

superscale

BY JOE SAGE

THE ACADIA IS A MIRACLE OF PACKAGING THAT FEELS SPACIOUS AND LUXURIOUS IN A MANAGABLE SIZE AT A MANAGEABLE PRICE

The GMC Acadia has been catching our eye for some time now. The styling just clicks, and the size looks right—we know it has seven seats, yet doesn't look too big to handle routinely. What's more, we had had mixed feelings about

the five-passenger Terrain. We've warmed up to it more now (see our May/June issue), but at the same time had said we'd find it worth having two more kids, just so we'd need an Acadia.

The time arrived to try it out. Our probable odds of not be disappointed were only enhanced as we received our Acadia in Denali trim and with AWD

—as we would prefer to order one. It even came in the pearlescent White Diamond Tricoat paint that had been so attractive around town.

Acadia was launched in 2007, and a Denali version arrived in mid-2010 for the 2011 model year. What had actually been catching our eye was the prior generation. For 2013, sheetmetal was freshened, immediately noticeable in its bold but refined grille, accompanied by a cleaner front fascia and bolder headlight treatment now featuring LEDs. It has taken no time for us to like the style and stance of the restyled Acadia even more.

The new Acadia's interior features improved soft-touch materials, new ambient lighting, and accent stitching on a par with vehicles at a much

higher price point. On the safety front, the 2013 model introduced an industry first: a front center air bag. You can bet electronics have been upgraded, so welcome GM's Color Touch system for infotainment, navigation, many general controls and available IntelliLink services. Side blind zone alert, rear cross traffic alert and rear vision camera are standard. Creature comforts benefit from 8-way power seats in front, with the driver's seat additionally including lumbar support memory and a reclining feature.

The automatic transmission lever and connecting mechanisms have been reengineered for improved shift quality, and ride and handling benefit from new dual-flow damper shocks and struts.

There are five Acadia trim levels, but all have the same 3.6-liter VVT gasoline direct injection V6 engine. At 4850 pounds for our AWD version (or



4656 with FWD), there is a lot to move around, yet it still has a 23 MPG highway fuel economy rating.

We entered and settled into a rich chocolate brown leather interior with the aforementioned stitching (the photo above is of a standard Acadia), reminiscent of a top-flight Infiniti interior. We turned the key to discover a heads-up display, à la its performance cousin the Corvette—a feature GM implements well.

A two-three-two configuration is common in 7-seaters, largely due to dimensional constraints toward the rear. The Acadia's seven seats are executed with two thrones in the front and two captain's chairs in the second row, relegating a threesome to the rear. This setup provides regal



Unlike many 7-passenger SUVs and crossovers which provide seating in a 2-3-2 configuration, the Acadia's 2-2-3 layout can keep things luxurious for four adults (with additional cargo space in that case, too).

GMC ACADIA AWD DENALI

ENGINE	.....3.6L V6 VVT DI
TRANS	.....6-speed automatic
POWERTRAIN	.....all-wheel drive
POWER/TORQUE	.....288 hp, 270 lb-ft torque
FUEL	.....regular unleaded
BUILD LOCATION	.....Lansing, Michigan
TURNING CIRCLE	.....40.4 feet
BRAKES (FR/R)	.....12.8"/13" 4w ventilated disc
FUEL MILEAGE	.....16/23/18 MPG city/hwy/comb

BASE (STICKER)	.....\$47,945
SAFETY	6 months OnStar w/ crash response and turn-by-turn; remote keyless entry, extended range; airbags including side curtain; TPM; rear vision camera system; side blind zone alert; rear cross traffic alert; rear child door locks; engine immobilizer theft deterrent; StabiliTrak ESC/traction.
EXTERIOR	Spare tire/wheel; power sunroof, second row skylight; dual power fold heated turn signal auto dim outside mirrors; 20" aluminum wheels; HID headlamps; front fogs; power liftgate; roof rack w/ bright side rails; factory trailer hitch; remote start; ultrasonic rear park assist.
INTERIOR	7-psngr seating, 2nd row captain's chairs, 3rd row split bench; 8-way power front seats, driver's seat w/ recline, lumbar; leather wrap steering wheel; wood accents; power tilt/telescope; power windows w/ express; tri-zone climate; rear cargo storage system; auto dim mirror; univ home remote; two rows leather appointed seating; heated/cooled front seats; Bose premium audio; color touch radio; rear seat audio and headphone jacks; heads-up display.
OPTIONS	White Diamond Tricoat .....\$995 Nav and rear seat entertainment ...\$2240
DESTINATION	.....\$895
TOTAL AS TESTED	.....\$52,075



quarters to four adults or two adults and two teens, while also allowing third row access up the middle, avoiding finger-pinching seat jockeying.

Unlike a Yukon/Yukon XL comparison, where volume is added in the middle and the whole thing becomes significantly longer, with cargo space preserved in the rear, the Acadia is not that much longer than a Terrain. Despite the addition of a spacious third row, the Acadia's wheelbase is just 6.4 inches longer and overall length 13 inches more. The Acadia does gain 6.1 inches of width. Add it all up, and the Acadia has just 24.1 cu.ft. of cargo space behind its last (third) row, while Terrain has 31.1 cu.ft. behind its last (second) row. The Acadia, however, has 70.1 cu.ft. behind its second row, or 116.1 with all but the first row standing. (The Terrain maxes out at 63.9.)

So that choice seems fairly clear, depending upon the reliability of your crystal ball. If you think you will need to carry four people plus considerable cargo, the two vehicles can be compared by budget, style or whim. If you may sometimes need to carry the team, but not necessarily with a lot of gear, the Acadia wins out. If you need to carry seven people and a lot of gear regularly, the smaller space behind Acadia's third row starts to factor in. You are likely looking at the Yukon XL.

The GMC Acadia is built on a front-wheel-drive basis. The AWD version is an intelligent system, pro-rating grip as feedback dictates. This is good for fuel economy and even good for traction, but because of its front bias, we did feel some mild torque steer characteristics at times.

The Acadia does have four-wheel ventilated disc brakes, but its almost 5000 pounds feels at



times as though it could use the stopping power of a set about an inch or two larger or with more calipers.

We loved some specific features in the Acadia, such as an additional glovebox at top dead center of the dashboard, which is where you plug in your iPod (it might get hot in summer) or stash paperwork or, indeed, gloves.

We were impressed with individual climate controls overhead for both the second and third rows. Just having this for the second row—an absolute requirement for some families we know—is hard enough to find. People riding in the rear also benefit from a comprehensive set of entertainment options, complete with headphones.

As with many vehicles, we had to battle the paths of the touchscreen interface for awhile to turn off a feature we hate but others may love, the seats that retract when you shut off the vehi-



cle—a touch of elegance to some, or a practical joke that pulls you away from your groceries just as you reach for them, to others.

The Acadia has a smooth and commanding feel overall, giving us the superscale feeling reflected in our headline. The whole world feels bigger from behind its wheel, and the Denali trim level confirms the feeling. ■

