

# Mainstream achiever

BY JOE SAGE

As GM's volume leader by far, Chevrolet goes well beyond the Goldilocks set of compact, midsize and full-size crossovers and SUVs. There are seven basic sizes (as they split out their EVs). Add Bolt, EV-only, for eight sizes. Add two others available as both ICE and EV, for ten models.

Traverse fills a spot that is easy to understand—the largest one that's smaller than Tahoe and Suburban. (That biggest pair are in a category often called "large," rather than mere full-size, while Traverse is called midsize by GM. And it's a three-row, an advantage when comparing usefulness of a size within officially stated categories.)

All-new in 2024, Traverse remains basically unchanged, other than adding a High Country trim in 2025 (more premium-refined). Driven here is the Traverse Z71, a mid-priced adventure-oriented trim with off-road upgrades, the only Traverse that's AWD-only. (It does have 2WD modes for in-town efficiency, but 2WD-only, as available on all other trims, would go against the Z71's mission.)

The Z71 brings 18-inch wheels, all-terrain tires, wider track, an extra inch of ground clearance, and dampers with hydraulic rebound control. Its own front fascia provides a higher approach, an aluminum skid plate and red tow hooks. It makes for a

handsome face and definitely looks the part. Dedicated terrain modes, hill descent, a twin-clutch AWD system and trailering package are included.

While built with an eye on off-road, Chevy identifies Z71 buyers as "experience-seeking adventurers who are bringing the family and their gear along for the journey." At just under 5,000 lb, fuel mileage is rated at 21 mpg combined, which is not major fuel-sipping, but reasonable for a big three-row with almost 100 cubic feet of cargo volume.

Also of note, the Z71's turning circle is 39.0 feet on its 18-inchers, nimble for a three-row, versus 40.7 feet in fancier models with 22-inch wheels.

Basic driving is mainstream. It's a nice substantial size, smooth and solid passing over boulevard rain troughs at speed. Power, handling and brakes

all get the job done, while you will sometimes be aware of the vehicle's size. The eight-speed automatic is noteworthy for providing a bit of a soundtrack, almost reminiscent of a CVT, which it is not.

Given its positioning statement and moderately engineered mission, we set out to see just how far the off-road bits can take you. We took our Z71 onto mostly well-graded dirt roads, typical of that weekend family camping or fishing trip, with a foray onto an ungraded side road with pronounced ruts, swales, climbs and crests (as pictured). On both surfaces, its other personality kicked in, and the ride becomes a bit harsh, a reminder to stay short of the point of losing adhesion. We wouldn't want to go much rougher; the added ground clearance and twin-clutch abilities on mixed surfaces, as well as towing, are more likely to define the best routes to those adventure weekends.

Modes are geared more toward the dirt than

pavement, in line with the Z71 mission, but we might wish we had a sport or performance option around town. Then again, those aren't much needed for family duty and could ding fuel mileage.

Traverse Z71 is arguably more ruggedized than rugged (along the lines of a vehicle that has more of a sport package than is actually a sports car). It's an appealing special-duty-capable build in Traverse's overall niche, as an ample three-row SUV, slotting in above where many lineups leave off, while providing something short of Tahoe or Suburban (an in-town handful to some buyers). And the tight Z71 turning circle is a big benefit in town.

With solid specifications, good looks in any environment, features and finishes that will more than satisfy most tastes, this special Traverse has multiple jobs to do and does them well, all at a notable value point in its own lineup, as well as in the Chevy crossover/SUV lineup overall. ■

## SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY.....	Lansing, Michigan
ENGINE/TRANS BUILD.....	Mexico / USA
PARTS CONTENT.....	US/Canada 37% / Mexico 27%
ENGINE.....	2.5L 4-cyl VVT turbo, DOHC, cont var valve timing, high-pressure injection, electronic throttle control, alum/alum
HP/TORQUE.....	328 hp / 326 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO.....	na
TRANSMISSION.....	8-spd auto
DRIVETRAIN.....	AWD
SUSPENSION.....	F: MacPherson strut; R: 5-link indep
STEERING.....	elec variable-effort power
BRAKES.....	F: 12.6x1.2; R: 12.4x0.9
WHEELS/TIRES.....	18-in alum / 265/65R18 A/T
LENGTH / WHEELBASE.....	204.7 / 121.0
GROUND CLEARANCE.....	na, but +1 inch Z71
TURNING CIRCLE.....	39.0 ft
HEADROOM (F/2/3).....	*42.6 / 40.0 / 38.3 in
	*(specs w/o sunroof, which ours has but no specs provided)
LEGROOM (F/2/3).....	44.3 / 41.5 / 32.1 in
CARGO CAPACITY.....	(max) 98.0 cu.ft
TOW CAPACITY.....	(standard pkg) 5000 lb
WEIGHT.....	4793 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY.....	reg unl / (AWD) 21.7 gal
MPG.....	20/24/21 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE.....	<b>\$48,900</b>
ENHANCED DRIVING PKG: Super Cruise™ (with 3-yr OnStar upgrade), enhanced auto park assist, driver attention assist, Bose premium 12-spkr audio.....	3935
PANO SUNROOF / POWER SUNSHADE.....	1500
DRIVER CONFIDENCE PKG: HD Surround Vision, 120V pwr outlet, rear ped alert, traffic sign recog, key card, rear camera mirror.....	1225
DESTINATION CHARGE.....	1895
<b>TOTAL.....</b>	<b>\$57,455</b>
<i>Note: our sticker price above; the manufacturer has not provided direct pricing info; consumer website pricing below.</i>	

## 2026 CHEVY TRAVERSE LINEUP

.....(per consumer site) FWD.....	AWD
LT.....	\$42,695.....\$44,695
Z71.....	▼ 50,795
High Country.....	56,995.....58,995
RS.....	57,295.....59,295

## 2026 CHEVY SUVs BY SIZE\*

.....(per consumer site) from:	
Bolt (EV only).....	\$28,595
Trax.....	21,700
Trailblazer.....	23,300
Equinox.....	28,800
Equinox EV.....	34,995
Blazer.....	35,600
Blazer EV.....	44,600
Traverse.....	▼ 40,800
Tahoe.....	59,500
Suburban.....	62,000

\*Given the variety of sizes, with overlap by government categorization, seat count, powertrain, price and other variables, we might recommend a visit to the website of Mid-State Chevrolet in West Virginia, who offer a detailed explanation from all angles: [www.midstatechevy.com](http://www.midstatechevy.com) (see Nov 3 2025 blog).

In any trim, you have to buy a \$3,935 package to get Bose audio. The rest of this package, we could (and might even prefer to) live without, other than always useful rear pedestrian alert.

