AAA, Parents Magazine add nine new vehicles to annual 'Best Cars for Families' list

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Safety, value, convenience set these vehicles above all others.

Nine new vehicles have been added to the 2007 AAA and Parents magazine Best Cars for Families list. The 15-vehicle list, now in its fifth year, appears with detailed reviews of each model in the April issue of Parents magazine. By combining AAAâ€™s auto-safety expertise with Parentsâ€™ understanding of what families want and need, the team of reviewers created a list of sedans, economy cars, vans, SUVs, and crossovers perfect for everything from shuttling the kids to doctorsâ€™ visits and soccer practice, to weekend getaways and longer road trips.

Mercury Milan â€œSafety, convenience, and lasting value are especially important to parents shopping for a family vehicle,â€• said John Nielsen, director, AAA Vehicle Acquisition and Consumer Information. â€œThe vehicles on this yearâ€™s list provide the whole packageâ€”comfort, practicality and performance with options for every family size.â€•

â€œWe put the vehicles through real-life road tests that include everything from running errands to carpooling, to taking a family vacation,â€• said Sally Lee, Parents editor-in-chief. â€œWith many parents and children spending several hours per week in the car, itâ€™s important that itâ€™s a safe, happy place for everyone in it.â€•

AAA and Parents test drove hundreds of vehicles, considering everything from air bags and fuel economy to cupholders and cargo space. The reviewers also installed a variety of child safety seats into every car, making sure it can be done easily and securely. Of those vehicles that have been tested, the AAA/Parents picks are among the top performers in crash tests conducted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS).

The AAA/Parents 2007 Best Cars for Families are listed below, along with a brief description of why the reviewers chose each vehicle. More complete reviews are available in the April issue of Parents. An asterisk denotes a vehicleâ€™s first time on the list.

SEDANS

Honda Accord: This sedan does virtually everything right. An incredibly smooth ride ensures that when kids conk out, they wonâ€™t be disturbed. The simple dashboard design enables drivers to adjust controls quickly, enabling them to keep their eyes on the road.

Mercury Milan*: This upscale cousin to the Ford Fusion has a quiet, steady feel on the road and an impressive package of standard safety and convenience features: antilock brakes, side-curtain air bags, reading lights and cubbyholes for the kidsâ€™ stuff.

Toyota Camry: Kids will appreciate the spacious back seat, which has a fold-down center armrest to defuse turf wars. Standard features include advanced frontal, side-impact and side-curtain air bags, as well as a driverâ€™s knee air bag.

CROSSOVERS

Dodge Caliber*: The kid-friendly options include stain-resistant upholstery and a refrigerated beverage holder that works nicely for baby formula. Definitely opt for side-impact air bags.

Ford Edge*: The Edge has the rugged feel of an SUV but its cushiony seats and responsive ride make it seem

more like a sedan. The sizeable cargo area is large enough for all the soccer gear in a kidâ€™s carpool.

Toyota RAV4*: This crossover is quick and nimble like a sedan, yet itâ€™s roomier than expected. The RAV4â€™s standard safety package includes side-curtain air bags and stability control.

SUVs

Chevy Tahoe*: The supersize Tahoe has room to spare, even if you add the third row of seats. This SUV is maneuverable for its size, and on the highway itâ€™s as quiet as a nursery during naptime.

Honda CR-V*: Honda has managed to make this redesigned SUV even better. The rear seats recline which makes it easier for older kids to nap. The CR-Vâ€™s crisp handling and super-smooth ride reminds where engineers focused their attention.

Hyundai Santa Fe*: The Santa Fe is packed with safety technology to protect little ones, and the modest price tag leaves something for their college funds. Nice surprises include second-row A/C vents.

MINIVANS

Honda Odyssey: Driving is almost effortless with this minivan. The second row can be outfitted with posh captainâ€™s chairs or three seats. The third-row seat folds flat into the floor and on some trim lines the second row does, too.

Hyundai Entourage*: Three-row, side-curtain air bags, stability control, and antilock brakes are all standard, as are the Entourageâ€™s three-zone climate control system and power windows in the sliding doors. Load up on options and still pay less than $30,000.

Toyota Sienna: Load the Sienna with eight passengers and thereâ€™s still room for groceries, baby gear, and lots more. The second-row seats slide forward for quick access to the back row, and three-row, side-curtain airbags are standard.

ECONOMY

Honda Civic: Itâ€™s small things that earn this sedan big points, like a compact emergency brake that creates more space up front, rear heat ducts, and scuff-resistant material behind the front seats â€“ where the little onesâ€™ feet love to rest.

Mazda 3: The 3 is simply too much fun to be so practical. The ride screams sports car, yet the big, stable tires and quiet cabin make day trips pleasant too. The hatchback version provides extra storage space for strollers and suitcases.

Volkswagen Rabbit*: Modern features include advanced frontal, side-impact, and side-curtain air bags standard, along with antilock brakes and stability control. The audio system has a jack for MP3 players and the handy hatchback makes for simpler loading.

* new additions to this yearâ€™s list

Child passenger safety tips from AAAâ€™s award-winning Seated, Safe & Secure initiative can be found at www.aaa.com/publicaffairs and at www.Parents.com/April. For car care information, auto buying tips and more, visit www.aaa.com.

Parents, published monthly by Meredith Corporation, has been Americaâ€™s #1 family magazine for more than 75 years. Since its inception in 1926, it has been a trusted source by every generation of parents.

Currently the magazine is a powerful community of 15.6 million readers devoted to supporting the efforts of parents, educators and other citizens who strive to make the world a better place for our children. Parents can be found online at www.parents.com.

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