

Shifting Gears

[Rolling and Profiling In the Cadillac SRX](#)

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By Roger Witherspoon

For much of the last decade, there seemed to be a rule in Detroit that all one needed to have a successful, popular SUV was to make it big. It could be ugly, uncomfortable, and drink gas like an alcoholic robot and, the belief was, it would sell if it was BIG, ugly and uncomfortable.

But times changed, and the folks who wrote the old rules at General Motors took a long overdue hike when the government stepped in to finance a structured reorganization. The result was a new look, style, and feel in the GM fleet. That change was particularly noticeable in the Cadillac line, which no longer resembles the “hogs” of olden days and relies on style rather than just a venerated name to lure buyers. And in the SUV department, the new look is particularly evident in the five-passenger, mid-sized SUV, the Cadillac SRX.

Cadillac had to put quite a lot of thought into the SRX, as it entered a tough division anchored by the Lexus RX, Audi Q-5, Acura MDX, and the high-powered BMW X-5 and Porsche Cayenne.



On the outside, the SRX has a profile closest to the Lexus RX, with a low roofline sloping to the rear. But that's as far as the resemblance goes. This generation of Cadillacs takes its styling cues from the angular lines of stealth aircraft, with intersecting triangles and sharp edges. There is nothing soft about its appearance, though it is defiantly sleek and windswept. The front is angular and no nonsense, slanting downwards over the 20-inch wheels towards the street, as opposed to the sharply rising front of the Porsche Cayenne and BMW X-5.

Powering the SRX is a 3.6-liter, aluminum V-6 engine producing 308 horsepower and 265 pound-feet of torque. The car is not built for racing a Porsche, and takes time to get up to speed. But once it is moving, there is more than enough power to propel the SRX towards the triple digit mark on the speedometer. And if you really want to spent part of your vacation in a fast car, the SRX can tow 3,500 pounds – which means you can bring your Porsche or Dodge Charger along with you.

The SRX' power plant is mated to a six-speed automatic transmission with a smooth-shifting, electronic manual mode and all wheel drive. The SRX' never quite feels like a car when you are driving it particularly on sharp, hairpin turns. But it hugs the roads and even at high speeds, with its wide stance and traction control, you don't have the fearful sensation of being at the mercy of a runaway truck.

Ed Welburn, the artist in charge of GM's crayons, put a lot of thought into the riding experience. Upon entering, the first thing you notice is the wide, double sun roof which opens the interior to the sky and adds both light and a feeling of spaciousness that makes the SRX feel larger than it actually is. There is a power sunscreen which can cover the rear or both skylights. The front skylight is also powered and can be tilted for more air or completely opened.

The interior décor is primarily two-toned, double-stitched leather with wood accents on the doors. Each door has thick, leather, padded armrests and two, long trays: a shallow one just under the arm rest to hold cell phones or other small items, and a deeper, wider

one near the floor which runs the full length of the door and can hold a 12-ounce water bottle and enough maps for a cross-country drive.

For comfort, the front set of thickly padded seats are wide, power adjustable and can be heated or air cooled. In the front section of the driver's seat can extend up to six inches for great support of long-legged drivers. In the rear, there is enough leg room for three average sized adults or a pair of basketball players pushing the seven foot mark. These seats can be heated and either laid flat to enlarge the cargo area, or laid back for a comfortable snooze.

In the entertainment sector, the SRX covers the lot. There is an easy to use navigation system with an eight-inch touch screen. The SRX' electronic offerings include XM radio – which also provides traffic and weather updates – as well as a CD and MP3 player, USB and iPod ports. There is a 40-gigabyte hard drive to install your personal collection of a few thousand songs or movies; and a 10-speaker Bose sound system. The back of the front seats have built-in screens for watching movies or playing video games, using wireless headsets so as not to interfere with the music emanating in the front of the car. Or, if the car is sitting still, the front occupants can also watch the videos.

As with most GM vehicles, there are two cell phone communications systems on the SRX: Bluetooth and OnStar. The Bluetooth system is easy to set up and if you have a smartphone can be used for voice communications as well as playing your stored music through the car's sound system. OnStar, GM's satellite driven communications and service network, can handle calls in areas where there are no cell towers, and can provide turn-by-turn navigation instructions. There is also live concierge service, which can connect to emergency police and medical responders, or make reservations at a restaurant in the next town.

For a top level SUV, GM has offered a lot for \$51,000. But given the quality of the other luxury, mid-sized SUVs on the market, Cadillac had to step up to a demanding marketplace, or stay out of it. The market has yet to determine the winner in this four-wheeled competition. But the 2012 SRX is likely to be a competitor.



2012 Cadillac SRX

MSRP: **\$51,055**

EPA Mileage: **16 MPG City** **23 MPG Highway**

Towing Capacity: **3,500 Pounds**

Performance / Safety:

3.6-Liter cast aluminum DOHC V-6 engine producing 308 horsepower and 265 pound/feet of torque; all wheel drive; 6-speed automatic transmission; 4-wheel power assisted disc brakes; independent strut front suspension; linked H-arm rear suspension; 20-inch aluminum wheels; stability and traction control; heated outside mirrors; fog lamps; back-up camera; adaptive xenon headlights; driver and front passenger front & side impact airbags; rear side head curtain airbags.

Interior / Comfort:

AM/FM/XM satellite radio; 10-speaker Bose surround sound system with 40 gigabyte hard drive; CD and DVD player with wireless headsets and 2 rear seat screens; MP3,

USB and iPod connections; Bluetooth; OnStar; tilt and telescope, leather and wood, heated steering wheel with fingertip audio, phone and cruise controls; heated and air cooled, front leather seats; heated rear leather seats; front and rear climate controls; powered sunroof and sunshade; satellite navigation system with 8-inch touch screen.