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MAGAZINE

## McLaren 570S Coupé

Supercar in Sports Car Clothing



### BMW X6 xDrive50i

Brawn, with more brawn

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# CONTENTS



**McLaren 570S Coupé**

12



**BMW X6 xDrive50i**  
Daring exterior design-  
athletic character

18



**2016 Jeep Grand  
Cherokee Overland**  
The Grandest most luxurious  
Jeep of them all

22



**Infiniti QX80**  
The Japanese take on the  
Cadillac Escalade

26



**Mercedes GLA**  
Mercedes' smallest SUV is the  
next big thing

30

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**2017 Jaguar F-Pace**  
Fashionably late to the party

32



**Range Rover Evoque**  
A stylish crossover you can fall for

36



**Lexus NX200t**  
Lexus' foray into the world of compact luxury crossovers

50



**Cadillac XTS4 Vsport**  
The Americans take on German sport and luxury

64

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# McLaren 570S Coupé-The new baby-McLaren

## Is it as good as most big-boy supercars?



Introduced at the 2015 New York Auto Show earlier this year, the 570S Coupé is McLaren's first model in their new "Sport Series" tier of less-expensive models. Following its global debut, the 570S marks the entry of the McLaren brand into the luxury sports car market.

### McLaren's new tiered model range

McLaren's Sports Series finishes off the company's tri-tier product family which now consists of the Sports Series, the Super Series, and the Ultimate Series. "The Sports Series is aimed at a new audience for McLaren. It's the first time we've competed in the sports car as opposed to the supercar market", explains

Mike Flewitt, Chief Executive Officer of McLaren Automotive.

In a nutshell, the Sports Series is the most price-accessible of the range, launching with the 540C Coupé from Q2 in 2016, but first with the more powerful 570S Coupé.

Loosening your purse strings a bit will get you into the company's Super Series, the core McLaren range, featuring the 650S, available as a Coupé and Spider, and the 675LT. Finally, as befits the name, the Ultimate Series is the pinnacle (and most expensive) of the company's product line, comprising of the

McLaren P1 and the McLaren P1 GTR.

Staying true to the company's design mantra, every McLaren designed for road or track since 1981 is built around a lightweight carbon fibre chassis. The 570S does not deviate from this principle, while delivering high performance and high efficiency through a mid-mounted twin-turbocharged V8 engine. More on that later.

### "What's this about "Shrink Wrap"?"

Clean, sweeping lines and an uncluttered exterior was what McLaren's Chief Designer, Rob Melville, was going after with the 570S styling at the outset of the





project.

While design cues and learnings from the company's models in the Super and Ultimate Series ensure that the Sports Series cars look every part a true McLaren, the 570S still brings its own clear identity while introducing the McLaren design language to the sports car segment with its tense "shrink wrapped" body lines. "The air-piercing front bumper separates airflow into four directions, with each path being worked over, under and through the sculpted bodywork. The beautiful organic form, with features including the door tendon and flying buttress work with the fixed rear wing to optimise aerodynamics", says Melville. The "shrink wrapped" 570S results in what the company has named its flying buttress. But this design is more than just marketing nomenclature. In fact, it is as much functional as it is form. The rear of the glasshouse features unique floating C-pillars, allowing air to follow the shape of the cabin and flow beneath.

This counteracts lift over the roof as the airflow that is channelled through the buttress equalises the areas of low pressure created by the convex roof, thereby increasing downforce. Even the distinctive dihedral doors, a McLaren feature since 1991, now feature floating tendons which work to channel air into the ultra efficient air intake.

### Race-derived technologies

Despite being on the lower end of the price scale, as with all McLaren models, the company has leaned heavily on its race-derived technologies to prioritise performance, driving engagement and exhilaration. Lightweight construction, including the use of a carbon fibre chassis, means that the 570S offers supercar performance in a package that is sure to appeal to not only new customers to the brand, but also to McLaren purists.

The connection between McLaren's road and Formula 1 cars is a natural process of experience, knowledge,

principles, and process transfer. Thanks to the brand's 50 years of Formula 1 racing expertise and over 20 years in heritage of building exotic cars, McLaren says that the 570S is designed to be a no compromise driving experience on both road and track.

It is no surprise then that the car was designed and engineered by a team of experts at the McLaren Technology Centre (MTC) alongside the Formula 1 team operations. Like their Formula 1 cars, every 570S is hand-built in the company's state-of-the-art McLaren Production Centre (MPC) in Woking, England. Each car takes 188 man hours to build by a team of 370 highly-trained assembly and quality technicians.

### Is it every day usable?

McLaren says that all of their models are genuinely usable daily drivers. However, given the high running costs and lack of storage of its other models, it is doubtful that anyone but the deepest of pockets would run the vehicles day in and out. Nonetheless, changing



this mindset with the new Sports Series line-up was at the top of the priority list for the McLaren engineering team.

Starting with the cabin, the 570S Coupé's interior was designed to have a clear focus on space and ergonomics. The layout was chosen to offer maximised outward visibility and interior space. Compared to its big brother, the Super Series McLaren 650S, the 570S Coupé is in fact 11mm longer, with a cabin that is both longer and wider. This means that the baby McLaren, in fact, has greater all-around spaciousness and increased shoulder room.

A redesigned carbon fibre MonoCell II chassis (25 per cent stiffer than a comparable aluminium chassis) means that the sill is 80mm lower to further ensure that ingress to and egress from the cabin is easier for the car's well-heeled owners. Fully-electric eight-way

adjustable seats can be specified with heating and memory functions, and a comfort entry / exit feature is also available.

Exotic cars are notorious for their lack of visibility, but McLaren designed the 570S' front windscreen to be taller than it is wide to optimize forward visibility. The peak of the front wheel arch is positioned directly over the centrepoint of the front wheel to allow the driver to place the car with precision.

Even the classic McLaren dihedral doors have been newly designed and developed to offer a greater operating range. A newly revised action means a more upwards and forward arc. The result is that there is easier access to the cabin due to the larger opening. The words "storage space" and "exotic sports coupé" may have been an oxymoron in the past, but the 570S Coupé boasts a class-leading level of storage space

thanks to its front luggage bay. There is a sizable 144 litres of capacity up front, and stowage of everyday items within the cabin has been accommodated via concealed pockets and bins around the cabin.

### The Drive

So what does all of this design and engineering pomp and circumstance result in?

With its 3.8 litre twin turbo V8 engine and 562 bhp and 443 lbs-ft of torque (600Nm), McLaren claims a class leading power-to-weight ratio. 0-100 km/hr whizzes by in 3.2 seconds and 0-200 km/hr in 9.5 seconds. Top speed is a lofty 328 km/hr, breaking the magic 200 mph number; it is 204 mph to be precise. As the 570S is the only car in its class to offer a lightweight carbon fibre chassis, its dry curb weight of only 2,895 lbs (1,313 kg) is about 309 lbs (140 kg) lighter than the nearest rival. Since weight is the killer

of driving fun, these low numbers ensure optimized handling and agility.

McLaren says that their newly-developed suspension system uses adaptive dampers and anti-roll bars to ensure enhanced levels of driver engagement and refinement on both the road or track. It is also a less complicated (which typically means cheaper) than the expensive cross-linked anti-roll system of other McLarens. In Normal mode, the 570S still can't quite match the Porsche 911 Turbo for ride comfort, but it never crashes over bumps and still provides high level of feedback and driver engagement as advertised.

The 570S uses the same seven-speed SSG (Seamless Shift Gearbox) as its 650S Super Series big brother, offering Normal, Sport, and Track modes. However, further recalibration has resulted in even faster shifts. The engineering boffins even went to lengths to separate the gearbox clutch control from the engine control computers to produce quicker gear changes. Since sports car drivers will likely be more sensitive to running costs versus exotic supercar drivers, for the first time ever, a stop-start system has been fitted to a McLaren, offering greater efficiency while improving fuel consumption and reducing CO2 output.

#### Wrap-Up

With the launch of the 570S and the new Sports Series, McLaren has also launched its most attainable model with the lowest running costs of any McLaren to date. Compared to the original 12C, the 570S' annual scheduled services require the lowest level of labour and parts than in previous models (roughly less than half the cost of the original 12C). Even the engine oil replacement intervals have been lengthened to every two years or 15,000 kms, whichever comes first, much like your run-of-the-mill Mercedes-Benz or BMW coupé.

But is it like dining at a bistro when you want to be at a top table restaurant? Not at all! As a package, the 570S' design and calibration offers a more usable McLaren sports car experience, more affordable and more suitable for daily road driving than its stablemates.

If this is a sign of what is to come from the small British company, car enthusiasts should all be very excited. So if you have an odd AED 740,000 lying around, do yourself a favour and pop down to your local McLaren dealer to order one of these. It is unlikely that you will be disappointed to this entry point into the world of McLaren.



# BMW X6 xDrive50i

## Daring exterior design-athletic character



Before we get into the nitty gritty for the current BMW X6, a little history. The letter X was first used by BMW three decades ago to indicate four-wheel drive, which it still does with the XDrive nomenclature. During the eve of the New Millennium, “X” evolved into a new model for the company in the X5, the first so-called Sports Activity Vehicle (SAV) that allowed BMW to expand into the realm of luxury off-road capability.

Further innovations brought about another first: the debut of a Sports Activity Coupe (SAC). Not to be confused with an actual two-door vehicle, the SAC took the essence and sporting nature of a traditional sports coupe and applied it to the SAV concept. Thusly, the X6 was born.

### Aerodynamic improvements

That was over 10 years ago, and the X6 has now entered its second generation appearing a lot meaner

and more powerful. A new longer and leaner headlight design flows into a reworked dual kidney grille, proving my preceding point. As with all the other family member redesigns, there are now familiar slashed air vents ahead of the front doors that help dissipate turbulent air to reduce drag and improve aerodynamics.

### Camel coloured seating

The interior of the previous generation could hardly

be described as Spartan, but there would be something amiss if the premium automaker didn't up the stakes considerably with the introduction of version two. Sitting down on the ridiculously supple camel-coloured leather seats is like slipping on a pair of worn-in fine Italian leather gloves.

### ConnectedDrive

Aside from the obvious upgrade in upholstery, technology receives a bump in the form of BMW's ConnectedDrive infotainment system. A widescreen 10.2-inch monitor is perched above the centre air vents and acts as the command centre for entertainment, driver settings and information. The extra width comes in handy because in navigation mode, a map

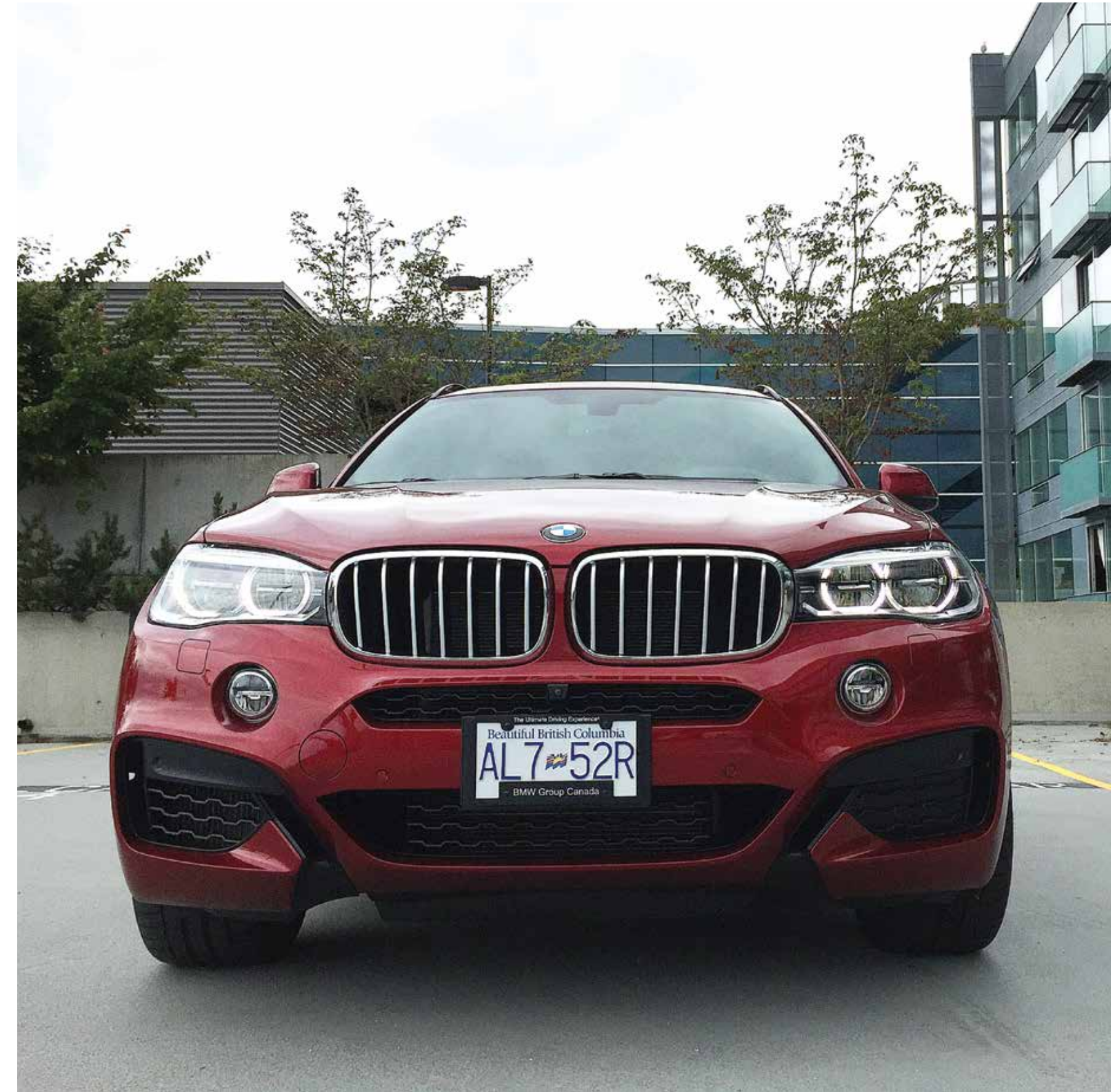


is always present on the side of the screen even when you're inputting an address change, for instance. Using modern camera wizardry, there's also a handy overhead view of the vehicle that pops up on the display that warns you if you're getting too close to another object while in traffic or parking.

### Roar

Available with two powertrain choices in Canada, my tester was the more powerful xDrive50i variant with the 4.4-litre twin-turbo V8 motor. I guarantee that the moment you throw the car in Sport or Sport Plus mode, apply the throttle and hear the full-blown roar of the mammoth engine, you will completely forget you're in a large SUV/SAV. The 445 horsepower





and 649 Nm of torque — up 45 hp and 39 Nm from previously — is capable of propelling all 2,345 kilograms from 0-100 km/h in under five seconds. For those times where a more composed ride is called for, there is an Eco mode and the default Comfort that keeps the performance at a lower boil and fuel economy somewhat in check, but don't get your hopes up. Driving like a perfect gentleman (most of the

time), my average consumption was 17.4 L/100 km in mixed city and highway conditions.

The 2015 BMW X6 is built in Spartanburg, South Carolina.

**Specifications**

Type: four-door, five-passenger crossover SUV  
Layout: front engine, all-wheel drive

Engine: 4.4-litre twin-turbo V8  
Transmission: eight-speed Steptronic automatic  
Power: 445 hp @ 5,500 rpm  
Torque: 649 Nm @ 2,000 rpm  
Curb weight: 2,345 kg  
Brakes: front/rear disc with ABS  
Fuel Consumption (L/100km, city/hwy combined): 17.4 (observed)

# 2016 Jeep Grand Cherokee Overland

## The Grandest most luxurious Jeep of them all



Born out of necessity during the world wars, the original Jeep was hand-built in just seven weeks with a lot of hard work and the genius determination of automobile engineers.

Even as far back as World War I, the U.S. Army was urgently looking for an all-terrain reconnaissance vehicle that was fast but yet lightweight. In World War II, as the axis of powers began to score victories in Europe and Northern Africa, rapid development of this vehicle was called upon even more urgently. So urgently in fact, that the US Army put out a call to auto manufacturers requesting a running prototype in just 49 days.

The Jeep is a really clever idea. A simple but strong chassis, four wheels, four wheel drive, and a rough and tough engine that was durable enough to allow a

sustained low speed without overheating the engine. Because the original Jeep often had to be shipped in crates, there was also a wheelbase requirement of not more than 80 inches, but yet the vehicle had to be able to carry a payload of 600 pounds.

Willys-Overland was eventually granted the Army contract. But because the War Department required such a large number of vehicles to be manufactured in a relatively short time, Willys also allowed Ford to help with manufacturing of the vehicles using Willy's build specifications.

During World War II, Willys and Ford filled more than 700,000 orders, with Willys-Overland supplying more than 330,000 units.

Born out of necessity, during and after the war, Jeeps were recognized and loved by soldiers and civilians

alike thanks to the "do anything" and "go anywhere" nature of the vehicle. And the rest, as they say, is history. Decades later, there is still trust and respect commanded by the Jeep brand name.

### Back to the Future

Built on more than 70 years of legendary heritage, Jeep vehicles have had to adapt to the times. These days, Jeep is now a division of Chrysler (aka FCA) with a full line-up of vehicles. The company promises that all Jeeps are still able to provide owners with a sense of security to handle any journey with confidence.

The 5-seater Grand Cherokee is the flagship vehicle in Jeep's present day lineup. Engine choices include the 3.6-litre Pentastar V6, the 5.7-litre Hemi V8, as well as a 6.4-litre V8 in hot-road SRT trim. Unfortunately, what is not available in the UAE, is the excellent



3.0-litre EcoDiesel turbocharged V6 that was fitted to the North American-specification Grand Cherokee. This sweet mill of a turbodiesel engine produces 240 horsepower and a massive 420 lb-ft (569 Nm) of torque, but yet delivers family car-like fuel economy.

### More power and fuel economy for 2016

For 2016, the 3.6-litre V6 adds advanced two-step variable valve lift and upgraded variable-valve timing, as well as Engine Stop-Start technology to improve fuel economy and efficiency. Output has also now also risen to 295 horsepower, despite the reduction in fuel consumption. Towing capacity is best-in-class for gasoline-powered SUVs at 6,200 pounds (2,812 kg). The available Hemi 5.7-litre V8 packs 360 horsepower and 390 lb-ft (528 Nm) of torque, and a best-in-class towing capacity of 7,400 pounds (3356 kg).

Other efficiency improvements include electric power

steering with customizable settings, decreased tire rolling resistance, and weight reductions with revised aluminium suspension components.

All Jeep Grand Cherokees are mated to FCA's corporate eight-speed automatic transmission. A robust and durable unit, I like it quite a lot as it shifts relatively quickly and smoothly. A fussy electronic shifter is part of the deal though, as it looks like a traditional gearshift lever but doesn't operate as such. It can be tricky to get just the gear that you want, especially when you're not used to it. Still, it is a lot more intuitive to the novice driver than the electronic shifters found in the most recent Mercedes-Benz or BMW vehicles.

When fitted with the the optional two speed low range transfer case, the low crawl ratio of 44.1:1 really aids in climbing over, or through, tough obstacles.

### Ride and Drive

The original Jeeps were available with bolt-on snowploughs and blowers, but these days, customers are more interested in the latest in safety and conveniences.

The Jeep Grand Cherokee was extensively updated in the 2014 model year inside and out. For 2016, all trim levels of the Grand Cherokee have been upgraded for an even more premium look while simultaneously making each trim level readily identifiable at a glance. Standard on Overland and Summit trim levels are Bi-Xenon HID headlamps that are outlined with signature LED running lamps. All Grand Cherokee include front and rear LED lighting for a uniquely Jeep signature, day or night, even from a great distance.

The optional 3.0L turbodiesel V6 found in my test vehicle was quiet, efficient, and had excellent pull for passing manoeuvres in day-to-day driving. Combined with the optional Quadra-Lift air suspension system in





Aero mode (lowered 0.6 inches from the Normal Ride Height), I consistently saw impressively low highway fuel consumption figures of around 8.5 to 9L/100 kms.

Quadra-Lift features five height settings for optimum ride performance, and is able to add up to 3.8 inches of vehicle lift using the driver controlled four-corner air springs. I was impressed with Grand Cherokee's air-cushioned, premium feeling ride that one would associate more with a European luxury sedan. Perhaps the only downside is that while there are two off-road modes that can provide a maximum of 10.4 inches of ground clearance and up to 20 inches of water fording depth, there is no selectable sport suspension mode to firm up the ride on tarmac, where the Grand Cherokee is likely to spend most of its life. While Aero mode does lower the vehicle's centre of gravity by a further 0.6 inches from the 8.2 inch normal ride height, the Grand Cherokee's suspension tuning feels a bit soft and cushy for spirited driving on windy roads.

For 2016, the Grand Cherokee continues to be available with four available 4x4 systems. My Overland model was kitted out with Jeep's most sophisticated



system, Quadra-Drive II, with a 2.72:1 low-range gear ratio and an electronic limited-slip rear differential. Quadra-Drive II is also able to anticipate low traction and adjust in order to proactively limited or eliminates slip.

**Interior**

The award-winning interior of the Grand Cherokee is clearly one of the most well-crafted cabins in the segment. For 2016, Chrysler's excellent UConnect system carries on. The big 8.4-inch touchscreen is paired up with traditional knobs and buttons, making it much easier to use than many other similar infotainment systems on the market. Controls for radio and climate are found below the screen and have easily identifiable knobs and buttons.

For 2016, Jeep has also added Apple iPhone integration and Siri Eyes Free functionality. Using the voice button on the steering wheel, drivers can speak natural language voice commands to send text messages, play music, access turn-by-turn directions, and much more.

Overland models have several premium touches such as standard Nappa leather seats, a stitched leather dash, and available open-pore wood. There is a distinct touch of modern luxury that is highlighted especially well at night, thanks to the ambient lighting through the cabin. Even the rear footwells and rear door pockets are softly illuminated.

For added passenger comfort, Jeep's rear seats recline by 12 degrees. There is also a 12 degree forward angle for more cargo space, therefore allowing 24 degrees of total variation with the rear seatback.

Cargo volume behind the second row measures 36.3 cu ft. With the rear seats folded, there is a sizable 68.3 cu.ft. of cargo capacity available. To keep the spare tire clean during off-road manoeuvres, the compartment is housed under the rear cargo floor. It also includes removable dual storage bins for housing muddy gear or other items.



**Wrap-Up**

While the 2016 Jeep Grand Cherokee may be a country mile apart in technical sophistication from its Willys-Overland great grandfather, it still carries on the great heritage of Jeep's off-road capability. With a comfortable interior, modern day on-road manners, sophisticated styling, and improved performance for today's Jeep lovers, it's no surprise

that the Grand Cherokee is the most awarded SUV in history.

If you're looking for a 5 passenger SUV that can do it all, including going off-road further than the typical crossover SUV can manage (i.e. Toyota Highlander or Honda Pilot), be sure to add this Jeep on your shopping list!



# Infiniti QX80

## The Japanese take on the Cadillac Escalade



I named it the BFG. For those of you who are familiar with Norwegian author Roald Dahl's kids' books, this name will bring back childhood memories. For those of you who aren't, BFG is short for "Big Friendly Giant".

And a giant the Infiniti QX80 is. At 208.9 inches (5306.06 mm) long, this is one big and luxurious truck. But thankfully, most of the Infiniti's big truck ways are hidden underneath oodles of supple leather,

premium wood trim, and techno wizardry.

In early 2000's, people were buying SUVs at a record rate. But with unstable gas prices as a rule these days, that mindset has cooled.

Although full-sized SUVs now don't get as much attention as they used to, their size, capabilities, and image still appeal to many. There is still a market for affluent families who need the space, passenger carrying and towing capacity of a full-size body-on-

frame SUV.

Let's see how this posh SUV has polished its shine for 2016.

### More than just a little nip and tuck

Updated for the 2015 model, the QX80 offers a fresh new exterior design with additional technological features that make it Infiniti's most premium SUV ever.

With the signature Infiniti grille, broad shoulders, and

large greenhouse, there's no mistaking this vehicle on the road for anything else but an Infiniti.

Infiniti says that the QX80 was "conceived to attract and hold viewers' attention, conveying its underlying sense of power and strength". Well there's certainly no denying that the vehicle is an imposing one with its Brontosaurus-like long and prominent hood, slightly offset headlamps, and an almost vertical tailgate. Some people may find the look rather polarizing, but beauty is in the eye of the beholder and I found myself growing to like the QX80 after spending a week with it.

The refreshed bold front chrome grille is now flanked by new powerful LED-based high/low beam headlamps with integrated LED turn signals and LED foglamps. 20-inch aluminium alloy wheels and copious amounts of chrome trim adds to the overall vehicle's luxurious persona.

This is an impressive feat considering that the QX80 is based on Nissan's venerable Nissan Patrol SUV which is not famed for its luxurious accoutrements, but rather

for its almost legendary off-road ability. The Patrol (aka the Safari in Japan) has been gallantly used by militaries, humanitarian forces, and adventurers from Australia to the Middle East, Europe, Asia and beyond.

### Stump pulling power

Under the QX80's hood is Nissan's proven 5.6-litre direct-injection V8 engine producing 400 horsepower and 413 lb-ft (560 Nm) of torque. Paired with a 7-speed automatic gearbox, the QX never feels underpowered. Amusingly, Infiniti has also equipped this transmission with Downshift Rev Matching, just in case you feel like rowing the gears yourself using the manual shift mode.

Infiniti's All-Mode 4WD system offers a computer controlled automatic mode (basically a 'leave and forget' mode), selectable four-wheel-drive high range with a locked centre differential, and four-wheel-drive low range.

The main advantage of being based on a truck platform is the QX80's 8,500 lbs (3855 kg) trailer towing capacity. With four-wheel-drive low range, an

increasing rarity among SUVs these days, the QX80 is perfectly equipped for towing a boat on a slippery boat launch, or a heavy horse trailer.

While it is highly unlikely that owners will take their large luxury ute off-road, thanks to its Nissan Patrol's underpinnings, there is no doubt that the QX80 is capable off the beaten path.

### Luscious Interior

As they say, the devil is in the details. Infiniti's interior designers had the goal of taking the interior of a private jet and transforming it into a full-size SUV.

The result? Even when compared to other high-end luxury cars, the interior of the QX80 is absolutely opulent. There is soft pleated leather on the doors, the dash, and almost a whole forest of burl walnut wood trim (hopefully sustainably sourced).

There are also a lot of little touches that make the QX80 feel special and expensive, whether it's the texture of the metallic knobs or the French stitching of the leather surfaces.

The main thing that betrays the QX80's age here is





the lack of LED interior lighting and a full-coloured instrument gauge cluster. With many vehicles, including cheaper ones, going to all LED-based illumination and TFT LCD screens, the Infiniti still makes do with the traditional yellow-hued incandescent bulbs and old school dot-matrix-like graphics and typography. With optics being an important part of the luxury class, this is one area upon which can be improved upon.

An alphabet soup of passive and active driver's assistance systems are included as expected in this premium segment, including Infiniti's Forward Emergency Braking (FEB), Predictive Forward Collision Warning (PFCW) and High Beam Assist. The QX80's Around View Monitor system makes parking duties a lot easier by utilizing four small superwide-angle cameras – mounted on the front, side and rear of the QX80 – to provide a virtual 360 degree view of objects around the vehicle, helping to maneuver it in tight spots. The Moving Object Detection function helps enhance the driver's situational awareness by providing visual and audible warnings (front or back range object detection) if the system detects large moving objects within the displayed image in situations such as when pulling out of a parking space.

Overall, all of the touchscreen infotainment system's controls are very easy-to-use. You will feel right at home if you're used to any late model Infiniti or Nissan. Unlike many newer vehicles on the market, there are many physical buttons to supplement the



touchscreen.

Two advanced audio systems are also offered. The standard Bose 13-speaker Premium Audio System includes two subwoofers and rear headliner-mounted 3rd row speakers that help ensure that sound quality is not compromised by obstructions such as luggage or cargo. Also available is the Bose Cabin Surround sound

system with 15 speakers.

Other features on my test vehicle include dual 7-inch colour headrest monitors, two pairs of wireless headphones, wireless remote control, auxiliary input jacks and 120V power outlet. The QX80 allows playback of games or movies in the rear, while front occupants listen to audio all at the same time. The two

7-inch colour monitors include an auto-bright system that adjusts for daytime, clouds/evening and night/tunnel lighting.

### Seating

Even though this Infiniti is a full-sized SUV, don't expect minivan-like third row seating accommodations and comfort. Due to the body-on-frame design, the last row of seats are mounted on the floor, which results in marginal legroom and thigh support in that seating area. The third row is fine for smaller adults on shorter trips, but like many other full-size SUVs on the market, you wouldn't want to cross the country sitting back there.

The QX80's second row, on the other hand, is pure luxury. My tester was fitted with captain's chairs that can be adjusted for both legroom and seatback angle. They're heated too, of course, with dedicated rear HVAC controls.

Maximum cargo volume is a cavernous 95.1 cu ft with all of the seats folded flat, but space behind the third row is a skimpy 16.6 cu ft.

### Ride and Drive

Despite its brawny looks and off-road pedigree, one of the unexpected delights about the QX80 was how well it rides and drives. 0-100 km/hr blasts by at a quick 6.5 seconds accompanied by a deep and snarly V8 exhaust note.

The QX's steering is also relatively crisp, light, and precise for such a large SUV. It's probably just what customers in this segment want as it really helps to mask the big truck's 5,888 lbs curb weight.

The main thing that betrays the QX's good manners,



aside from its length and height, is its slow steering ratio. You will really have to twirl the steering wheel quite a few turns lock-to-lock to accomplish tight parking manoeuvres or U-turns.

The big Infiniti's ride is also surprisingly comfortable, largely due to the sophisticated independent front and rear double-wishbone suspension setup with Dual-Flow Path tube shock absorbers and an air suspension rear load levelling system.

To keep things flat and level in the corners, my test



vehicle was also equipped with the optional Hydraulic Body Motion Control system. Suspension travel is automatically controlled by hydraulic chambers integrated into each shock absorber, and the system does a stunningly good job at reducing body lean in turns, resulting in improved ride comfort for passengers in all three rows.

### Final Thoughts

Calling the QX80 a big SUV is sort of an understatement. This big Infiniti is more than just "big". It's impressively imposing.

The QX80 shines through with its strong engine, impressively agile handling, towing ability, and luxury accoutrements.

For those looking for a large and polished people mover but without a domestic or German name badge, this large Infiniti may be just your ticket if you can get past its love-it-or-hate-it looks.





# Mercedes GLA

## Mercedes' smallest SUV is the next big thing



If you load up one of the best selling games on Nintendo's Wii U videogame system, Mario Kart 8, you'll notice something that is not like the others. Amongst all the make-believe go-karts is a cartoony rendering of Mercedes-Benz's newest entry into the ubiquitous compact crossover segment: the GLA. Type "Mario Kart + GLA" into the search bar on YouTube, you will also be treated to a bizarre Japanese live-action commercial starring everyone's favourite pixelated plumber and the automaker's new vehicle, which aired shortly after the game's initial release. The point I am trying to make is that quirky small SUV represents a step in a different direction by the upscale German nameplate. It looks and, to some degree, drives quite unlike anything else Mercedes-Benz offers, and that's a good thing.

### Gaming business partnership

The purpose of partnering with a gaming business is of course to create buzz within the 25 to 34 segment — the average gamer's age is 33 years old after all, according to a 2010 survey. The GLA 250 has many

attributes that a younger audience would appreciate, starting with its alternative-sporty appearance. Huge headlight housings and a signature two-slat grille dominate the front of the vehicle, and you can recognize the GLA approaching from afar because of the LED "eyebrow" light strip that gently slopes down and over each projector headlamp. An attractive metallic garnish overlays the radiator opening and foglight recesses.

### Profile

The side profile of this crossover is the most telling angle when it comes to uniqueness. Squat and stout, it reminds me of a hatchback that grew a little too quickly, and in some places more than others. The roofline remains low, but the wheel arches bulge out hinting at possible off-road inclinations. At the back, a contrasting metallic bumper diffuser grabs the eye and reinforces the suggestion of toughness.

### Dashboard design

Inside the GLA, the design is refreshingly simple and Mercedes-Benz describes it as "a bridge between

modernity and avant-garde, between tradition and progression." Dials and buttons are straightforward and easy to find and, especially important, easy to operate. The wavy silver 3D dash covering might make you dizzy if you stare at it for long enough, though. The freestanding display hovering above the dash vents actually works in this case, rather than appearing like an afterthought. The only problem I had from a usability standpoint was trying to pair my iPhone via Bluetooth to stream music. There are submenus upon submenus, and I found it an overly complex process, even for someone that uses a lot of different systems on a weekly basis.

### Engine is punchy

A 2.0-litre turbocharged four-cylinder engine takes care of power delivery, churning out 208 horsepower and a healthy 350 Nm of torque. It's punchy when you give it some gas, but the seven-speed dual-clutch automatic transmission feels a bit laggy. Changing the drive mode helps this somewhat (more on this below). Coupled with the capable 4MATIC all-wheel drive system, the



0 to 100 km/h time is around the 6.4-second range. Chances are, the only drag racing or off-roading done by GLA owners will be the virtual kind with a Wii U controller. The important thing is the equipment allows such activities, if they decide to pursue it in real life. The chassis is rigid with reinforcements installed to areas including the B pillars and under body, and 4MATIC adds Downhill Speed Regulation to help the

vehicle maintain a steady rate of speed when traversing down a steep stretch. An off-road transmission mode alters shift points and acceleration to optimize driving on loose terrain.

### Infotainment

The GLA debuted last year, and remains largely the same for 2016 except for a few minor touch-ups. Dynamic Select has been implemented, so you can

choose between normal, eco-friendly or sport settings to increase pep or fuel efficiency while on the road. The interior features the latest version of the company's infotainment system built around the aforementioned seven-inch display screen. Other new comfort and convenience features include keyless ignition, dual-zone climate control, adjustability for the driver's seat cushion, and extra colour options for both the interior and exterior.

This interesting creation by Mercedes-Benz is built right for attracting that desirable millennial demographic to the brand. The base sticker price is Dh179,000 but the model I drove, loaded with everything you wish was standard (navigation, automatic climate control, panoramic sunroof, backup camera, etc.), raises the price an additional nearly Dh16,000.

Then again, can you put a price on driving the same automobile as the Super Mario Bros.?

### Specifications

Type: four-door, five-passenger compact crossover  
 Layout: front engine, 4MATIC all-wheel drive  
 Engine: 2.0-litre four-cylinder turbo  
 Transmission: seven-speed dual-clutch automatic  
 Power: 208 hp @ 5,500 rpm  
 Torque: 350 Nm @ 1,250 rpm  
 Curb weight: 1,535 kg  
 Brakes: front/rear disc with ABS  
 Fuel Consumption (L/100km, city/hwy): 9.8/7.4



# 2017 Jaguar F-Pace

Fashionably late to the party



It may be late by a decade or so to the crossover trend, but very soon, Jaguar will have its first ever sport-utility vehicle. Although corporate brother Land Rover has an SUV-only portfolio, in order to grow its sales (and subsequently its profits), Jaguar needed to add their own ute in order to present potential customers with a more complete luxury catalogue.

The world saw a hint of what was to come with the Jaguar C-X17 Concept, Jaguar's first sports crossover concept vehicle. And guess what? Penned by designer

Ian Callum, that vehicle was absolutely drop dead gorgeous.

Fast forward to today and the F-Pace production vehicle is as pretty as the C-X17 Concept vehicle. But not pretty in a dainty way, but rather in an assertive way with some hints of the F-Type sports car's aggressiveness and design cues.

Jaguar's Director of Design, Ian Callum, says that "The F-Pace is an all-weather, all-surface Jaguar sports car, life-proofed for five people and their belongings".

## Lines and curves

One look at the F-Pace and you can see that it is visually heavily inspired by the lines curves and proportions of the F-Type, and in turn Jaguar's latest design philosophy. From the hood bulge to the pronounced rear hips, the F-Pace has a unique road presence that fits in with the latest in a bloodline of beautiful performance cars that include the new XE and XF.

Under the F-Pace's aluminium skin is the all-new



allow-intensive platform that has also been developed for the Jaguar XE sports sedan. Since the XE has been designed to be the company's BMW 3-Series fighter, the F-Pace should also be a step above the competition in the handling department.

#### Power packed

Power comes courtesy of Jaguar's corporate 3.0-litre supercharged V6 engine, available in both 340 hp and 380 hp configurations. The F-Pace S with the 380 hp V6 is expected to accelerate from 0-100 km/hr in a quick 5.5 seconds. For those who wish to be a bit more fuel conscious, there is also a turbocharged 2.0-litre diesel 4 cylinder motor producing 180 hp.

Part of the appeal of an SUV is the space and practicality afforded by the design. Jaguar boasts that the rear seats are wide enough to accommodate three adults in comfort, and the F-Pace has a 40:20:40 seating configuration for greater flexibility. The seats can be folded completely flat, individually, or a variety of permutations and combinations. With the rear seats up, rear cargo space is still an impressive 640 litres.

#### Infotainment

Inside, the F-Pace gets a 10.2-inch touchscreen display, which is part of the infotainment system powered by a quad core processor and SSD. Up to eight devices can be connected thanks to the hot-spot WiFi support while the navigation system can be displayed in the 12.3-inch instrument cluster, which includes 3D maps.

#### Innovative security

The all-new F-PACE also brings the world debut of Jaguar's Activity Key. A waterproof, shockproof wristband with an integrated transponder, this wearable technology supports active lifestyles because it allows the keyfob to be securely locked inside the vehicle. Locking the all-new F-PACE using the Activity Key will disable any keyfobs left inside the SUV. Activity Key works on the same RF frequencies as the other keys and is used to lock and unlock the vehicle by holding it in close proximity to the J of the Jaguar lettering on the tailgate.

The Activity Key has no battery, so owners never have to worry about changing it or short-circuiting it with exposure to water. Jaguar thinks that this gadget could be quite invaluable if, for example, you're going surfing or kayaking. Given the fact that the luxury crossover market is red hot right now, one can probably fearlessly predict that the F-Pace will quickly become Jaguar's bestseller. Look for the Jaguar's first crossover to arrive in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and other GCC countries sometime in the latter half of 2016.



# Range Rover Evoque

## A stylish crossover you can fall for



The original Range Rover was a 1970's child. A favourite with the country set, it also serves as transportation for diplomats, kings, queens, sheiks, and pop stars even today.

The new century launch of the baby Range Rover, the Evoque, completely revitalized Land Rover, single-handedly taking the company from a good-for-them 220,000 units a year to a "Wow-we-better-start-copying-Land-Rover" 380,000+ units.

### What is it?

Styling-wise, the Evoque continues to be one of the best concept-car-to-production examples. Nearly everything from the concept's sharp sheet metal to the clean and simple interior design made it from show car to showroom. Manufacturers often tone down the concept car's looks to a relatively bland production car,

so I have to applaud Land Rover for its gutsy design statement.

For 2016, the coupe-esque three-door model and a more practical five-door model (as tested for this review) carry on as they have since the Evoque's 2011 launch. New and upcoming for the 2017 model year is a convertible soft-top version of the three-door model for those who wish to take their top-down motoring experience off the paved roads. The jury is still out on the popularity of that concept, but that's for another future review.

Two new grille designs are offered for 2016, both with a revised surround and bold mesh inserts that are available in a selection of premium finishes, including Atlas Silver, Narvik Black and Corris Grey.

Now optionally available but not pictured on our test

vehicle, is the extra cost option of full-LED adaptive headlamps. This is the first Jaguar Land Rover product to be offered with this feature.

### An even more luxurious interior

This sophisticated little crossover is the hipster of sport cutes, the Range Rover for fashionistas, and for the last few years, arguably the pinnacle of compact luxury SUV styling. Perhaps it's no surprise that Victoria Beckham assisted in the interior design.

You sit high up in the Evoque with a great view out of the front windshield. High windows sills give a bit of a cocoon-like feel, but without sacrificing too much visibility from the front seating positions. The rear space is bigger than it looks from the outside, with three slim adults fitting fine back there. However, concept car styling has its price, and cargo room is

more limited than its primary rivals from Germany and Japan. Also, rearward visibility is hampered by a miniscule rear window on the tailgate and high door sills on the rear doors. Thank goodness for the rearview camera and big rearview mirrors!

Bringing large-car luxury to the most compact and fuel-efficient production Land Rover ever produced, the Evoque becomes the first vehicle in its class to offer massage front seats for additional comfort and a truly premium experience. Massage seats can be specified in conjunction with cooled 14-way electric memory seats. A selection of five massage programmes can be selected, providing various levels of back stimulation

and helping to reduce driver fatigue.

### Ride and Drive

There's nothing quite like being behind the wheel of a Range Rover and the Evoque is no exception even in its more diminutive form. It's a different, more nimble, more modern take on the British brand's driving experience, suited for primarily urban on-road missions. There's nothing wallowy about how it attacks corners, and apexes windy roads like an excited hot hatch. But yet it rides with the class of its big brothers, despite what some Land Rover purists may think of it as a fancy bit of chintz.

The engine is still the turbocharged 2.0-litre inline four

rated at 240 horses, and the automatic transmission still has nine-speeds (how many more do you need!). But their calibrations are more subtle now. Compared to its new kissing cousin, the Land Rover Discovery Sport, the Evoque is obviously the sportier of the two, with fairly aggressive throttle tip-in so that it feels quicker off the mark.

There is the occasional shifting abruptness under heavy throttle along with some turbo lag at low revs. These are a couple of things that will hopefully be improved upon in the future. Nonetheless, there is plenty of torque (250 lb-ft or 339 Nm) giving the vehicle an overall peppy, punchy feel to compliment





its nimbleness. 0-100 km/hr is officially rated at 7.6 seconds.

While most Range Rover Evoque owners will never take their vehicles off-roading, the Land Rover team still went to great lengths to ensure that they could if they wanted to. After all, all-terrain capability is a hallmark of the Land Rover brand.

All Evoque models come with Land Rover's Terrain Response system, which allows the driver to set up the Evoque for a variety of conditions such as gravel, mud, or snow. New for 2016 is Land Rover's All-Terrain Progress Control (ATPC), which allows a very low speed – as low as 1.8 km/hr, much lower than the natural creep speed of the vehicle – to be automatically maintained in challenging off-road environments where steep gradient, rough terrain and low-grip levels make maintaining an ideal speed difficult.

Technology is an essential part of the Evoque customer's lifestyle and therefore a plethora of new driver-assistance and consumer-centric features have also been introduced for 2016. The highlights include Autonomous Emergency Braking, Lane-Keeping Assist, and Attention Assist.



**Wrap-up**

The Range Rover Evoque may cause traditional Land Rover purists to turn their noses up. However, as with the case of Porsche, the Cayenne and Macan SUV's sales profits are what have been funding future Porsche 911 sport coupé's research and development costs. The same can be argued to be true of the Evoque versus other Land Rover/Range Rover vehicles.

With its slightly tweaked and fettled exterior and interior, the Range Rover Evoque has continued to evolve for the better without diluting its distinctive character. It's a ride worth checking out if you're in the market for a compact luxury SUV.



# Home tune up

While it's certainly a good idea to have that favourite mechanic or auto garage on speed dial, you don't always have to bring your car into a professional shop for every single maintenance issue. Here are five basic tune-up items that anyone can perform from the comfort of their own driveway.

## • Engine air filter

A good, small but essential part to replace is the air filter for the car's intake system in the engine bay. The process takes only five to 15 minutes for most makes and involves unbuckling a few clamps, removing the old unit and installing the new one. As a bonus, new vehicles often have a warning system that alerts drivers when it's time to replace, usually between 24,000 and 48,000 kilometres.



## • Cabin air filter

Like the filter for your engine, the cabin filter is responsible for ensuring all the unwanted bits floating around in the air from outside of the car are trapped so they don't enter the interior. Time for install depends on the design of your specific vehicle — some simply require popping open a panel under the dashboard to gain access, while others may need you to take out the glove compartment to get to it.

## • Tire pressure

This maintenance item is extremely easy to do, yet is often overlooked or ignored. Having the correct tire pressure is important because either overinflated or underinflated tires can lead to premature wear. The latter causes increased rolling resistance that could also lead to poor fuel economy. Checking only takes a couple of minutes and all you need is a tire pressure gauge — just remember to measure the reading when



the tire is cold to get an accurate reading. You can find the proper manufacturer-suggested psi on the driver's side doorjamb.

## • Lights

Especially at night, the exterior lighting on your vehicle is the primary way you stay visible to other motorists and pedestrians. That's why it's something that should be inspected regularly. Walk from the front to back and side-to-side ensuring all headlights, taillights, brake lights (get a friend or family member to assist with this one) and running lights are in working order. Replace any burnt out bulbs.



## • Wiper blades

If in good condition, windshield and rear window wipers help to clean the glass and keep the road visible. To test the health of your blades, hit the washer spray button and see if the operation is smooth and streak-free. If not, head to the dealership or local parts retailer to pick up some new ones. Removal and reinstallation is fairly painless if you follow the instructions on the back of the package. It's a good policy to replace your blades at least once a year, as the rubber can turn brittle over time.



In today's busy world, finding the time to wash our cars can be a hassle. That's probably why automatic car wash businesses do so well. So it should be no surprise that the concept of waxing a vehicle is foreign to many people — partly because they don't see the point, and also because they simply have no idea how to do it. From a purely aesthetic standpoint, giving your car a coat of wax will make it gleam like it just came off the showroom floor. The other benefit of it is that it will help to shield the paint — and make it easier to clean — from the abuses of everyday driving like splattered road tar, bird droppings, and so on. Follow these easy steps and your ride will be shiny and protected in no time.

## Before you start:

- Make sure your car is clean and dry, so wash and wipe beforehand.
- Pickup some wax. Something like Meguiar's White Wax is a good choice because it serves the dual purpose of adding a layer of protection as well as removing light oxidation and contaminants (note, the company also carries a Black Wax that serves a similar purpose, designed for dark coloured vehicles).
- Have some clean, 100% cotton or microfibre cloths on hand for the application and then the polishing afterwards.
- Find a cool, shady location like in a garage or under covered parking to avoid the hot sun baking on the wax.

# How to wax your car

**1)** Squirt some liquid wax onto the cloth (a little goes a long way), and choose one panel of a car to work on at a time. I normally start with the roof and then the hood and work my way towards the back of the car.

**2)** Apply the wax in the same direction that the wind would flow over the car. In other words, use a front to back motion rather than circles, which can cause swirl marks in the paint. After you finish with a panel, leave it move to the next one letting the wax sit for a while instead of immediately wiping it off.



**3)** After the car is covered in a hazy white finish, it's time to polish. Using another clean towel, buff off the wax using a similar technique to when you were



initially applying it.

A few things to be mindful of: try and avoid getting wax on any black rubber trim because it can be annoying to remove later on. A big white dried blob kind of ruins the look of your newly spotless vehicle. If you run your fingers over the paint and you still feel or see some bumps, you may need to use a clay bar first to lift out any lodged in bits of dirt or grit. That's all there is to it! Now go out and show off the fruits of your labour.



# Collision Mitigation System



These days, cars are equipped with a plethora of passive safety features. Front, side, and curtain airbags all help to prevent serious injuries. With the development of passive safety features, vehicle safety has increased steadily over the past decades.

In addition to the systems, which mitigate the consequences of an accident, active systems for the prevention of accidents and the mitigation of their consequences have become increasingly important. After all, the best way to protect against injuries is to avoid accidents in the first place!

In the last few years, auto manufacturers have been introducing a whole host of Collision Mitigation technologies to help drivers stay out of crashes, and subsequently out of the hospital.

Let's take a look at four of these systems.

## 1. Anti-lock Braking System (ABS)

ABS has been around for over three decades now. Originally implemented on airplanes to prevent them from skidding on the runway during landing, the modern car-based equivalent was first introduced in the 1970's by Mercedes-Benz.

ABS may not seem like the latest technology nowadays as it is standard equipment on even non-luxury compact cars. However, being able to brake hard and steer around an obstacle is something most people take for granted.

ABS has also undergone refinements with better sensors and computer algorithms that adjust for changing road (or off-road) conditions.

## 2. Adaptive Front Lighting

If you can't see it, you can't avoid it!

Adaptive front lighting is a generic term for headlamps that respond to driver steering. They're usually fitted to

cars with Xenon or LED headlamps and uses sensors to measure vehicle speed and steering angle.

Small electric motors turn the headlights accordingly to facilitate vision around a curve at night. The faster you go around a corner, the quicker they turn to literally allow you to see around corners.

## 3. Blind spot monitoring

Think of a blindspot monitoring system (aka side view assist) as your guardian angel that watches the sides of your car for you.

Most systems use two radar sensors, one in each corner of the rear bumper to scan a few metres behind and to the side of the vehicle. These areas are commonly known as the driver's blind spots.

If a vehicle is detected in these areas, a warning light on the mirror or A-pillar is illuminated. If the driver activates a turn signal in the direction a vehicle has

been detected, the warning light will flash and on some vehicles a warning tone will sound.

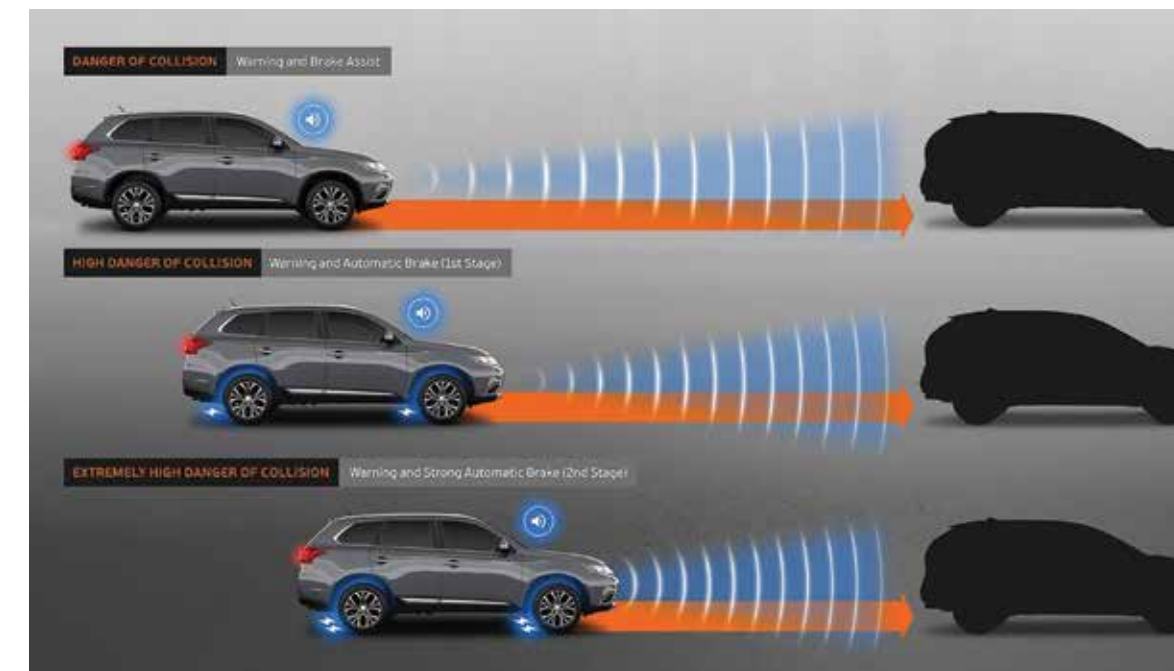
BMW's blindspot warning systems will actually vibrate the steering wheel in order to get the driver's attention!

## 4. Collision Mitigation Braking

Many cars, particularly in the luxury segment, are available with some sort of collision mitigation braking system.

This is a forward collision warning system that includes some or even full autonomous emergency braking to reduce the chance of a collision.

The system is usually an enhancement of an Adaptive Cruise Control system, which uses a radar sensor behind the front grille to maintain a particular speed



Frontal Collision Warning prevents collisions by warning the driver when approaching a vehicle ahead too quickly. The driver is alerted by an optical warning and an additional alarm. In addition, City Collision Mitigation helps prevent collisions by priming the brake system to reduce stopping distance. Pedestrian Warning has the same functionality but specifically prevents pedestrian collisions.

Infiniti also has a system that uses rear sonar sensors and rear facing radar to prevent collision with crossing objects (such as a wall, a child, or another vehicle).

While these systems are no substitute for proper driver attention, these systems can help to reduce driver error by always being on alert, monitoring the road ahead without getting tired or distracted.

and distance interval from traffic ahead, both of which are set by the driver.

With collision mitigation, the system will also provide visual and auditory warnings when speed and distance indicates risk of a crash with the leading car. If the driver does not respond by reducing speed, the system will tug at the seat belt, vibrate the steering wheel, or use other means in order to get the driver's attention and begin braking to mitigate — but probably not prevent — the crash.

BMW's Active Driving Assistant brings the latest safety technologies to drivers with their Frontal Collision Warning, City Collision Mitigation and Pedestrian Warning.



# Run-flat tires



Almost as long as cars have had wheels, they've had spare tires stashed onboard for the eventual inevitability of a flat tire. In some of today's luxury vehicles, however, manufacturers have traded the donut spare for more cargo space by using run-flat tire technology. How does it work? Find out below.

## Purpose

Run-flat tires allow you to do exactly that: continue

running on them even after you've experienced a flat. But it's not meant to be a permanent solution. The idea is that you get to a service shop or garage as soon as you can to have the tire repaired\* if possible, or replaced entirely. Once punctured, run-flats have limitations on how fast and how far you can continue to drive. Every model is different, and it's best to consult your owner's manual

or the tire maker's specifications. For example, on the BMW 3 Series Sedan, drivers can continue on for up to an additional 150 kilometres.

## Design

Not all run-flat tires are created equal —on the BMW 3 Series, the tires feature reinforced sidewalls. The thicker rubber provides the extra bit of support necessary to allow you to get you safely to your

destination.

Another common run-flat design utilizes what is called a support ring. Rather than thicker sidewalls, there is a ring comprised of a hard material underneath the tread, capable of continuing to bear the weight of the vehicle in a reduced air pressure situation.

While self-sealing tires are not technically run-flats since they cannot operate in an airless environment, they are worth mentioning as some companies are offering such products as an aftermarket alternative. A layer of sealant inside can self-heal a small tear once the offending object has been removed, as long it occurs near the middle of the tread.

Regardless of the design, all true run-flat setups rely on a tire pressure monitoring system (TPMS), which is a series of sensors that communicate with the vehicle's computer to alert the driver of a puncture. This is



critical so that you don't continue driving without realizing a flat tire has taken place.

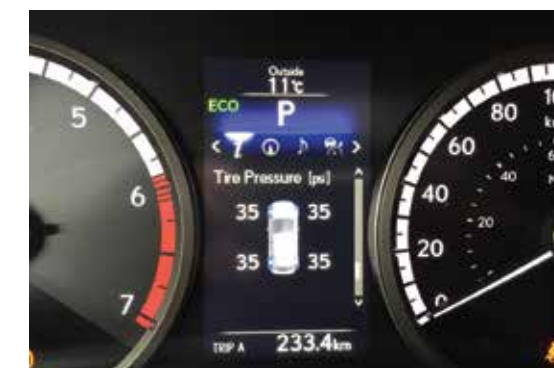
## Upsides

One of the biggest benefits of using run-flats is avoiding having to immediately pull over in inclement weather or otherwise questionable conditions. Instead of changing the tire yourself or calling a tow truck right then and there, you are awarded a little extra leeway to get the car where it needs to go.

When a puncture does occur on the road, a conventional tire may cause a sudden loss of control. A run-flat, on the other hand, is specifically designed to continue providing support with the absence air.

## Downsides

Although having run-flats installed on your vehicle means you don't have to stop to change a tire, it also means there's no spare in the back, or a jack, or tools,

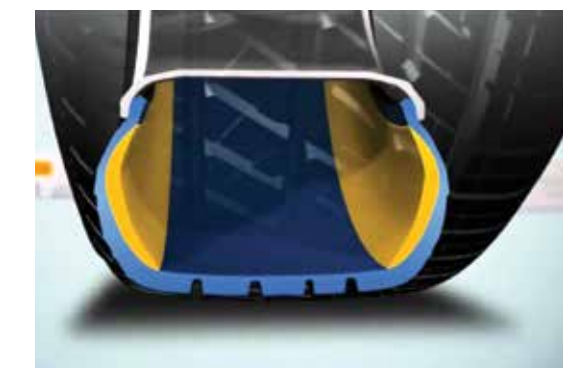


should you require those items for any reason.

Reinforced is another word for stiffer sidewalls, potentially causing slightly rougher ride quality. To compensate for this, suspension systems are sometimes tuned accordingly at the factory.

Unsurprisingly, run-flat tires are pricier than their standard counterparts due to less production and a more complex construction process. If repair is not possible, the offending tire may have to be replaced in twos. Stock may be limited in store, again due to smaller production runs.

\* Repair of a punctured run-flat tire should only be undertaken after inspected thoroughly by a professional and deemed safe to do so. Generally, repair is only possible with a puncture of less than six millimetres in depth, and on support ring equipped models, if the ring hasn't sustained excessive damage.





# 2016 BMW 7 Series

## A technological tour de force



The BMW 7 Series has arguably always been eclipsed by its rival from Stuttgart, the Mercedes-Benz S-Class. Since the 7 Series' inception, BMW has never been the top seller in the segment. It is a constant game of one-upmanship in this game of who is at the top of the ultra-luxury hierarchy.

But why should the average Joe care about the seemingly unattainable or opulent levels of features or technology on these large luxury flagship sedans?

It is because much of the technology developed for the

S-Class or 7 Series ends up trickling down from the outer reaches of the luxury segment down to everyday cars. Anti-lock brakes, air bags, electronic stability and traction control systems, and LED headlamps may seem common place these days, but they all made their original debuts on both of the aforementioned luxury vehicles years before they arrived on a Toyota Corolla. The re-imagined 2016 BMW 7 Series flagship has recently broken cover with a smorgasbord of technology and luxury. Here are a few of its technical

highlights, which will hopefully be making its way down the automotive food chain in the years to come.

### Gesture Control

BMW's iDrive operating system, now in its 5th generation, is newly available with touch screen technology offered in conjunction with the standard Navigation system. Operating the iDrive has become easier as customers will also be able to operate the system in the same way as modern electronic devices. In addition to using the Controller to operate the

system in familiar style, its functions can also be selected and activated by touching the screen's surface. Voice command and actual button selection is also available.

But what is really ground breaking is that the iDrive system also works in conjunction with the 7 Series Gesture Control. This new technology makes its global debut in the new BMW 7 Series.

Pre-selected hand movements in the vicinity of the center console allow 3D sensors to register and fulfill requested actions. The system has been designed to be extremely intuitive and user-friendly. The gestures to

adjust the audio volume control, for example, involve twirling a finger clockwise in mid-air to increase the volume of the stereo and twirling it counter-clockwise to decrease it. Answering a call on a connected Bluetooth phone can be performed by simply pointing at the screen, or the call can be ignored by swiping a finger.

There is even a configurable gesture whose associated function can be customized from a selection of possible functions. This includes navigation to the home address, or deactivation of the screen. Gesture Control can be used as an alternative to conventional means of

operation without the need for separate activation.

### 3D Surround View camera

Although 360 degree surround view cameras are not new, BMW's 3D View Camera has a few new tricks up its sleeve.

Like other systems, cameras mounted at the front and back of the exterior mirrors provide a 360 degree view around the vehicle. Surround View includes the standard Rear view camera, Panorama View, Top View. But what it is new to the party is 3D View.

In addition to the simple depiction of the driving space to the rear, top, and sides, in 3D View, a computer



generated 3D view is shown simultaneously, for an even better overview when parking. Since iDrive now features gesture control, the driver can literally use a flick of the wrist to spin the image 360 degrees to see every nook and cranny around the 7 Series in 3D space.

Panorama View makes navigating in areas with low visibility, such as driveways or confusing intersections, safer. A digital camera on the front of the car captures the traffic situation in front of the vehicle. This enables early detection of oncoming traffic so that the driver can react appropriately. The Panorama View function is automatically deactivated when the car reaches 15 m/h.

**Multi-composite body – Carbon Fibre Reinforced Plastic**

Thanks to the BMW Efficient Lightweight strategy, the new BMW 7 Series will tip the scales up to 130 kilograms lighter than the outgoing generation of models. At its heart is a body structure with a

Carbon Core based on the transfer of technology from the development of the BMW i models.

The use of CFRP (Carbon Fibre Reinforced Plastic) – whose material properties lend themselves to use in the passenger cell areas exposed to heavy loads – increases torsional rigidity and strength.

The configuration of the sheet metal elements can be adjusted accordingly, allowing body weight to be significantly reduced.



Carbon-fibre reinforced plastic (CFRP) is 30 per cent lighter than aluminium and roughly 50 per cent lighter than steel. In the 7 Series, it is used atop the centre

tunnel, in the B- and C-pillars, the windshield header, rear parcel shelf and, more importantly, inside the side roof rails. The side sills also benefit from CFRP reinforcement. The rest of the car is comprised of aluminium (front fenders, roof, doors, deck lid and other key forgings) and steel.



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# Lexus NX200t review

Lexus' foray into the world of compact luxury crossovers



Over 25 years ago, Lexus was the product of a Toyota corporate project. Code-named F1, its intent was to develop a premium new sedan that could rival the best from Europe. This clandestine effort was aimed at producing a world-class luxury sedan for international markets, and did not have any specific budget or time constraints. Engineers did not even have to utilize existing Toyota platforms or parts.

This project began in 1983 and six years later culminated in the launch of the Lexus LS full-sized luxury sedan in 1989. With the late Toyota chairman Eiji Toyoda's blessing, Chief Engineer Ichiro Suzuki's goal was to develop an all-new design that surpassed

existing rivals from America and Europe.

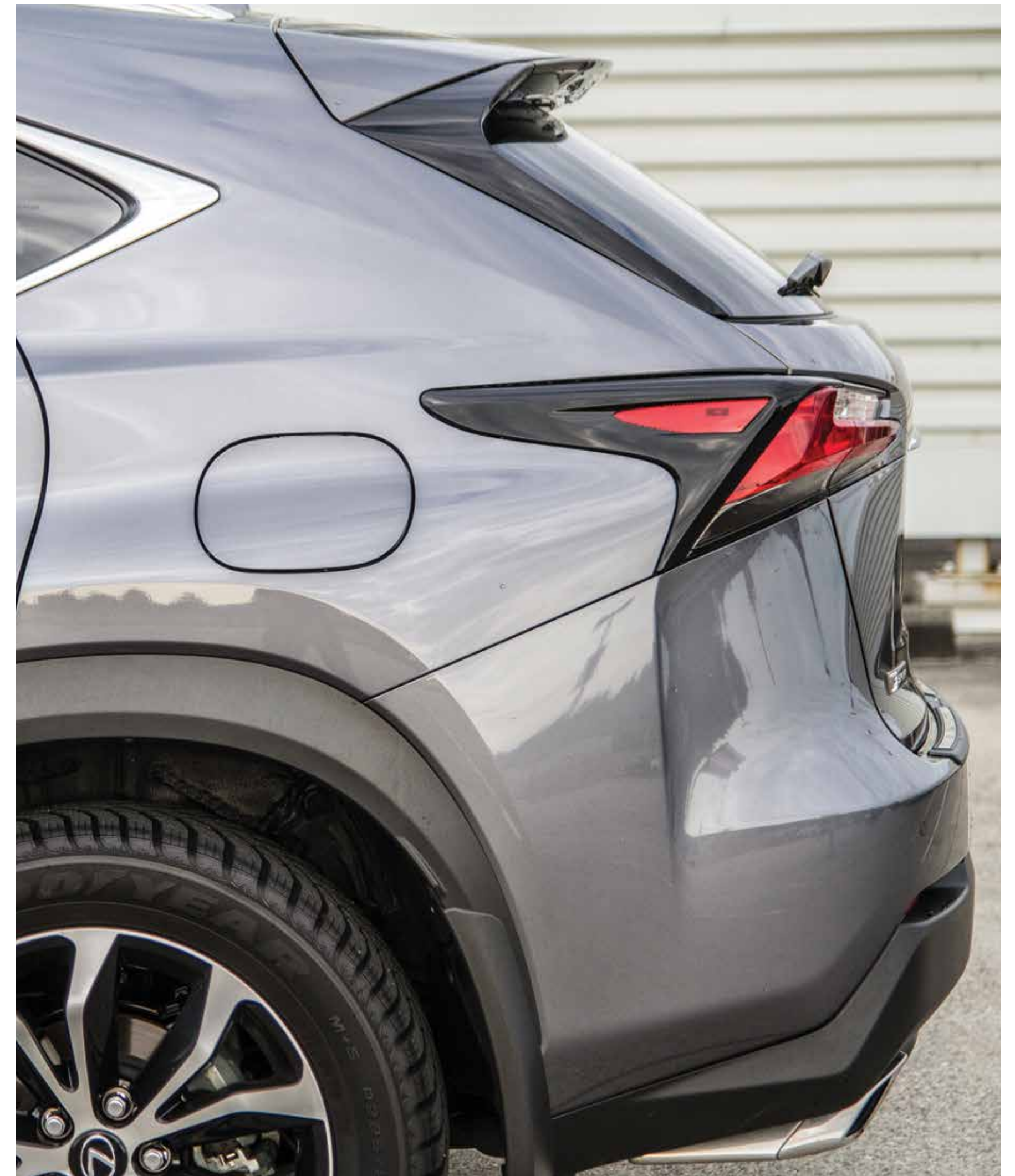
In true Japanese fashion, at its peak, the Lexus development team included 60 designers, 1,400 engineers split up into 24 teams, 2,300 technicians, and over 200 support workers. There were 450 vehicle prototypes and 900 engine prototypes, many of which were tested all over the globe in all sorts of conditions. By the time the dust settled, over 2.7 million kilometres of testing was done, and over US\$1 billion in development expenses were spent.

The 1990 Lexus LS400 shocked the automotive world with its quality and engineering, and was a wake-up call to Lexus' rivals, many of which had been

complacently resting on their laurels for years. Fast forward to 2015 and Lexus is now regarded as a major competitor to the likes of BMW, Mercedes-Benz, and Audi.

In the midsize luxury crossover segment, the company's RX350 was early to the party and has been dominating sales since its introduction in 1998. Both the Lexus RX and the Toyota RAV4 have been innovators in the car-based SUV segment, these days better known as the crossover market.

However, when it comes to compact luxury SUVs, the NX is late to the party. And not just fashionably late but just late. BMW has been in this segment for over



10 years with its X3, and Mercedes-Benz has had their GLK (aka GLC now) since 2008.

Will the Lexus NX200t be playing catch up now, or will it be able to conquer new customers into the Lexus family? Let's have a closer look.

### What it's not

There was a time where nobody would even consider associating the words "luxury car" and "Japanese" in the same sentence. Then came along the Honda Legend, whose market success showed that the Japanese reputation for reliability and engineering did impress high-end buyers. It just hadn't been packaged properly before.

While it is late to the upscale compact SUV fray, the Lexus NX is far more than a fancy Toyota RAV4. Sure it shares the same basic platform as the RAV4, but it



in a sporty fashion but the downside to the unique dual-tiered control surface is the slightly busy layout. There are a lot of buttons on said levels, requiring that one take his/her eyes off the road until familiarity with button positioning sets in.

It is also not as easy to use the touchpad Human Interface Controller as one would expect, mainly due to the fact that in a moving vehicle, your finger can get jostled all over the place while trying to select one of the on-screen buttons using the touchpad. Sure there is haptic feedback that lets you know where your cursor is hovering, but it is a bit slow to respond and simply not as easy to use as the systems from the NX200t's German rivals. Some improvement could be made here.

does not take a genius to see that it looks and feels a lot different both inside and out.

For one thing, the Lexus feels a lot more intimate and personal inside. The rear seats are a good deal smaller than the RAV4, as is the cargo hold. If you have a bigger family, the RAV4 still will be more accommodating.

The NX's high window line creates a high belt line, allowing for a comforting cocoon-like feeling. The trade-off is that visibility out the sides and back is not the greatest, largely due to the thick C-pillars and also the smaller windows in the rear doors. Luckily, Lexus has seen fit to include a rearview camera, alleviating much of these issues. An available blindspot warning also takes care of the rest.

The double-decker Lexus dash wraps around the driver



### Styling

The NX200t is provocatively-styled with some familiar cues from its big brother RX and even its sporty RC coupé cousin.

Over the last few years, Lexus designers have really tried their very best to come up with their own designs, some with varying levels of success. With sharp creases and edges, the NX will not be mistaken for anything but what it is. A late model Lexus vehicle.

The dramatic Lexus' spindle grille looks like it could eat children here, and in F Sport trim with its blacked out accents, the NX almost looks slightly sinister.

While some design experts and industry rivals say that the trapezoidal grille is "polarizing", Lexus' global chief, Tokuo Fukuichi, stands by the design, saying that the stand-out face provides some design shock therapy that was previously lacking with the brand.

This is particularly important in competitive emerging markets such as China, where Lexus sales trail German rivals Audi, Mercedes-Benz, and BMW by a wide margin. Lexus is banking on the fact that their latest direction in styling will give the company a unique edge thanks to the company having vehicles that stand out from the crowd.

### First Four-Cylinder Turbo Lexus

The "t" in the NX200t refers to the 2.0 litre turbocharged 4 cylinder engine under the NX's hood.

It's the first application of this all-new Lexus engine, which is making its way across to the rest of the product line, including the IS sport sedan.

This Atkinson cycle motor has been designed for power and efficiency, delivering up to 235 horsepower and 258 lb-ft (350 Nm) of torque. Combined with a six-speed automatic transmission and all-wheel-drive, the NX200t delivers surprisingly sporty acceleration and minimal turbo lag. It would be nice to see a transmission with more gearing sometime in the future as the NX's competitors can be had with 8 or even 9 speed transmissions. Also not available is a more powerful engine, which BMW and Mercedes both offer with their entries in this segment.

However, the NX is also available in a hybrid version, called the NX300h. Now that is a rarity in this segment. Perhaps it's no surprise as it plays to parent company Toyota's corporate strengths. The NX300h is built around a Lexus Hybrid Drive specifically configured for the NX series and delivers up to 194 net system horsepower and 152 lb-ft (206 Nm) of torque. Additional handling and control technologies are, of course, standard equipment on the NX, as expected in this luxury segment. These include the table stakes combination of Vehicle Stability Control, Traction Control, Hill-start Assist, and Dynamic Torque Control.

As in the sporty RC coupe, a three-setting Drive Mode Select System includes Sport, Normal, and Eco positions that modify the NX's responsiveness to emphasise efficiency or sportiness. I liked "Sport" mode the best, as it also sets up the electric power steering with the most natural weighting, while still combining quick and accurate steering responsiveness.

### It doesn't drive like an old-fashioned Lexus, but that's not a bad thing

If you're a traditional Lexus buyer, you may be disappointed that the NX200t won't drive like a traditional soft and cushy Lexus. The NX200t's modus operandi is not to waft and float down the motorway, but instead aims to be more sporty and more attached to the road, especially in the F Sport trim that my test vehicle was equipped with.

This is certainly a step away from the typical Lexus plushness that many have come to associate with the brand, but also an important one to introduce a more diverse audience to the company's offerings. Whatever the NX is, one thing is for certain. This engaging new compact luxury crossover is a very important vehicle for Lexus and will likely be one of the very best sellers for the brand. I think that Eiji Toyoda would be quite proud.



# Honda's VTEC engine design

## How does it work?



In 1989 when Honda engineer Ikuo Kajitani invented VTEC, Honda's Variable Valve Timing and Lift Electronic Control, he probably didn't expect VTEC to one day become part of pop culture. These days, "VTEC just kicked in" memes are commonplace, and Honda fan boys use it as part of their everyday vernacular.

### History

The technology behind VTEC did not originally have anything to do with automobile engines but in fact from Honda's motorcycle division. The basic idea was that Honda's engineers knew that two-valve engines were competent at lower engine speeds and idled smoothly. On the flip-side, four-valve engines made a

lot more top-end power.

The holy grail then, was to design an engine that could rev to high rpms (for great top-end power), but yet idle patiently at 1,000 rpms.

Since Japan levies a tax based on engine displacement, Japanese auto manufacturers have invested large amounts of their research and development efforts

towards squeezing the maximum amount of power out of an engine without increasing its displacement. Some went to the forced induction route (turbocharging or supercharging), but Honda decided on something different.

As far back as 1984, Honda launched their NCE (New Concept Engine), which aimed to push the limits of top-end torque production without sacrificing low-end engine performance. Although only Japanese-market 1985 Civic and Integra engines were part of this project, it convinced Ikuo Kajitani that the ideal engine design would have better fuel economy and a higher output across the entire power band.

### How does it work?

The directive issued by top management at Honda R&D was to "find a new technology to lead the next generation of Honda engines". Looking back now, Honda's engineers appear to have fulfilled that directive.

VTEC technology has drawn considerable praise as the world's first valve mechanism capable of simultaneously changing the valve timing and lift on the intake and exhaust sides.

The system essentially uses two camshaft profiles and hydraulically selects between them to provide the engine with valve timing optimized for both low and high rpm operations. Switching between the two cam profiles is controlled by the engine control unit, which takes into account a variety of factors including engine oil pressure, temperature, throttle position, and much more.

Using these inputs, and upon the driver's throttle pedal demands, the electronic control unit will determine if the switch from low lift to high lift cam lobes will improve horsepower output. When opening

and closing according to the high-lift profile, the valves open further and for a longer time, thus generating more power even at high engine revolutions. VTEC will continuously vary the timing and amount of lift of the valves according to engine speed.

To prevent breakage, VTEC camshafts were made from a then completely new high-carbon, high-chrome cast steel that have a combination of heat and surface treatments. Even the exhaust valves were made of heat-resistant nickel-based steel combined with molybdenum, titanium, and tungsten.

It is because of these over-engineered bits and bobs that

Honda's components have almost become legendary for the abuse they can handle.

### Today's latest VTEC engines

20 years later, it's somewhat amazing to reflect back upon what VTEC has done for Honda enthusiasts and indeed the auto industry in general. Many other manufacturers have their own version of variable valve timing these days but Honda's is the stuff that will go into engine halls of fame.

The principles of VTEC haven't changed much in over two decades. The design's simplicity is arguably its most amazing attribute, along with the fact that it is almost entirely mechanical (but yet durable) for yet a relatively low production cost. Although VTEC was

made famous by the 1989 Honda/Acura Integra and the 1991 Honda/Acura NSX supercar, it has now spread all across the Honda model line-up. Honda also recently announced

their first ever turbo engine for the 10th generation Civic coupe fitted, of course, with a i-VTEC engine. This advanced engine also utilized gasoline direct-injection and turbocharging technology.

The "i" stands for "intelligent", and includes a system called VTC (Variable Timing Control). Based upon all sorts of technical information that would be too detailed for this article, the camshaft gear is electronically and hydraulically driven, offering an unprecedented balance between performance and emissions thanks to the computer's ability to reduce timing at idle, and advancing it at higher speeds, which increases valve overlap and power.

By adding i-VTEC's VTC system, camshaft timing becomes variable. With both systems in place, there is potential for both economy and efficiency to make significant leaps.



# Hydraulic vs. Steering



While the switch from conventional (hydraulic) power steering to electric is a more subtle change for the average driver than, say, a gasoline to electric motor, it is nonetheless a big step in automotive evolution. You'll find this technology in modern offerings from Hyundais to Porsches, and some brands like Infiniti take it one step further with the introduction of a steer-by-wire system. Here's how it all works.

## Hydraulic power steering

Most cars sold a few years ago use this type of a steering setup. A hydraulic piston connected to the steering

gear uses pressurized fluid to provide assistance when turning the wheel. The fluid moves via a pump that is driven by the engine — The issue is the pump is always using energy even when the steering wheel isn't touched. The amount of assistance can also feel different depending on how fast the vehicle is moving.

## Electric power steering.

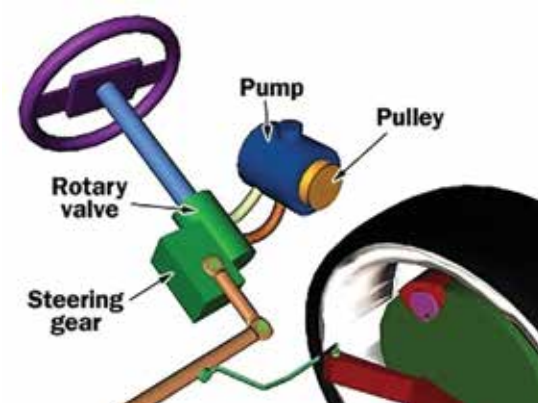
An electric power steering (EPS) system deletes the piston and pump altogether and instead utilizes a small, independent motor and torque sensor mounted directly to the steering column or gear. The sensor monitors force being applied to the wheel and gives the appropriate amount of help to the driver. The benefit is less energy drag from the engine, resulting in slightly better fuel economy, as well as fewer moving parts and lighter weight.

## Steer-by-wire

Infiniti was the first to introduce steer-by-wire to the market with the launch of the Q50 luxury sedan a couple years ago. Calling it Direct Adaptive Steering (DAS), it largely eliminates any mechanical connection between the driver and the wheels. So where as EPS removes hydraulics, DAS goes one step further and

takes away the traditional steering linkage as well (although there is a mechanical backup system in case the electronics fail), using actuators instead that turn the wheels directly.

Steer-by-wire is definitely the wave of the future as more and more traditional car functions are digitized. DAS is already showing what is possible with its ability to tailor steering feel to accommodate the user's preference, and features like Active Lane Control where the computer can automatically keep the car in its lane to compensate for environmental changes such as heavy crosswinds or uneven road surfaces.



# mavi



# Remote Control Range Rover



It may still be some time before we see fully autonomous cars ruling the streets, but Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) is getting one step closer with a series of experiments involving controlling a Range Rover remotely, and monitoring brain waves to improve driver concentration. Last month, researchers at JLR demonstrated using a smartphone app to help a Range Rover Sport test vehicle apply throttle, steer, brake and perform a multi-point turn, the latter potentially useful for exiting tight or poor visibility situations. Sensors are utilized to detect and avoid other objects, and eventually may

be able to scan the surrounding environment to assess whether it is safe to perform the commands executed by the “driver.” “Getting a car out of tricky parking manoeuvre can be a stressful experience for any driver. A remote control car, or vehicle that can autonomously turn in the road, demonstrates how we could use these new technologies to reduce the tedious parts of driving and improve road safety,” said Wolfgang Epple, JLR director of research and technology. The ability to walk alongside the Range Rover while manipulating it is also handy for off-road or adverse

weather conditions. The company gives an example of precisely positioning it when crawling over rocks or exploring a slippery section of mud or ice covered road. “Because our customers drive in all terrains and in all weather, any future autonomous Jaguar or Land Rover must be as capable on rough tracks and unpaved roads as it would be on city streets,” said Epple. JLR is borrowing from the fields of sports, medicine and aerospace for its Mind Sense project. The purpose is to see if the onboard computer can read a driver’s brainwaves in order to determine when he or she is becomes sleepy or distracted.

To do so, the data is measured through the hands, via contacts embedded in the steering wheel. To compensate for the distance the waves have to travel from the subject’s head, software amplifies the brainwaves. This could lead to new safety developments, such as a vibrating steering wheel or pedals to alert the re-engage the driver. Epple added that with autonomous motoring, there will still be times when it is necessary to hand control back to a human operator, and innovations such as this will tell the vehicle whether the person behind the wheel is alert and ready to go. To that end, one more advancement being worked on is wellness monitoring. JLR added medical-grade sensors — originally developed for use in hospitals — strategically placed in the seat of an XJ sedan to analyze the driver’s heart rate and breathing. Applications for this include being able to predict the onset of an incapacitating illness and even stress mitigation. Imagine this scenario: after a bad day at work, your



Jaguar or Land Rover automatically changes the mood lighting to a soft pale blue, makes the cabin

temperature a little more comfortable and plays some Marvin Gaye through the premium speakers.



# Volvo V60 XC review

Stylish refined wagon with great safety features



Why is it that we find anything remotely to do with off-roading so darn cool? For me, it must be some kind of living-vicariously-through-others phenomenon whenever I see an armoured-out Jeep or exposed dune buggy. This might explain why I was excited to hear Volvo was debuting a Cross Country (XC) variant of the V60 wagon.

## Rugged crossover with style

Nowadays, there are many luxury brands making rugged editions of crossovers and SUVs marketed towards the adventurous consumer, but Volvo was actually the first with its V70 Cross Country offered way back in 1997. While the new V60 XC certainly evokes the spirit of the original, it is a beast of an

entirely different sort combining elegant styling with off-road design cues.

I received several compliments from the general public while driving around in the press car loaned to me by the Swedish automaker. Using the current standard V60 as a base, ground clearance has been raised, subtle silver skid plates installed front and rear, as well as matching side scuff plates. My favourite accessory would have to be the black "fender extensions," or wheel arch flares, although the exclusive 18-inch split five-spoke wheels equipped with beefy high profile tires aren't bad either.

## Love that steering wheel

The interior also gets some small changes to

differentiate the XC from the city-going version, namely in the form of black leather with brown contrast stitching. Most everything else will feel familiar to anyone who has sat in a recent Volvo product, and that's just fine. The driving position is comfortable, giving a great view of the road and all areas around the vehicle. The thick, leather-covered steering wheel feels great in your hands and makes the overall experience oddly more enjoyable.

What good would an all-road capable wagon be if it couldn't carry a bicycle? At 1,241 litres of cargo capacity, the V60 can carry any kind of gear with no problems. The only thing missing, however, is a power lift gate to keep your hands from getting dirty opening



and closing the lid.

The engine packaged with the XC is T5 five-cylinder gasoline engine producing 250 horsepower and 361 Nm of torque, which still feels quick even though it's pulling along 1,780 kilograms of weight. Handling is surprisingly nimble for its size, helped by the Volvo's all-wheel drive system putting power to the ground at all four corners regardless of surface conditions.

## Safety

There is a full suite of safety features included as standard equipment, like front and side airbags, collapsible steering column, stability and traction

control and whiplash protection seating. I found City Safety especially accurate and useful, a function that utilizes infrared sensors to detect the vehicle in front and warns the driver in a possible collision scenario, even applying the brakes automatically if no action is taken.

In addition, there are driver assistance technologies customers can choose to have optioned on as part of a package, like a blind spot warning system and cross traffic alert to warn you of oncoming objects behind you as you leave a parking space.

The 2016 Volvo V60 Cross Country is available now.

## Specifications

Type: five-door, five-passenger wagon  
 Layout: front engine, all-wheel drive  
 Engine: 2.5-litre turbocharged five cylinder  
 Transmission: seven-speed Geartronic automatic  
 Power: 250 hp @ 5,400 rpm  
 Torque: 361 Nm @ 1,800 rpm  
 Curb weight: 1,780 kg  
 Brakes: front/rear disc with ABS  
 Fuel Consumption (L/100km, city/hwy combined): 11.9 (observed)





# Kia K900 review

## Luxury cruiser with all the electronic bells and whistles



When you hear talk of redefining the rear-wheel drive uber-luxury sedan segment, Kia might not be the first brand that comes to mind. But the Seoul-based manufacturer is helping sway popular opinion with their flagship K900.

Through the corporate partnership of Hyundai and Kia, the K900 shares some family DNA, namely parts from the outgoing Genesis sedan and Hyundai's own range-topping vehicle, the Equus. Its handsome looks remain unique, due in large part to the influence of Peter Schreyer, president and chief design officer of Kia Motors.

### Tiger Nose grille

One of Schreyer's first tasks when he came onboard was to create a powerful face for the brand, which

he did with the now-famous Tiger Nose grille.

Implemented across Kia's entire portfolio of cars, the nose is especially pronounced on the K900 where it sits almost flat against the seamless curvature of the front bumper. Equally as seamless are the LED foglights stacked neatly above the LED daytime running lights, tucked away in the corners of the lower bumper opening where they dazzle when on and blend in when off.

You'll have to stand back a bit to capture the entire side profile of the sedan in frame, because it's long — 5,095-millimetres long. That might make for slightly tricky parallel parking in certain city spots, but your passengers will thank you. Why? Those in the front have 1,166 mm of legroom, and people fortunate

enough to climb into the cavernous rear cabin get nearly as much, at 970 mm.

### Super sound system

Given its almost limo-like proportions, I was surprised I had as good a time driving as my passengers did being driven around. Helming the 900-watt hi-fi stereo by Lexicon, that also provides OEM audio to Rolls-Royce, was part of the experience. I've listened to my fair share of premium sound systems, but the Lexicon setup really shines with a 12-channel amp in the trunk and 17 strategically placed speakers including an inverted subwoofer in the rear parcel shelf.

Speaking of the trunk, the K900 is one of the few luxury cars I've come across possessing a power-operated lid that opens and closes with the push of a

button. A big plus, particularly in the winter so you don't end up with a dirty hands each time you go shopping.

Standard on the highest trim level I tested is Kia's first Head-Up Display (HUD). Again, having experienced various HUDs, I've seen ones that work better than others. The one in this particular vehicle really is stellar. It's full colour, adjustable, and appears to be floating in the windshield space within the driver's line of sight without relying on any protruding panels or screens. Vitals like speed, precise turn-by-turn navigation instructions and safety alerts all appear when appropriate.

### V8 Power

A 420-horsepower V8 Gasoline Direct Injection engine, another Kia first, powers the range-topping

model. It's obvious there's plenty of power on tap, and when you get the rpms wound up the K900 really hauls. The throttle response seems a little laggy, like your foot moves a lot sooner before the big sedan actually moves. This sensation can be mitigated somewhat by toggling between the Eco, Normal and Sport settings, which adjusts the shift points of the eight-speed automatic transmission and also the feel of the electric steering.

Rear-wheel drive makes the handling feel spry and the car fun to drive, but a wet day and too much gas pedal can make the tail wag ever so slightly before it's caught by the Advanced Vehicle Safety Management encompassing technologies like the electronic stability control.

One final thought — it might be a good idea to keep

your wallet handy even after you've made the purchase: during a week of mostly city driving with small stretches on the highway, my average fuel economy was in the neighbourhood of 22.1 L/100 km.

### Specifications

Type: five-passenger sedan  
 Layout: front engine, rear-wheel drive  
 Engine: 5.0-litre V8  
 Transmission: eight-speed dual-clutch automatic  
 Power: 420 @ 6,400 rpm  
 Torque: 510 Nm @ 5,000 rpm  
 Curb weight: 2,091 kilograms  
 Brakes: front vented disc/rear disc with ABS  
 Fuel Consumption (L/100km, city/hwy combined): 22.1 (observed)



# Cadillac XTS4 Vsport

## The Americans take on German sport and luxury



Cadillac has been going through resurgence as a luxury brand. With the brand's latest products, customers are actually getting some good looking and competent products with the panache of a historic American brand.

The company's all-new full-sized sedan, the XTS, was designed as a domestic alternative to mid-sized German luxury cars such as the Mercedes-Benz E-Class, BMW 5-series, and Audi A6.

There has always been somewhat of a disconnect in the Cadillac line-up. Their big front-wheel-drive DTS and STS sedans sold well, but did not really fall into the high tech cutting edge image that the company wanted to portray. The XTS now looks to rectify this image issue and more.

Gone is the snoozer STS and old DTS styling in favour of a much more attractive design language in line with the rest of the Cadillac family.

The front end looks good with modern sharp, chiselled

edges that you expect from Cadillac's latest language.

To my eyes, the back looks a little less attractive, almost ungainly with a rear overhang that is perhaps a bit too long. Your mileage may vary. The result of the stretch is a hugely raked rear window and a slightly awkward short trunk lid.

The payoff, strangely enough, is not so much in rear legroom but a gargantuan 18 cubic feet of trunk space.

### New platform with available all-wheel-drive

The XTS is still based on a front wheel drive platform, which it shares with the Buick Lacrosse and Chevrolet Impala.

Cadillac's engineers have taken a layered approach to the driving experience, placing particular importance on designing a stiff new structure using new and established technologies. The XTS' structure is infused with strategically placed, ultra-high-strength steel for strength and crash protection.

My test vehicle was an XTS4, with the "4" on the badge denoting the optional all-wheel-drive system.

This Haldex-based full-time all-wheel-drive system with an electronic limited slip rear differential is optional for all-weather traction, all year round.

For the most part, the system is completely transparent. That is to say that the all-wheel-drive XTS4 feels very much like the front-wheel-drive version, safe and secure, but not particularly sporty.

### Twin Turbo Power

The standard XTS comes with a 3.6L V6 engine rated at 306 horsepower and 264 lb-ft of torque (355 Nm). It's no slouch of an engine. However, just like the styling, the performance, ride and handling has also been tuned to be a lot more edgy in Vsport trim. The Vsport's power is courtesy of a direct-injection 3.6L V6 engine from the CTS but now fitted with forced induction. This boosts power to a solid 410 hp and 369 lb-ft of torque (500 Nm), making the Vsport's

engine one of the most power dense six-cylinder engines in the segment.

The secret formula? Well perhaps "proven" is a better descriptor these days versus "secret". Cadillac's engineers added a pair of smaller turbochargers and an intercooler to help vastly eliminate a turbo engine's biggest nemesis, turbo lag. Peak torque is sustained over a broad range, 1,900 to 5,600 rpms, and there is always a confident feeling of power when accelerating or passing traffic on the highway.

This rocket of a six-cylinder is mated with GM's smooth shifting 6-speed automatic gearbox. My only criticism is that in this price and category, you would expect another extra gear or two much like the XTS' competitors. The gearbox could also shift a bit quicker, given the bar that has now been set by BMW's excellent 8-speed ZF automatic transmission.

The powerful twin turbocharged engine scoots the XTS4 V Sport from 0-100 km/hr in just over 5.5 seconds. Not bad a bad time at all considering the 4,000+ pounds of Cadillac that needs to be motivated.

### Ride and drive technology

When it comes to luxury brands, buyers expect the latest in technology and Cadillac doesn't disappoint. The XTS VSport comes with not only a more powerful engine but also with GM's excellent Magnetic Ride Control. The magnetorheological shocks are filled with a polymer liquid with many small magnetic particles suspended in it. Send an electrical charge to the liquid and the position of the particles in the liquid and its viscosity changes immediately.

The viscosity of the polymer liquid can be changed to an almost solid state similar to plastic or rubber in composition, which results in a softer or harder ride. Each of the four dampeners are adjusted individually and independently even when it seems that all of them are doing the same thing.

The result is that the big Cadillac glides over rough roads despite the big 20-inch wheels and low profile tires. If anything, I thought that with the XTS Vsport's powerful V6, the ride could be stiffer for sportier handling when the road bends.

It is not to say that the XTS4 Vsport doesn't willingly respond on winding roads. Quite the contrary, despite its size, there is some pleasant weight to the steering and minimal body roll. The Vsport will hold its own on a curvy road, but smaller luxury cars will still be more fun.

Other ride technology goodies include General Motors' HiPer strut anti-torque steer front suspension, and large Brembo brakes.

Modern luxury standards also call for the latest in driver safety technology and the XTS is loaded to the gills with forward-collision warning, blind-spot warning, cross-traffic alert, and attention monitoring. The Cadillac will even vibrate the seat to warn you of impending "threats".

### Interior luxury

Before you even get into the XTS' interior, the car entertains you upon approach. Unlock the car after dark and you'll be greeted by Cadillac's cool LED-infused door handles. Even the HID Xenon headlamps

have been outfitted with fibre optic LED light pipes that gradually brighten.

Open the door and the CUE infotainment centre stack and gauge cluster screens welcome you with a coordinated show in the form an animation.

This specific greeting pattern is something that GM's engineers carefully choreographed. Christos Roustemis, Cadillac interior designer, explained that each phase of the process was design to highlight every important area outside and inside of the vehicle. The inspiration was a theatre stage, where different areas get lit up by the production crew, then fade down.

This pantomime may seem slightly gimmicky, but the reality is that the luxury segment is a battlefield for LED lighting and new designs and technologies have to be employed to impress customers tired of conventional bulbs.

My Platinum trim level XTS was fitted with all of the luxury interior accoutrements that you would expect. A microfibre headliner, premium wood trim, surround-sound premium audio, ambient lighting, heated and ventilated seats, side and rear window shades, rear seat climate controls, a built-in Wi-Fi hotspot. You name it, it probably has it.

Sporting the latest interpretation of Cadillac's Art and Science design theme, the interior was not only very pretty, but also very distinctive. A stunning 12.3-inch reconfigurable instrument cluster presents itself to the driver upon entry, featuring vibrant graphic displays showcased among four driver-selectable themes, ranging from minimal to extensive information.





As with other Cadillac models, XTS is fitted with the company's CUE (Cadillac User Experience) infotainment system. The system integrates car settings, GPS satellite navigation, and is also designed to pair entertainment and information from up to 10 Bluetooth-enabled mobile devices, USB sticks, SD cards, and MP3 players.

At the heart of CUE is a vibrant 8-inch LCD multi-touch screen with proximity sensing and haptic feedback. CUE is designed to resemble a smartphone and therefore the system recognizes the same "swipe", "pinch", or "spread" gestures common to most smartphones or tablets.

While this all sounds great in practice, the CUE's interface needs to be quicker. Sometimes the haptic feedback is delayed, taking away from the high tech experience. It's not the worst I've seen, but it feels like it is a one processor generation behind from being a solid and clever system. Fortunately Cadillac is aware of these issues and each subsequent generation of CUE seems to be better and better.

#### Wrap-Up

The XTS brings some dynamic advancements to Cadillac and is another layer in building a world class foundation for the brand.

The car offers Lexus-like levels of luxury and isolation

from the outside world, but with a uniquely American twist. The handsome interior is packed with a high level of technology and safety features that buyers in this segment expect, as well as appropriate amount of high-quality soft touch leather surfaces.

If you value a sporty driving experience over physical size, or if you're a current Mercedes-Benz, BMW, or Audi owner, the Cadillac may still not be your cup of tea.

But if brand loyalty is less your style and you're seeking a distinctive large luxury sedan with a knockout interior, the XTS is worth a close look.

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# Honda Fit Subcompact now fits even more and achieves better fuel economy



“#FITwhatever” is the official social media slogan for the new, third-generation Honda Fit. The hashtag is a “Fitting” one (sorry) because it describes not only the diminutive car’s flexibility in adapting to different lifestyle types, but also its cargo-carrying-friendly nature.

The hatchback is one of my favourite form factors because of its versatility. It can squeeze in five passengers somewhat comfortably, the rear seats fold down (more on this later), and it plain looks great. The headlights are now integrated with a blacked-out front

grille. There are diffusers on both bumpers which, coupled with the bigger 16-inch alloy wheels (EX and EX-L), help swap a few points from the cute category over to sporty. If you stand back and squint, it kind of looks like a stocky Mystic Yellow Pearl bulldog sitting on its haunches.

## Magic Seats

A neat feature that deserves mention is the Magic Seats. A lot of automakers are finding unique ways of creating more with less when it comes to size. For example, the 2015 Fit is actually 40.6 mm shorter than the outgoing

model while only being 7.6 mm wider. That’s why I found it surprising that rear legroom for passengers has been increased by 122 mm. That is thanks to the engineers who played around with the architecture, made easier by a fuel tank that has been relocated to the middle of the vehicle.

A neat feature that deserves mention is the Magic Seats. In one of Honda’s promotional photos, it shows a woman lounging in the back with her legs stretched out onto the front seatback that’s been folded flat. There are a variety of seating positions that can

be achieved for comfort, or for cramming in more stuff—1,492 L worth with the second row laid down.

## Performance

Of course the performance aspect of the new Fit wouldn’t be left alone. Power output has increased by 13 hp and 11 Nm to 130 hp and 155 Nm. If previous versions were any indication, the transmission of choice would be the manual, which is now a 6-speed. My EX-L press vehicle came with the continuously variable transmission (CVT) option (+\$1,300) that despite improvements in technology is still noisy and a bit whiney during acceleration.

There are paddle shifters included that can help you simulate gear changes if you so choose. There’s also

an Eco Assist button that you can activate that will moderate engine, transmission, and other vehicle systems to help maximize fuel economy, but be wary that it will obviously impact the feeling of performance as well.

## Handles well

Fortunately, the Fit still retains some of the toss-able feeling that the nameplate was famous for. A press release says it “benefits from the most extensive use of ultra-high strength steel in the model’s history providing increased body stiffness while reducing platform weight by 57 pounds.” It definitely feels solid on the road and handles well with adequate response from the electric steering system, but in my opinion

it doesn’t quite fully capture the go-kart feeling of yesteryear.

The 2016 Honda Fit is manufactured in their new Celaya, Mexico, plant.

## Specifications

Type: five-passenger hatchback

Layout: front engine, front-wheel drive

Engine: 1.5-litre i-VTEC four cylinder

Transmission: CVT

Power: 130 @ 6,600 rpm

Torque: 155 Nm @ 4,600 rpm

Curb weight: 1,198 kilograms

Brakes: front vented disc/rear drum with ABS

Fuel Consumption (L/100km, city/hwy): 7.3/6.1



# Dubai Duty Free Group Sales Reach Dhs7.057 billion (US\$1.933 billion) in 2015



The New Year began on a high note for Dubai Duty Free as the group, which incorporates the airport retail operation and its Leisure division, announced turnover of Dhs7.057 billion (US\$1.933 billion) for 2015. The figure includes Dubai Duty Free sales, which reached Dhs6.892 billion (US\$1.888 billion) for the year. Dubai Duty Free, which operates at both Dubai International Airport and Al Maktoum International recorded its highest sales for the year in December 2015 when figures reached Dhs721.87 million

(US\$197.77 million). The December sales were fueled by Dubai Duty Free's 32nd anniversary celebrations when the operation offered a 25% discount across a wide range of merchandise from the 18th-20th December and recorded Dhs100.20 million (US\$27.22 million) on the anniversary day itself (20 Dec.). Over the three days, the cash registers recorded a total of 402,000 sales transactions with nearly 207,000 sales transactions alone on 20th December. Reflecting on the year at Dubai Duty Free, Colm

McLoughlin, Executive Vice Chairman said: "Overall, it has been a very good year and I would like to thank H.H. Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, President of Dubai Civil Aviation Authority and Chairman of Dubai Duty Free, for his ongoing support and I join His Highness in thanking our great team of staff, our suppliers and of course our customers, who are fundamental to our continued growth. "There is a lot to look forward to in 2016, including the opening of Concourse D at Dubai International,

which is a fantastic facility that will be very well received. We have a 7,000 sq metres retail operation in Concourse D and will be introducing some new brands and concepts there," added McLoughlin. Dubai Duty Free recorded an impressive 26,848,832 sales transactions in 2015, which is an average of 73,558 sales transactions per day across both Dubai International and at Al Maktoum International. Category wise, Perfumes continued to be the highest selling category with annual sales topping Dhs1.137 billion (US\$311.58 million) which represents 16.50% of total annual sales. Liquor and Cigarettes followed, with sales of Dhs1.069 billion (US\$293 million) and Dhs589.67 million (US\$161.55 million) respectively. Confectionery came in 4th place with sales amounting

to Dhs556.14 million (US\$152.37 million) followed by Gold with Dhs549.32 million (US\$150.50 million). Departure sales, which account for 87% of the total annual sales reached Dhs5.989 billion (US\$1.640 billion), while Arrivals sales showed a 6% increase over last year and accounted for 11% of the total annual sales. Moreover, Terminal 2 recorded an 18% increase in sales over last year to reach Dhs639.52 million (US\$175.21 million). While the successful running of the retail operation is a major focus for Dubai Duty Free, it has received over 500 awards to-date which bear testimony to its retail success. In 2015 alone, Dubai Duty Free was presented with

27 awards including the prestigious Frontier Award for "Best Marketing Campaign of the Year by a Retailer" and the US Global Traveler Award for "Best Duty Free Shop". Dubai Duty Free's Executive Vice Chairman, Colm McLoughlin also received several awards including the "Best Business Leader in Retail Award" presented at the inaugural Middle East, North Africa & Asia (MENAA) Best Business Leaders Award held last month at Burj Al Arab. Looking ahead, Dubai Duty Free will continue to maintain its busy events and promotional calendar which includes the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships to be staged at the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Stadium from the 15th to 27th February.



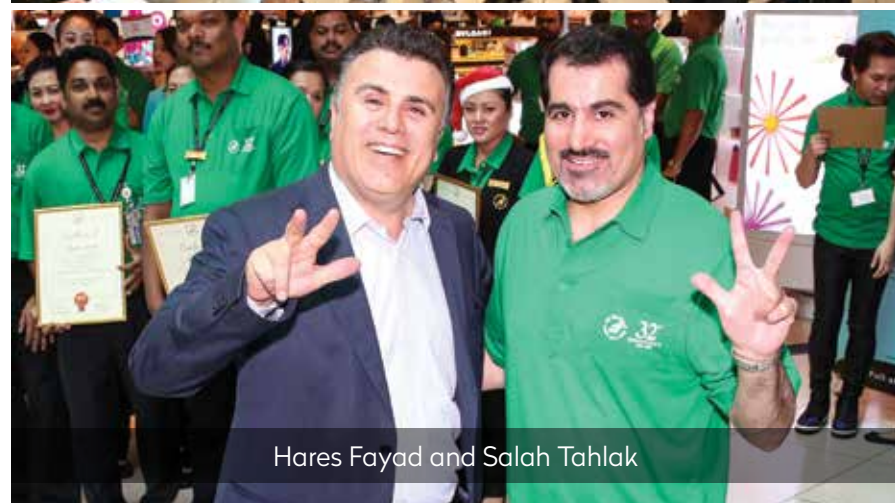
# Dubai Duty Free 32nd Anniversary



US\$1 Million prize presentation Shyamjith Vasanthan



Colm McLoughlin and Hares Fayad



Hares Fayad and Salah Tahlak



Salah Tahlak, Ramesh Cidambi, Colm McLoughlin, George Horan and Sean Staunton with Dubai Duty Free staff



DDF Finest Surprise draw to win two luxury cars and one motorbike



The Dubai Duty Free senior officials at the ceremonial cake cutting in Concourse C



Shoppers through the aisles and check-outs counter in Concourse C



Celebratory atmosphere at Dubai Duty Free Shopping Complex



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