

Escalade adds communications and safety features for 2016

July 6 2016, by Ann M. Job



This photo provided by General Motors shows the 2016 Cadillac Escalade. For 2016, Cadillac's Escalade SUV finally interfaces easily with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto and adds a vibrating seat function to alert drivers when they are wandering out of their lane. The newest features make the already plush and impressive Escalade a more modern road cruiser. (Richard Prince/Courtesy of General Motors via AP)

Cadillac has added new communications and safety equipment to the outsized Escalade for 2016, making it the first version to integrate Apple

CarPlay and Android Auto, allowing drivers easy access to their cellphone contacts, music and apps.

The new Escalade also makes more use of its vibrating safety-alert driver's seat. Now, via a new lane departure safety system, the seat vibrates to alert a driver when the SUV is straying from its lane, not just when it is getting too close to nearby objects while parking.

The 17-foot-long Escalade already boasted a lengthy list of technology and luxury features that made it an impressively plush road cruiser and stalwart tow vehicle. It can tow up to 8,300 pounds, meaning sizable horse trailers and campers are just a hookup away.

The federal government gives the 2016 Escalade five out of five stars in side crash protection for occupants. Frontal crash test results are not available. But Consumer Reports magazine rates the Escalade "poor" in reliability.

The starting manufacturer's suggested retail price, including destination charge, for the 2016 Escalade with rear-wheel drive is \$73,965.

This base price includes a fuel-guzzling 420-horsepower V8 engine; leather-trimmed seats; a leather- and wood-wrapped heated steering wheel; 20-inch wheels and tires; a navigation system with an 8-inch display screen; five USB ports; a reconfigurable electronic instrument gauge cluster; Bose surround sound with 16 speakers; power-folding third row seats; heated and cooled front seats; power-adjustable pedals; a power liftgate; and an all-around-the-vehicle vision camera system.

Including the destination charge, the lowest starting retail price for a 2016 Escalade with four-wheel drive is \$76,565.

The Escalade hasn't lost any of the shine that has made it a staple at red

carpet events over the years, featuring a large silver-colored grille, lots of chrome-look touches and vertical LED headlights and taillights.

Outside and inside, the Escalade looks and feels big, in part because it's still based on a platform from a full-size pickup truck and it rides high.

Step-in height is 22 inches, so the optional-for-\$1,750 power-deployable side running boards are worth considering for graceful entries and exits.

Despite suspension improvements over the years that include automatic dampers to help control the ride, passengers still notice a truckish ride as the Escalade's rear suspension still has a live rear axle instead of a more modern independent rear suspension and air springs.

The test-driven Escalade Platinum provided a smooth ride on straight highways, but there was plenty of shifting among passengers as the heavy SUV traversed curves and bumps were noticeable when its extra-large wheels hit bumps.

The 6.2-liter, overhead valve V8 has direct injection, which helps account for the healthy horsepower and 460 foot-pounds of torque at 4,100 rpm that moved the nearly 3-ton Escalade with ease. And most shifts came smoothly via the eight-speed automatic transmission.

But fuel mileage of 13.8 mpg in mostly city driving was far below the federal government's rating of 17 mpg. Highway travel was much better, with the test-driven model getting 20 mpg and a government rating of 21 mpg.

Thankfully, premium fuel is not required.

The Escalade is offered with seven- or eight-passenger seating. While front-seat headroom and legroom is generous, third-row passengers can

feel a bit cramped.

Cargo space behind the third row seats is just 15.2 cubic feet, which is less than a Toyota Camry's.

In May, the 2016 Escalade was part of a U.S. safety recall of 4,789 vehicles from Cadillac's parent company, General Motors Co. The recall stated front upper control arms in the suspension may not have adequate welding, creating the possibility of impaired steering that raises the risk of a crash.

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