

25 Years of Chrysler Minivans—a Timeline of Innovations

The Minivan Formula

In 1977, a small team of Chrysler designers and engineers began working on what they called the “magic wagon.” With the program formally approved in 1980, the “minivan,” as it would become, was as comfortable as any traditional American station wagon, but more spacious, versatile and economical, and it would fit into an average garage.

A front-engine, front-wheel-drive design allowed the first minivan to have an interior with a flat floor. Ease of access and loading were also important, leading to a sliding side door, one-piece tailgate and fold-down/removable seats. Ultimately, the Dodge Caravan and Plymouth Voyager debuted in 1983 as vehicles that friends and family conveniently stepped into, like a car, rather than climbing up and into a full-size van.

1983-1984

First minivan introduced to the market (the “T-115” first front-wheel-drive small van)

November 2, 1983, Chrysler Chairman Lee A. Iacocca marks the production of the first minivan at Windsor Assembly Plant in Ontario, Canada

First models include Dodge Caravan, Dodge Caravan C/V and Plymouth Voyager

Total of 210,000 Caravan and Voyager vehicles are sold in the first full year of sales. With the break-even point of 155,000 annually, the minivan plays a major part in restoring Chrysler to profitability

Zinc Institute Award of Excellence for Corrosion Protection in 1984 is first award given to the minivan (Plymouth Voyager)

1985

Car and Driver selects Plymouth Voyager minivan as one of its “10 Best”

Chrysler introduces a flexible seating option, the innovative “Convert-a-Bed” Travel Package in its minivans

Plymouth introduces Voyager SE model termed “Magic Camper Package.” This model comes complete with 8x10-foot (2.4x3.0-meter) canvas tent

1986

Company introduces optional light-duty tow package for minivans

1987

One million minivans sold

First minivan to offer selection of petrol engines

- First minivan with V-6 engine, a 3.0-liter
- New 2.5-liter four-cylinder powertrain replaces original 2.2-liter

Late 1987 model year, Chrysler is the first to offer a long-wheelbase option and expands the minivan market by introducing the Dodge Grand Caravan and Plymouth Grand Voyager

Company begins exporting the Chrysler Voyager minivan for sale in Europe

Eight-passenger seating option premieres for premium short- and long-wheelbase models

1988

Plymouth Voyager and Grand Voyager receive Automobile magazine's "All-Star" award

1989

Plymouth Voyager receives Motor Trend's "Top Ten New Car Buys" and Automobile magazine's "All-Star" award

1990

Two million minivans sold

Company invents the luxury minivan market segment with introduction of Chrysler Town & Country

Plymouth Voyager receives Motor Trend's "Top Ten New Car Buys" and Automobile magazine's "All-Star" award

1991

Company introduces all-new second generation of America's best-selling minivan ("AS" platform) with newly styled exterior and interior with several minivan-first features including standard driver-side air bag, child safety locks on sliding door, available four-wheel anti-lock brakes, available Quad Command seating and available all-wheel drive

New 3.3-liter petrol engine added to minivan lineup

Plymouth Voyager receives numerous awards, including Motor Trend's "Top Ten New Car Buys," Automobile magazine's "All-Star" and MotorWeek's "Best Minivan"

1992

Three million minivans sold

Company is first to offer integrated child safety seats

European production of Chrysler's short- and long-wheelbase minivans begins in a joint venture with Steyr-Daimler-Puch (Eurostar) in Graz, Austria

1993

Four million minivans sold

Company celebrates 10th Anniversary of the Minivan with Chrysler and Dodge anniversary models introduced to mark the milestone

Chrysler leaps ahead with the first all-electric minivan – TEVan – and produces them on the same production line as gasoline-powered minivans at the Windsor Assembly Plant in Ontario, Canada. Approximately 56 TEVans are produced for fleet use only

Chrysler Voyager gains extra appeal for European buyers with an economical turbo-diesel version sold exclusively in markets outside North America. Chrysler Voyager and Grand Voyager capture 23 percent of the European minivan market

Chrysler expands minivan sales into the Middle East, South America and Pacific markets

After 10 years, Chrysler minivans have the highest U.S. loyalty rating of any vehicle on the road

1994

Chrysler improves on safety with minivan-first passenger-side air bags and dynamic side-impact protection

Company produces first minivans to meet the 1997 California Ultra Low Emission Vehicle (ULEV) certification

Ozone-friendly air conditioning refrigerant, R134A, is introduced on all Company minivans

Dodge Caravan and Plymouth Voyager receive new sports suspension package

Powertrain upgrades include a new 3.8-liter petrol engine and a 3.3-liter Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) alternative fuel engine

1995

Five million minivans sold

The 100,000th Chrysler Voyager is manufactured at Eurostar in Graz, Austria, on March 31, 1995

1996

Company introduces first-ever cab-forward third-generation minivans ("NS" platform), with more than a dozen minivan-first features including 16-inch wheels and tires for enhanced performance, Easy-Out Roller Seats®, adjustable cup holders, adjustable reclining rear child seat with molded seat cushion and dual-action rear drum brakes

Chrysler Town & Country, Dodge Grand Caravan and Plymouth Grand Voyager expand their cargo capabilities with a U.S. minivan-first driver-side sliding door and are the first minivans capable of transporting 4x8-foot (1.2x2.4-meter) material without removing second- and third-row seats

Plymouth Voyager and Grand Voyager win "North American Car of the Year" at the 1996 North American International Auto Show

Dodge Caravan earns Motor Trend's "Car of the Year" award, a first for the minivan category

Chrysler, Dodge and Plymouth minivans receive numerous awards, including Car and Driver's "Ten Best," Automobile magazine's "All-Star" and AutoWeek's "North American Car of the Year"

Chrysler debuts an all-electric minivan concept called EPIC (Electric Powered Interurban Commuter Vehicle) at the North American International Auto Show

New 2.4-liter four-cylinder dual-overhead cam engine replaces 2.5-liter unit

1997

Six million minivans sold

Company manufactures EPIC, an all-electric minivan on the "NS" platform, with advanced lead acid batteries. EPIC is more powerful than the TEVan and features a range of 120 miles (193 kilometers). EPICs are manufactured and sold exclusively to government and utility fleets

The Enhanced Accident Response System (EARS) is available only on Chrysler minivans, and traction control becomes an available option

Expanding internationally, the first right-hand-drive minivans are manufactured at Eurostar in Graz, Austria

Sales of the right-hand-drive Chrysler Voyager start in March—over 2,000 are sold in its first month of sales in the UK

1998

Seven million minivans sold

Company celebrates 15th Anniversary of the Minivan

Chrysler takes the luxury minivan to new heights by introducing the 1999 Chrysler Town & Country Limited. New features include chromed wheels and door handles, body-color luggage rack, winged badge on liftgate, a rear seat with center armrest, upgraded seating material, carpeting and steering-wheel audio controls

Chrysler minivans are first to offer Flex Fuel Vehicle (FFV) availability and rear seatback-mounted grocery bag hooks

Chrysler's electric-powered minivan, EPIC, improves with higher performing nickel metal-hydride batteries

1999

Eight million minivans sold

Chrysler and Dodge minivans are first to offer an Auto Stick transaxle and 17-inch wheels and tires for enhanced performance

2000

Setting a new world record for fuel economy, a Chrysler Voyager SE fitted with a 2.5-liter common-rail turbo-diesel (CRD) engine travels 1,724 kilometers (1,077 miles) on a single tank

Chrysler minivans are the first to offer a 6.4-inch (16.2-centimeter) LCD screen and wireless headphones for in-vehicle entertainment

The 3.8-liter engine with all-wheel drive meets Low Emission Vehicle (LEV) standards in Northeast Trading Region states

2001

Nine millionth minivan is produced at Eurostar in Graz, Austria

Company introduces fourth generation of the minivan ("RS" platform), described by Road & Track magazine as "the most innovative vehicle to come out of Detroit for decades." New generation of minivans have even more minivan-first features including power liftgate, dual power-sliding doors, power-sliding door obstacle detection, removable powered center console, pop-up rear cargo organizer, three-zone automatic temperature control and split rear 50/50 Easy-Out Roller Seats

A newly revised 3.8-liter six-cylinder produces almost 50 more horsepower than the previous generation's engine – Chrysler minivans are the first to offer more than 210 horsepower

MotorWeek awards Chrysler minivans "Best Minivan" award

Dodge Caravan is the best-selling vehicle in Canada

2002

e-minivan models introduced for customers price-shopping for minivans on the Internet

2003

Ten million minivans sold

Company celebrates 20th Anniversary of the Minivan with Chrysler and Dodge anniversary models introduced to mark the milestone

2004

Company introduces 2005 model-year minivan with more minivan-first features including the innovative Stow 'n Go® seating and storage system

Fourth generation receives exterior and interior refresh

Factory-installed SIRIUS Satellite Radio is available for U.S. customers

Three-row side-curtain air bags and Occupant Classification System (OCS) are available

Chrysler minivans begin to offer what is now known as uconnect phone with Bluetooth wireless technology, among many other new and unique features

Chrysler Grand Voyager launches sales of the Chrysler brand in China

2005

11 million minivans sold

Chrysler and Dodge minivans continue to garner industry accolades with 35 more awards

2006

Chrysler Voyager and Grand Voyager are consistently one of the Company's top three best-selling vehicles outside North America

DVD changer is updated to play any CD or DVD—including MP3, DVD audio, DVD-R and DVD-RW

2007

12 million minivans sold

Company introduces 2008 model-year fifth-generation long-wheelbase minivan ("RT" platform), with distinct brand identity for both Chrysler and Dodge, along with 35 new or improved features over the previous generation

Fifth-generation minivan-first features include a removable two-part sliding front console with power outlet, umbrella holder, dual DVD entertainment system that can play different media simultaneously, dual A/V jacks, 115-volt inverter and 12-volt power outlet in C-pillar, ambient halo light package with movable LED pinpoint lighting, integrated child booster seat, removable and rechargeable LED flashlight and available first- and second-row heated seats in cloth or leather

The "family room on wheels" concept is taken to a new level with the minivan-first Swivel 'n Go™ seating system

First minivan to offer Stain Repel seat fabric

First minivan in North America to offer a six-speed automatic transaxle

Dodge Caravan is first Dodge brand vehicle to be built and sold in China

2008

Company celebrates 25 Years of the Minivan—a quarter-century of innovation and leadership in the segment that Chrysler created

Unique 25th Anniversary Edition models for Chrysler and Dodge are introduced to mark the milestone

Four more minivan-first features are introduced for the 2009 model-year minivans including Blind Spot Monitoring System, Rear Cross Path System, SmartBeam® headlamps and swiveling third-row entertainment monitor

Chrysler and Dodge minivans with new 4.0-liter fuel economy optimization offer unsurpassed fuel economy, without sacrificing power (25 highway mpg U.S.)

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