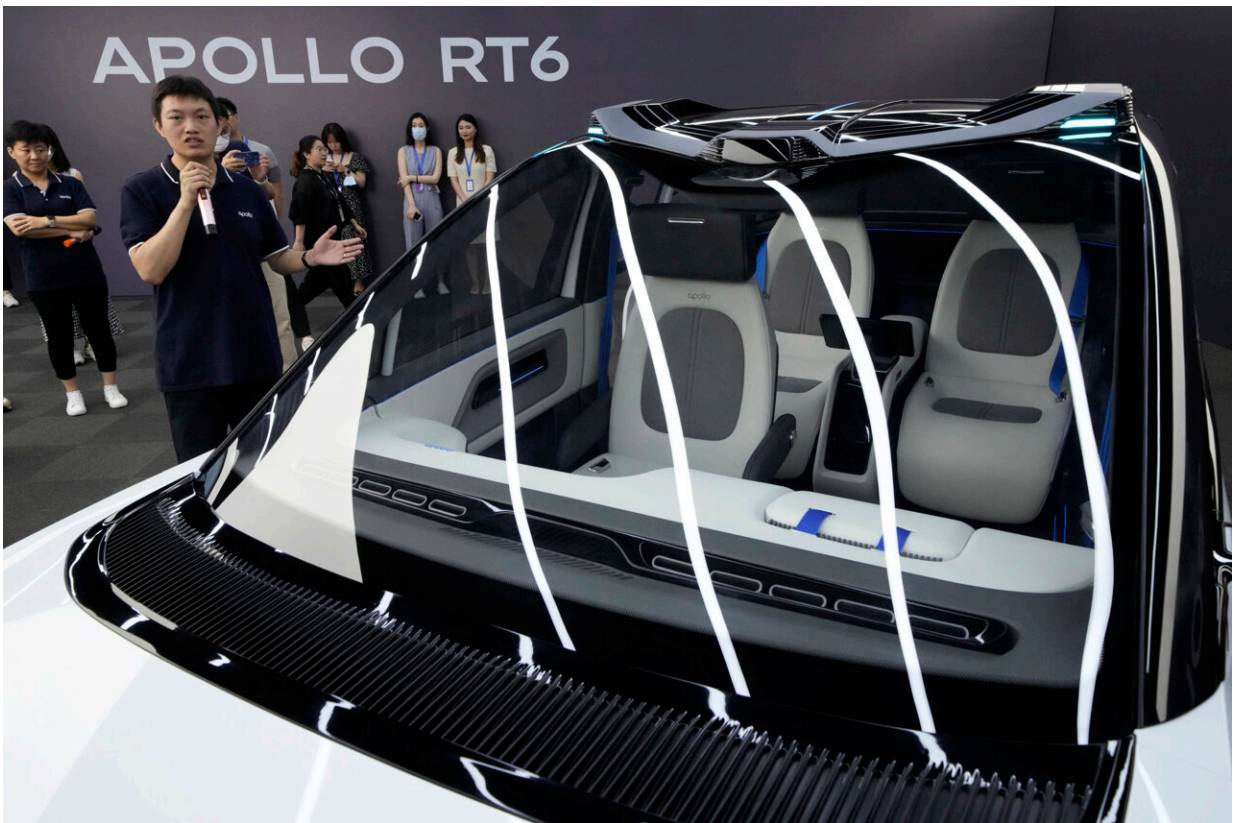


# Baidu unveils latest autonomous electric vehicle: Apollo RT6

July 21 2022, by ZEN SOO

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Xu Baoqiang, general manager of Baidu Autonomous Driving Vehicle manager, briefs members of the media on the Apollo RT6, a fully electric vehicle with an "optional" steering wheel that can be removed or installed when required, Wednesday, July 20, 2022, in Beijing. Chinese search engine and artificial intelligence firm Baidu on Thursday, July 21 unveiled its latest electric autonomous driving vehicle that it says will be soon be part of its robotaxi fleet, as China pushes forward with its autonomous driving ambitions. Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan

Baidu, a Chinese search engine and artificial intelligence firm, unveiled its latest electric autonomous driving vehicle on Thursday.

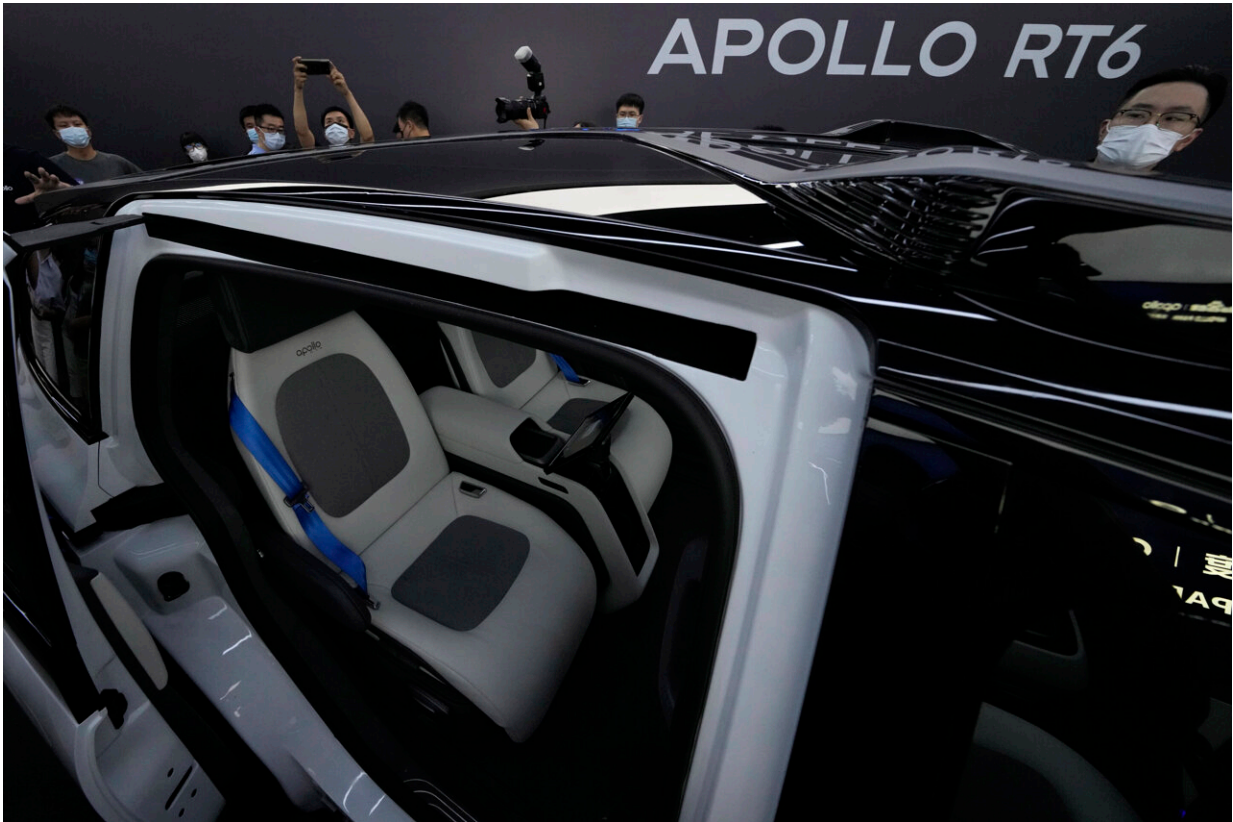
The Apollo RT6 will be soon be part of Baidu's robotaxi fleet, as China pushes forward with its autonomous driving ambitions. It is a fully electric vehicle with a steering wheel that can be removed or installed when required, and will cost 250,000 yuan (\$37,000) per unit.

"This massive cost reduction will enable us to deploy tens of thousands of [autonomous vehicles](#) across China," Robin Li, co-founder and CEO of Baidu, said at the firm's Baidu World conference Thursday.

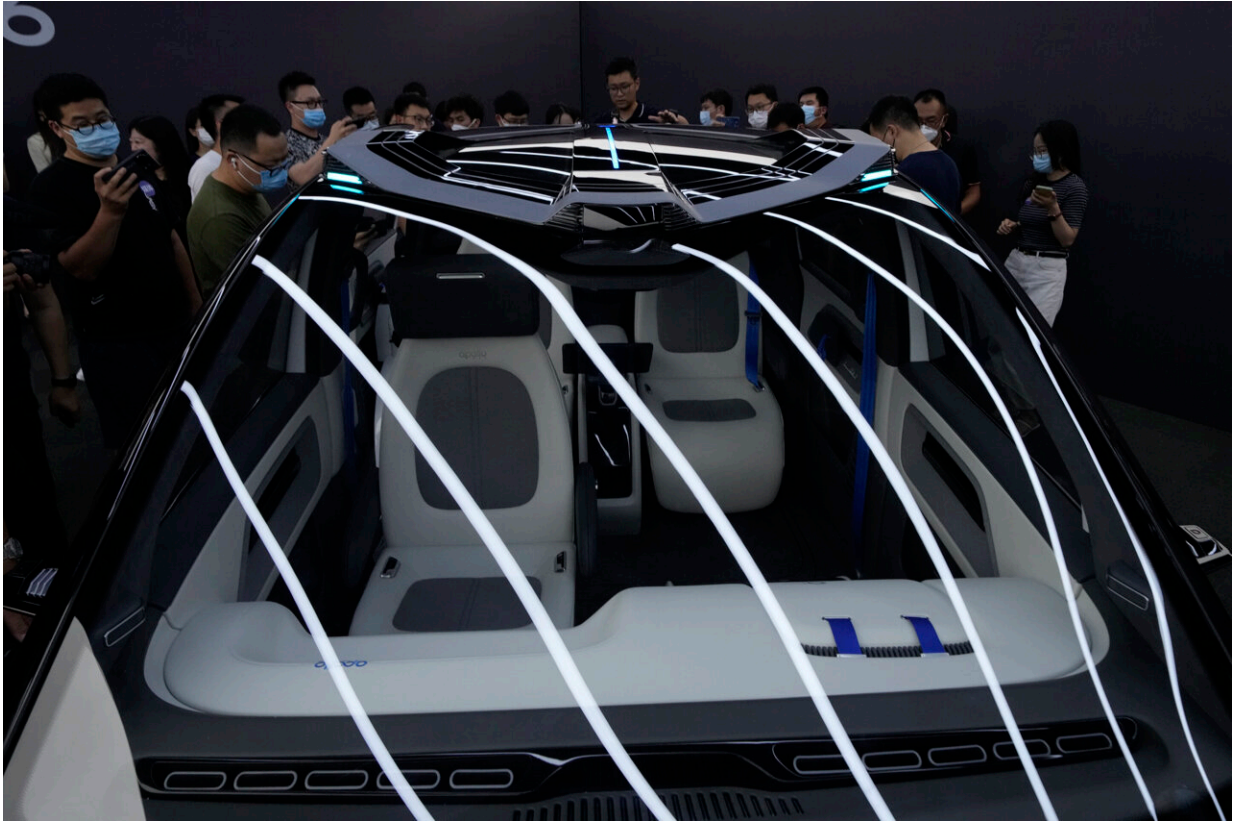
"We are moving towards a future where taking a robotaxi will be half the cost of taking a taxi today."

Baidu already runs Apollo Go, an autonomous ride-hailing service using self-driving robotaxis with safety staff seated in the driver or passenger seat. It has launched Apollo Go in big cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Guangzhou, although the service is limited to specific areas.

The RT6 also attained the industry's Level 4 out of five possible levels of technology. That means its systems can operate without a driver but must be pre-loaded with a detailed map, thus limiting the areas where the vehicles can operate.



Journalists attend a preview of the Apollo RT6, a fully electric vehicle with an "optional" steering wheel that can be removed or installed when required, Wednesday, July 20, 2022, in Beijing. Chinese search engine and artificial intelligence firm Baidu on Thursday, July 21 unveiled its latest electric autonomous driving vehicle that it says will be soon be part of its robotaxi fleet, as China pushes forward with its autonomous driving ambitions. Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan



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A woman attends a preview of the Apollo RT6, a fully electric vehicle with an "optional" steering wheel that can be removed or installed when required, Wednesday, July 20, 2022, in Beijing. Chinese search engine and artificial intelligence firm Baidu on Thursday, July 21 unveiled its latest electric autonomous driving vehicle that it says will be soon be part of its robotaxi fleet, as China pushes forward with its autonomous driving ambitions. Credit: AP Photo/Ng Han Guan



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Lower levels of technology range from cruise control, a feature that has been available for decades, up to Level 3, which allows hands-free highway driving. Self-driving robot carts already are widely used in factories, warehouses and other tightly controlled settings.

The Apollo RT6 was designed specifically with autonomous driving in mind, compared to previous generations where the technology was retrofitted on conventional vehicles, the company said.

The steering wheel-free design allows more space for the installation of extra seating or other additions, even a gaming console or vending machine.

Baidu is best known for its search engine and online advertising services, but in recent years has invested heavily in autonomous driving and artificial intelligence technology, including automated personal assistants and AI chips.

China aspires to lead autonomous driving technology globally but lags the U.S. in introducing such services. Alphabet's Waymo began offering driverless taxi services in Phoenix, Arizona in 2020.

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