

Lincoln MKX burns 87 despite heft and place among luxury-class rivals

by Mark_Maynard

The Lincoln MKX crossover does something its luxury-class competitors don't.

It runs on 87-octane fuel.

MKX - Lincoln's five-passenger MKX crossover saves owners money with its 265 horsepower V-6 that runs on 87 octane. With more than 10 competitors in this vehicle segment, the MKX is unmistakable from every other crossover by the wide and bright Lincoln grille. Pricing starts at \$36,455. CNS Photo courtesy of Lincoln. That may not be a big incentive for some customers in the luxury-car market, but for buyers intrigued with the MKX styling, it's a good selling point.

Most luxury-class crossovers, such as the Infiniti FX35 and Lexus RX 350, require 91 octane. The MKX has a 265-horsepower, 3.5-liter V-6 that is EPA rated for 17 mpg city and 24 highway, which compares with 17/22 for the RX and 16/21 for the FX35. And the MKX is the heavier at 4,400 pounds.

My test vehicle was an uplevel model with all-wheel drive. The base price of \$36,445 is about \$3,000 less than the RX and \$3,600 less than the FX35. With options, the tester costs \$43,215, which includes a basic warranty of four years/50,000 miles, one year/15,000 miles free scheduled maintenance and six years/70,000 miles on the powertrain.

The MKX is the luxury version of the Ford Edge, and it builds on that solid DNA. Despite some family resemblance to the Edge, the MKX is unmistakable from every other crossover by the wide and bright Lincoln grille.

Engine power is more than adequate; the six-speed automatic transmission is accommodating and smooth. Brake force could be more absolute, and the suspension is tuned for comfort rather than the sportier setting in

the Edge. Sightlines and drive height are reassuring.

Interior design is roomy with accents of satin metallic trim, but the plastics appear to be more Ford quality than Lincoln. But that may have been addressed for 2008 models, as Lincoln claims "more luxurious color and material combinations with new bright nickel accents."

I also find that the flat buttons on the console for audio and temperature controls are less intuitive to use than knobs, but there are steering wheel controls for several of those functions. Those controls help keep eyes on the road and hands on the wheel.

Back seat passengers have 39.6 inches of legroom (several inches more than most of the competition) and the seat backs recline. The flat second-row floor is a big plus for transporting three across in comfort. Seat backs have a 60/40 split fold to expand the 32.3 cubic feet of storage behind the second row. And the seats can be folded from the cargo area with a pull of the EasyFold release.

Among the unique features is the Panoramic Vista roof, a two-panel glass sunroof. The front panel slides and tilts while the rear glass is fixed, but both have sunshades. The roof is part of \$4,795 Elite package, which includes Sirius satellite radio, navigation system and the THX audio system. The THX system packs a 12-channel amplifier, 600 watts of power and 14 speakers, including two subwoofers.

Enhancing the audio are more sound-proofing treatments not applied in the Edge. Included are a thicker dash pad, a laminated windshield and thicker side glass, and a layer of sound-deadening material at the rear wheelhouses and behind exterior trim panels.

New standard features for 2008 include heated and cooled seats, Sirius satellite radio, and Lincoln Sync communications and entertainment system. The voice-activated system, developed with Microsoft, integrates wireless phones and media players into the vehicle using Bluetooth technology and USB connectivity.

New options include an upgrade from 18-inch to 20-inch chrome-clad wheels.

And there are some new topline packages.

Three 2008 limited-edition models in metallic paint colors of White Chocolate, Vapor Silver and Vivid Red are dressed up with a charcoal-black interior with Ebony wood trim, black carpeting and floor mats with a Lincoln Star logo, a better grade of leather-trimmed seats in charcoal black with medium light stone inserts and piping, chrome exterior door handles, Lincoln Star logos stitched on the first row headrests and 20-inch chrome wheels.

A Monochrome Limited Edition is available in any color you like as long as it's black. It has a black grille and all the Limited Edition upgrades.

MKX is a turnaround vehicle for Lincoln. It is selling steadily at 3,000 to 4,000 a month and the company is returning more of the Lincoln richness with new limited edition models.

As Ford Motor Co. sheds money-losing divisions - Aston Martin is gone, Jaguar and Land Rover are being shopped and there is concern for Volvo - let's hope more food is left on the table for Lincoln.

This once-iconic American luxury brand shouldn't be starved for budget.

2007 Lincoln MKX AWD

Body style: mid-size, five-passenger crossover SUV

Engine: 265-horsepower, 3.5-liter DOHC V-6

Transmission: six-speed automatic

EPA fuel economy estimates: 17 mpg city, 24 highway

Fuel capacity: 20 gallons (19, front-drive)

DIMENSIONS

Cargo space: 32.3 cubic feet

Front head/leg/shoulder room: 40/40.7/58.9 inches

Length/wheelbase: 186.5/111.2 inches

Curb weight: 4,400 pounds

FEATURES

Standard equipment includes: remote locking with driver-door keypad; dual-zone, automatic air conditioning; eight-way, power-adjusted front seats; six-disc, in-dash CD audio system with six speakers; auxiliary audio

input jack; four power points; leather- and wood-trimmed steering wheel with cruise, audio and climate controls; carpeted floor mats; tire pressure monitoring system; manual tilt-telescopic steering wheel; halogen headlights; fog lights; heated side mirrors with approach lights; 60/40 split rear seat with armrest; 18-inch tires and aluminum wheels

Safety equipment includes: front, side and curtain air bags; AdvanceTrac roll stability control; tire pressure monitoring system; disc brakes with ABS

PRICING

Base: \$36,445, including \$675 freight charge; price as tested, \$43,215

Options on test car: Elite package (\$4,795) includes Panoramic Vista roof, Sirius satellite radio with six-month subscription, navigation system, THX audio system; Ultimate package (\$1,995) includes heated-cooled front seats, automatic-dimming side mirrors, adaptive (turning) headlights, 18-inch chrome-clad wheels, reverse-sensing system; heated rear seats, \$295; front license-plate bracket, \$65

Warranty: four years/50,000 miles, one year/15,000 free scheduled maintenance, six years/70,000-mile powertrain

The competition: Acura MDX and RDX, BMW X5 and X3, Cadillac SRX, Infiniti FX35, Lexus RX 350, Mercedes M-Class, VW Touareg

Where assembled: Oakville, Ontario, Canada

PLUSES: Styling, comfort, flat-second-row floor, dealer treatment

MINUSES: Lack of techno options, soft suspension, needs more Lincoln richness.

ROOF

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CONSOLE

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