

2009 HYUNDAI ELANTRA TOURING GL



It's been almost ten years since Hyundai presented an Elantra station wagon. Today, of course, most automakers avoid calling a vehicle a station wagon; Hyundai named its newcomer "Touring". The Elantra Touring is available in L and GL trim, and both models can be equipped with an option package.

Designed in Germany, the Touring is based on Hyundai's European i30 platform, which is why its dimensions are different from the sedan's. The Touring is 5 cm longer in the wheelbase and 4 cm higher, whereas the sedan is 1 cm wider and 2 cm longer overall.

Interior and cargo area

The front seats are very comfortable. The driving position is good but with more left legroom would be better, especially for tall people. Additionally, as in several Hyundai vehicles, tall drivers would like to be able to lower their seat a bit more. Only the GL has a tilt-and-telescoping steering wheel. Headroom and legroom are generous.

The rear bench seat is comfortable for two adults, with adequate headroom and legroom. The 60/40-split seatback folds down on the cushion to form a slightly upward sloping floor. Folding the seatback leaves a gap behind the front seats into which a pet could tumble.

The cargo area is roomy, with 89 cm available forward of the hatch with the rear seatbacks in the upright position, and 174 cm with the seatbacks folded. Width is 104 cm and height, 78 cm. It's too bad, though, that the front passenger seatback does not fold. The hatch opens wide and has a low sill. With the rear bench folded down, the Touring offers 1,848 litres of interior volume and more cargo space than the Nissan Murano, Mazda CX-7 and Hummer H3.

Convenience and safety features

The cabin is very well finished in good materials, even though there is a lot plastic. Road and wind noise could be better suppressed. There are numerous storage spaces, including a roomy, dual-level console.

Gauges and controls are well displayed. Some controls, however, including the mirror controls, are not lighted at night. The heating system is relatively quick and provides a good level of heat.

Photo: Hyundai

The GL model has an electric defroster in the lower part of the windshield. The roof-mounted antenna can get in the way when long items are carried. The windshield wipers are a bit slow, especially in the second speed setting.

Safety equipment includes six airbags (dual front, side and side curtain), five head restraints including two active front restraints, and four-wheel disc brakes with ABS. To obtain side and curtain airbags, antilock brakes and active front head restraints on the entry-level L, you have to opt for the Preferred package. Stability control is unavailable on any model at the present time. Visibility is good in all directions except on a three-quarter-rear angle, because of the wide C-pillars. The headlights lack power and intensity, especially in the low-beam position, and in this position the lights are more yellow than white.

In U.S. government crash tests, the Touring obtained five stars out of five for front-occupant protection in a frontal impact. It earned four stars for all-occupant protection in a side crash, and four stars for rollover resistance.

Engine and transmission

Powering the Touring's front wheels is the same 2.0-litre four-cylinder engine found in the sedan, but with pistons reworked to reduce noise and friction and to improve performance and longevity. It develops 138 horsepower and 136 pound-feet of torque, for adequate acceleration and pickup. However, at 9.5 L/100 km, fuel consumption is a bit high. This engine meets strict Tier2/Bin5 emissions control standards.

The four-speed automatic transmission always shifts very, very smoothly, and it is well geared. You cannot start off in second with this transmission. It should be noted that several competing vehicles are equipped with a five-speed automatic.

On the road

A body structure that is 36% stiffer than in the preceding generation of the Elantra allowed Hyundai to improve the ride dynamics of the Touring. The front and rear spring rates are 24% and 39% stiffer, respectively, than the sedan's. All models come with 15-inch (195/65R15) tires, except the GL Sport, which rides on 17-inch (215/45R17) tires mounted on alloy wheels. The ride is generally comfortable but there can be a firm jounce on some bumps that not everyone will appreciate. A load tames the bounciness somewhat. With the 17-inch tires, the ride is a bit firmer. A change in tires might smooth things out. The Touring has a very good grip and is stable and predictable in corners.

The power steering is heavy, especially at low speed, something the 17-inch tires accentuate. Steering is stable, precise and quick, with a bit of road sensation. Braking power is average, with good fade resistance.

Inspection

In an inspection at a CAA-Quebec technical inspection centre, we saw that the Touring is sturdy in both structure and suspension. Corrosion protection is good, but the rear brake lines are untreated and sheathed in a plastic that collects grime, which may eventually lead them to corrode. Debris can get through the openings under the front bumper and damage the

air-conditioner condenser. The windshield washer fluid tank and coolant tank are very close to one another, which could cause confusion. The overhead camshafts are belt driven.

Conclusion

Hyundai has made a successful return to the compact wagon category. The Touring is versatile, comfortable and spacious. It'll be up to the consumer to decide whether the European firmness of the suspension is acceptable. The Touring combines car-like agility with a cargo capacity that surpasses that of some bigger crossover vehicles.

PROS: roominess, comfortable seats, road holding, smooth automatic transmission, versatility, quality construction

CONS: weak headlights, perfectible soundproofing, heavy steering, certain firm suspension reaction, openings under front bumper, fuel consumption

2009 HYUNDAI ELANTRA TOURING

Engine: 16-valve, 2.0-litre 4-cylinder

Horsepower: 138 hp at 6,000 rpm

Torque: 136 lb-ft at 4,600 rpm

Transmission: 5-speed manual; 4-speed automatic

Suspension: fully independent

Brakes: disc/disc

Wheelbase: 270 cm

Length: 448.5 cm

Width: 176.5 cm (without mirrors)

Height: 152 cm

Weight: 1,332 to 1,411 kg

Tires: P195/65R15; P215/45R17

Maximum towing capacity: 680 kg

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

Fuel consumption with automatic transmission:

Natural Resources Canada rating:

City: 8.7 L/100 km (32 mpg)

Highway: 6.5 L/100 km (43 mpg)

Test result: 9.5 L/100 km (30 mpg)

Test temperature: -3°C to 8°C

CO₂ emissions: 3,696 kg/20,000 km

Fuel tank capacity: 53 litres

Fuel requirement: regular grade gasoline

Acceleration:

0–100 km/h: 9.9 seconds

60–100 km/h: 6.9 seconds

Competition: Dodge Caliber, Jeep Compass and Patriot, Kia Spectra5, Mazda3 Sport, Mitsubishi Lancer Sportback, Pontiac Vibe, Saturn Astra, Subaru Impreza, Toyota Matrix, Volkswagen Jetta Wagon

Warranty:

- Full basic coverage: 5 years/100,000 km
- Powertrain: 5 years/100,000 km
- Surface corrosion: 3 years/60,000 km
- Perforation damage: 5 years/unlimited km
- Emissions control system: 5 years/100,000 km (full coverage);
8 years/130,000 km (catalytic converter, electronic control module,
onboard diagnostic system).

Factory replacement parts:

- Rear bumper: \$474
- Front brake disc: \$93
- Brake pads: \$104
- Muffler: \$267
- Front fender: \$207

Price according to trim level:

- L: \$14,995
- GL: \$18,795

Main options:

- Automatic transmission: \$1,200
- Preferred Package: \$2,250
- Sport Package: \$2,500 (GL)

Price as tested: \$19,995

Freight and preparation: \$1,495

Dealers: Quebec: 56 Canada: 144

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