

2010 CHEVROLET EQUINOX LT



Chevrolet has launched the second generation of the Equinox, which rides on a highly modified version of the previous platform. The new Equinox is 1 cm shorter and 1 cm wider but otherwise similar in size to its predecessor. This compact crossover is offered with a choice of two new engines and in two- or all-wheel drive. It is available in LS, LT and LTZ trim levels.

Interior and cargo area

The Equinox is easy to access, and as the bottom of the doors is lower than the sills, the sills stay clean. The seats are comfortable and the driving position is good. Headroom and legroom are relatively generous.

The backseat is comfortable for two adults, with plenty of headroom and legroom. The seat slides 20 cm forward and back. The seatback is divided 60/40 but not the cushion, which means that the two sections cannot slide forward and back individually, as they do in several competing vehicles. It's unfortunate, because it reduces functionality. Each section does recline, however. Folding down the seatback forms a floor that slopes up towards the front, leaving a gap behind the front seats.

Cargo capacity is relatively good but the suspension struts reduce the width to 95 cm, nearly 10 cm less than in similar vehicles. The cargo area measures 86 cm behind the rear seat when it's pushed completely back, with 20 cm more when it's pushed completely forward. With the seatback folded, there's 178 cm behind the driver's seat when it's adjusted for a tall person. Unfortunately, the front passenger seatback does not fold flat.

The hatch opens high and has a "garage" position that limits it to 75% of maximum lift height.

Convenience and safety features

The interior is very well finished, in materials of much higher quality than in the outgoing version. Claiming to have listened to customers as never before, GM paid particular attention to acoustic isolation. The engineers did not skimp on the materials used to isolate the cabin nor on the hours spent in the wind tunnel. Four-cylinder versions are also equipped with an active noise suppression system that uses microphones to detect unwanted noise that it cancels out by sending counter-acting sounds through the radio speakers. Still, road noise could be better suppressed. Cabin storage is good.

Photo: Chevrolet

Gauges and controls are well laid out and easy to use for most, though a bit of a reach for people of smaller stature. All are lighted at night, with the exception of the mirror controls and the glove compartment. The roof rails are a tad short, and they don't look very sturdy.

The climate control system in our test vehicle brought the temperature down way too far when programmed for 20°C. Also, the Heat/Defrost setting directed around 80% of the airflow to foot level. It's to be hoped that both these problems are limited to our tester. Lastly, two controls have the same functions. The vent located to the right of the steering wheel directs air onto the driver's right hand.

Safety-wise, the Equinox comes with dual front, side and side curtain airbags; four-wheel disc brakes with ABS; stability control; good headlights; and four head restraints. The two rear head restraints are fixed and not high enough to protect tall people. Visibility is good, but the wide A and D pillars create large blind spots. Without the rear view camera, distances are hard to judge when backing up.

In U.S. government crash tests, the Equinox obtained five stars out of five for driver and front-passenger protection in a head-on crash and for all occupants in a side crash. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety awarded the Equinox a Good rating, its highest, for driver protection in a frontal offset collision and for all-occupant protection in their side crash and rear crash tests.

Engine and transmission

The 2.4-litre direct injection 4-cylinder engine, new from GM, produces 182 horsepower and 172 pound-feet of torque. It gets an aluminum cylinder head and continuously variable intake and exhaust valve timing. It also has an ECO mode that changes shift points to improve fuel economy. In fact, fuel efficiency was tops among the Equinox's design priorities. Acceleration is adequate in routine driving but less efficient when you want to pick up the pace. Passing manoeuvres require serious planning, especially with the all-wheel-drive versions. In many conditions the engine has to work hard to move the vehicle along, to the detriment of fuel economy, since you have to keep a heavy foot on the accelerator. During our test, we obtained an overall fuel consumption of 11.2 L/100 km, which is about average for this type of vehicle with a four-cylinder and all-wheel drive.

The 3.0-litre direct injection V6 is based on the 3.6-litre and outputs 264 horsepower and 222 pound-feet of torque. Noteworthy features of this engine include the same variable valve timing system and piston cooling oil jets. This engine is more energetic than the four-cylinder, but not much. On the other hand, it has a towing capacity of 1,588 kg, 908 kg more than the four-cylinder.

The six-speed automatic transmission is the only one available. It is very, very smooth as it climbs through the gears, but it is a bit slow to downshift and you can feel it when it does. Its gears are well spaced. You cannot drive off in second gear with this transmission. The four-wheel-drive system directs torque to the rear wheels when it detects front-wheel slippage, and it does it fairly quickly.

On the road

The four-wheel independent suspension is equipped with front and rear stabilizer bars and hydraulic link bushings. In general, the ride is smooth, even very smooth. Some bumps set off a firm reaction that is almost harsh at times. Road holding is very good for this type of vehicle. The Equinox drives with a sturdy feel.

Steering is electrically assisted with the four-cylinder engine and hydraulically assisted with the V6. Steering with the four-cylinder is well tuned, stable, precise and relatively quick but it is completely devoid of road feel. The four-wheel disc brakes are vented, which is rare. The brakes are very powerful and they resist well to fade. However, they are expensive, especially the pads, so it's to be hoped they'll last a long time.

Inspection

In our inspection at a CAA-Quebec technical inspection centre, we saw that the Equinox is generally well built. Its platform is relatively sturdy but not completely rustproofed; fortunately, several joints are sealed. The radiator expansion tank and windshield washer fluid tank are close enough together to cause confusion. The latter is placed front and left of the engine compartment, which is not very safe for roadside fill-ups. The emergency brake is of a design that looks as though it could seize up relatively quickly. Debris can get through an opening in the grille under the front bumper and damage the air-conditioner condenser. The overhead camshafts of the four-cylinder engine are chain driven.

Conclusion

The new Equinox is a much better vehicle than before, especially where driveability and the quality of construction and materials are concerned. It is now a more nicely balanced vehicle. A few things still need attention, such as the rear seat and the climate control system. In many respects, this new generation propels the Equinox to the middle of the pack.

PROS: comfortable seats, smooth transmission, choice of models, roominess, road holding, powerful brakes

CONS: four-cylinder power, climate control needs work, visibility, road noise, suspension reaction stiff at times, opening under front bumper

2010 CHEVROLET EQUINOX

Engine: 16-valve, 2.4-litre 4-cylinder; 24-valve, 3.0-litre V6

Horsepower: 182 hp at 6,700 rpm; 264 hp at 6,950 rpm

Torque: 174 lb-ft at 4,800 rpm; 222 lb-ft at 5,100 rpm

Transmission: 6-speed automatic

Suspension: fully independent

Brakes: disc/disc

Wheelbase: 285.7 cm

Length: 477.1 cm

Width: 184.2 cm

Height: 168.4 cm (176 cm with roof rails)

Weight: 1,706 to 1,892 kg

Tires: P225/65R17; P235/55R18; P235/55R19

Maximum towing capacity: 1,588 kg

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

Fuel consumption with 4-cylinder and AWD

Natural Resources Canada rating:

City: 10.1 L/100 km (28 mpg)

Highway: 6.9 L/100 km (41 mpg)

Test result: 11.2 L/100 km (25 mpg)

Test temperature: 6°C to 15°C

CO₂ emissions: 4,156 kg/20,000 km

Fuel tank capacity: 71 litres (V6: 79 litres)

Fuel requirement: regular grade gasoline

Acceleration:

0–100 km/h: 10.2 seconds

60–100 km/h: 6.8 seconds

Competition: Dodge Journey, Honda Accord Crosstour, Ford Edge, GMC Terrain, Subaru Outback, Toyota Venza, Volkswagen Passat Wagon

Warranty:

- Full basic coverage: 3 years/60,000 km
- Powertrain: 5 years/160,000 km
- Surface corrosion: 3 years/60,000 km
- Perforation damage: 6 years/160,000km
- Emissions control system: 3 years/60,000 km (full coverage);
8 years/130,000 km (catalytic converter, electronic control module).

Factory replacement parts:

- Rear bumper: \$2,750
- Front brake disc: \$145
- Brake pads: \$370
- Muffler: \$1,547 (including resonator)
- Front fender: \$440 (Right side: \$485)

Price according to trim level:

- LS: \$25,995
- 1LT: \$27,725
- 2LT: \$30,110
- LTZ: \$33,460

Main options:

- AWD system: \$1,610
- V6: \$2,050 (except LS)
- Sunroof: \$1,095 (2LT, LTZ)
- Leather seats: \$1,205 (2LT)
- Power rear liftgate: \$520 (2LT)
- Rear seat entertainment system: \$1,750

Price as tested: \$32,340

Freight and preparation: \$1,350

Dealers: Quebec: 86 Canada: 435

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