Kei Cars are their practicality and uniqueness. There is a Kei Car that fits the needs of anyone, from a convertible, a gull winged sports car, a truck and more.

Why is the mileage so low on these cars?

Vehicles in Japan are driven substantially less than their North American counterparts. On average around 5,000 miles per year compared to 15,000 miles per year here. This is due to the high costs associated with driving a car in Japan (tolls, gas, "shaken" etc.) which leads most people to rely on Japan's highly efficient public transportation system.

These cars are pretty old, will they break down?

15 years may sound old to North American standards, but definitely not in Japan. The key to this is "Shaken". Shaken is a mandatory government certification/insurance program dating back to the end of WWII. This is an extremely stringent process which makes our Canadian certifications pale in comparison. Both major and minor mechanical/electronic components in a car is inspected with a fine tooth comb and item that is even slightly out of spec is replaced. Once vehicles reach 3 years of age must complete their first Shaken, and every 2 years after it must be completed until it reaches 10 years where the interval changes to EVERY YEAR. Each Shaken costs on average between \$800-\$2,000CN so by the time we get these vehicles, \$8,000 - \$14,000 worth of mandatory maintenance has been performed in its lifetime. Japan also has a warm, snow free climate which keeps rust in check and as mentioned previously, Japanese cars typically have very low mileage. These factors contribute to cars that are in very good mechanical and cosmetic shape.

How about insurance?

Surprisingly insurance is probably lower than you expected and typically is comparable to a late model car of the same vintage. Insuring a Kei Car is no different than insuring any other car with the exception that some insurance companies require an appraisal of the car.

Take for instance a "real world" example of a 1991 Honda Beat convertible coupe. In the Halton region (Burlington) it would cost a male in his late 20s \$1,100/year to insure. In addition, being 15 years old, these cars classify as "Special Interest" vehicles and as such, you can obtain specialty insurance. The Honda Beat described above would only cost \$190/year!

How about repairs?

Maintenance and repairs is a topic that is often of concern to potential buyers. Fortunately, Kei cars can be repaired by any competent mechanic whether it be at your local dealership, the local neighbourhood garage or even yourself. In fact, these cars are generally easier to work on since the engines (3 or 4 cylinder) and related components are smaller and less complex than your typical late model vehicle.

In fact, the mini trucks that we carry are so easy to work on, you can literally do most of the repairs sitting in the cabin or the truck bed of the vehicle!

How about parts?

In the spirit of cost saving, Auto manufacturers opted to build many Kei cars using components from the parts bin from other "non Kei" vehicles of the same vintage. For example, the Honda Beat shares some components with the Honda Civic of that era. The Toyota Sera is based on a Paseo/Tercel platform and the Nissan Pao, S-Cargo and Figaro share components with the Nissan Micra.

We can readily obtain any model specific part you may need, however they may need be ordered and shipped from Japan or the UK. Because of this, it is best to take a "proactive" approach to repairs. We do however keep on hand some basic maintenance parts.

Is it legal to own one of these cars?

Yes! In Canada it is completely legal to own and drive any of the cars that we offer on our website. Importation regulations allow for vehicle registration and licensing of any motor vehicle (excluding buses) from abroad as long as it is 15 years old, to the month. (ie. a vehicle manufactured in May 1991 would be eligible for Canadian importation in May 2006)

All of the vehicles we sell also come with an Ontario Drive Clean emission test certificate and an Ontario Safety Standards Certificate.

What about Right Hand drive?

Most of our vehicles from Japan are "Right Hand" drive as opposed to our North American "Left Hand" drive layout. This may seem awkward, but in actuality it doesn't make much of an impact on driving because Kei Cars are narrow enough to provide a clear view when making left hand turns. Apart from the shifter and windshield wiper/turn signal stalks being on opposite sides, everything else is the same. There are also some benefits to right hand driving. For instance, exiting the car leads directly to the sidewalk and parallel parking is easier as you have a better view.

Why buy from Kei Cars?

Vehicles purchased from us are in our possession and sold lien free with complete paperwork history. (Japanese export paperwork, Service paperwork etc) All of our cars have had at the minimum, complete basic tune-up performed which includes:

- Spark Plugs, Air Filter, Oil Filter
- Oil/Brake/Gear/Steering/Coolant Fluids Flush and Fill
- Drive belts and Timing Belt/Tensioner Replacement (If Required)
- New Tires (If Required)

Vehicles are also given a complete interior and exterior detail job. Our cars are sold with a valid Ontario Drive Clean and Ontario Safety Certificate unless otherwise noted or requested. Upon finalization of the purchase, the title will be transferred into

your name. If required, we would be happy assist you in obtaining insurance through the automotive broker that we use.

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