

2007 MAZDA CX-9 GT



The CX-9 is a seven-seater crossover sport-utility vehicle that shares several components, including its platform and 3.5L V6 engine, with the Ford Edge and Lincoln MKX. However, the CX-9 has its own suspension and engine management tuning. This new front-drive Mazda is available in GS and GT trim, and can be equipped with an optional on-demand all-wheel-drive system. The CX-9 is an imposing vehicle similar in size to the Ford Freestyle and only slightly smaller than the Chevrolet Tahoe and GMC Acadia.

Interior and cargo area

The front seats are easy to enter and very comfortable, with high seatbacks, good side support and large enough for stocky individuals to feel at ease. Drivers get a very good driving position. Headroom with the sunroof is limited for tall people.

Some people will find that the rear bench seat is a bit low for comfort. The seat is split 60/40, and you can slide either section fore and aft and adjust the angle of the seatbacks. The third-row bench is hard to reach but relatively comfortable for little folks, with adequate headroom and legroom. Folding both benches forms a flat floor, but there is a space between each row of seats that is deep enough for a dog to fall in and get hurt.

Cargo capacity is relatively limited—473 litres—with the third bench in use. Folding it expands trunk room considerably, and with both seats folded there is an impressive 2,851 litres of cargo space.

Convenience and safety

The interior is very well finished in good-quality materials. Soundproofing needs improving to eliminate road and wind noise. There are numerous storage spaces, including a spacious centre console. Unfortunately, there is no anchor point for a vertical net behind the first two rows of seats.

Instruments and controls are well laid out and all are illuminated at night. The audio system's volume button is a bit too thin and especially hard to operate when wearing gloves. To obtain an outside temperature reading, you have to push a button each time you start the engine, which is rather irritating. The heating system is very efficient.

Safety equipment includes six airbags, four-wheel antilock brakes, traction control, stability control and good xenon headlights that are standard on the GT. Visibility is good in all directions except to the rear when backing up, making it hard to judge distance. The front head restraints do not adjust quite high enough for tall people, while those on the two rear rows are too far back from the head and adjust too low.

Engine and transmission

The 3.5L V6 puts out 263 horsepower and 249 pounds of torque. The engine is Ford-made, but the CX-9's engine management system is by Mazda. Acceleration is good and pickup is satisfactory. This engine is well suited to the vehicle. It climbs easily and very smoothly through the gears. However, fuel consumption is high.

The six-speed automatic transmission shifts up and down almost imperceptibly, which is good because shifts are very frequent. It is, in fact, hyperactive and wants to gear down with every touch of the accelerator and at the slightest change in wind speed or road incline, which can get tiring. The transmission lets you drive off in second gear. The manual mode is a bit slow. The 4WD system effectively channels torque to the rear wheels if the front wheels slip.

On the road

Though firm, the suspension is generally very comfortable. However, with the GT version's 20-inch 50-profile tires, the reaction stiffens up considerably on some bumps. Faithful to Mazda tradition, the CX-9 offers very good road holding, especially for a midsize crossover SUV. It is a bit sensitive to side winds but feels very sturdy.

The power steering is well weighted, steady, precise and relatively quick. However, it doesn't have much in the way of road feel. The turning circle is short. The brakes lack power in emergency braking but in other circumstances, they do a good job, resisting well to fade.

Inspection

An inspection at a CAA-Quebec technical inspection centre showed that the underside while sturdy is not rust proofed and that joints are not sealed. There is an opening under the front bumper that is big enough to allow road debris to enter and damage the power steering cooler and air conditioner condenser. As is often the case with Mazda products, the paint is a bit thin. The overhead cams are chain driven.

Conclusion

Spacious, versatile and pleasant to drive, the CX-9 shouldn't have difficulty finding takers. Sports-minded drivers will appreciate the GT, though it reacts more firmly on rough surfaces because of its 50-profile tires. Poor fuel economy, however, undermines the otherwise very positive score.

PROS: handling, comfortable front seating, versatility, very smooth transmission, road compartment, efficient heating

CONS: perfectible soundproofing, hyperactive transmission, access to third-row seats, fuel economy, rear head restraints, inaudible turn signals

MAZDA CX-9 2007

Engine: 24-valve, 3.5-litre, V6

Horsepower: 263 hp at 6,250 rpm

Torque: 249 lb-ft at 4,500 rpm

Transmission: 6-speed automatic

Suspension: fully independent

Brakes: disc/disc

Wheelbase: 287.5 cm

Length: 507.4 cm

Width: 193.6 cm

Height: 172.8 cm

Weight: 1,956 to 2,062 kg

Tires: 245/60R18; 245/50R20

Maximum towing capacity: 1,588 kg

Airbags: dual front, plus two side and two curtain airbags

Fuel consumption with 4X4 version:

Transport Canada rating:

City: 14.5 L/100 km (19.5 mpg)

Highway: 9.7 L/100 km (29 mpg)

Test result: 16 L/100 km (18 mpg)

Test temperature: -24°C to 5°C

Fuel tank capacity: 76 litres

Fuel requirement: regular grade gasoline

Acceleration:

0–100 km/h: 8.5 seconds

60–100 km/h: 5.8 seconds

Competition: Buick Enclave, Chrysler Pacifica, Ford Freestyle, GMC Acadia, Honda Pilot, Hyundai Veracruz, Saturn Outlook

Warranty:

- Full basic coverage: 3 years/80,000 km
- Powertrain: 5 years/100,000 km
- Surface corrosion: 3 years/80,000 km
- Perforation damage: 5 years/unlimited km
- Emissions control system: 3 years/80,000 km (full coverage); 8 years/128,000 km (catalytic converter, electronic control module, onboard diagnostic system).

Factory replacement parts:

- Rear bumper: \$623
- Front brake disc: \$144
- Brake pads: \$111
- Muffler: \$411
- Front fender: \$193

Average insurance premium (Quebec City, replacement cost endorsement, claim-free insurance record, male or female driver 30 to 40 years old): \$877 to \$1,396

Price according to trim level:

- GS: \$39,595
- GT: \$43,955

Main options:

- Sunroof: \$1,000
- 4X4 system: \$2,000
- Luxury Package: \$1,495 (GT)
- Navigation Package: \$3,235 (Luxury Package required) (GT)
- Entertainment Package: \$1,520 (Luxury and Navigation packages required) (GT)

Price as tested: \$47,450

Freight and preparation: \$1,390

Dealers: Quebec: 53 Canada: 159