

## 2010 MERCEDES-BENZ GLK350



The all-new GLK350 is Mercedes' entry into the compact crossover utility segment. Mercedes identifies as direct competitors the Acura RDX, BMW X3 and Land Rover LR2, which are similar in size to the GLK, as well as the Audi Q5 and Volvo XC60. The GLK is powered by a 3.5-litre V6 linked to a seven-speed automatic transmission and full-time 4Matic all-wheel drive.

### **Interior and cargo area**

Bolted-on rocker sills create wide doorsills that get very dirty and complicate access. If the rocker sills had been designed as part of the door, it would have eased access and helped keep the doorsills clean. The front seats are very comfortable, with good side support. Legroom is good, but the sunroof limits headroom for tall people. The driving position is very good.

Access to the backseat is complicated by the rocker sills, the narrow door openings and a lack of space between the seat cushion and B-pillar. Headroom and legroom are relatively generous, but the bench seat is comfortable for just two. The shape of the seat and the space taken up by the transmission tunnel combine to make the centre section very inhospitable. The 60/40-split seatback folds flat to the floor, leaving a gap behind the front seats that's big enough to swallow up a pet.

The cargo area is quite spacious, and it has a first-aid kit. The load floor is flat but relatively high. Cargo space measures 85 cm behind the rear seat with the backrest up, and 168 cm behind the front seats when they're adjusted for a tall person. Width is 94.5 cm and height, 77 cm. All cargo area dimensions are smaller than in the Audi Q5 and Volvo XC60, except height, which is lower in the Volvo.

### **Convenience and safety features**

The interior is very well finished, in quality materials. However, road noise could be better suppressed. Cabin storage is good throughout. The optional navigation system can store up to 1,000 CD tracks on its hard drive.

Gauges and controls are well laid out and everything is lighted at night. The climate control system is efficient. However, not much air goes to the windshield in Defrost/Heat mode. Curiously, for a vehicle in this price range, the rear wiper has only an intermittent cycle.

Safety equipment includes dual front, side and curtain airbags; active front head restraints; four-wheel disc brakes with ABS; full-time all-wheel drive; traction control; and stability control with trailer-stabilization function. The GLK can tow up to 1,588 kg, and the stabilization function, which applies the individual wheel brakes as required to help maintain control, is a big plus for safety. Visibility is good, though the wide D-pillars create blind spots on a three-quarter-rear angle. The halogen headlights lack range in the low-beam position.

### **Engine and transmission**

The GLK is powered by the faithful 3.5-litre V6, which produces 268 horsepower and 258 pound-feet of torque for energetic acceleration and pickup. The engine runs smoothly and climbs easily through the gears. It is well adapted to the GLK. For the time being, a diesel engine is not in the works.

The seven-speed automatic transmission functions so smoothly that you never feel it shift. Gears are well spaced. The permanent all-wheel-drive system has a 45/55 torque split between front and rear.

### **On the road**

The four-wheel independent suspension system with Agility Control adjusts the shocks in function to driving style: flexible in routine driving and in low-speed off-road situations, stiffer in sporty driving or abrupt avoidance manoeuvres. The ride is very comfortable on all types of pavement, with bumps smoothly absorbed and only the occasional firm reaction. Road holding is sufficiently impressive to be the envy of many cars. The GLK is relatively agile and drives with a robust feel. It handles moderate off-road conditions with ease.

The power steering is heavy at low speed and does not re-centre after a sharp low-speed turn. At average speed and above, it is well weighted, stable, precise and relatively quick. It has good road feel and a small turning circle. Braking is powerful and fade resistant.

### **Inspection**

At a CAA-Quebec technical inspection centre, we saw that the GLK rests on a sturdy platform with sealed joints. The placement of the windshield washer fluid tank front and left of the engine compartment is not the best for roadside fill-ups. The ball joint is part of the front suspension control arm, which makes it more expensive to replace. The openings in the grille under the front bumper are large enough to allow debris to get through and damage the air-conditioner condenser. The engine's overhead camshafts are chain driven.

## Conclusion

If you like the GLK's size and appreciate its comfortable seating and handling, what you'll really like are its excellent road manners and how much fun it is to drive. The base model boasts enough standard equipment to offer a very good quality-price ratio. It's unfortunate to see the overly wide doorsills leave their mark on both the final score and the occupants' clothing.

**PROS:** comfortable front seats, road holding, well-adapted engine, smooth transmission, handling.

**CONS:** perfectible soundproofing, dirt-catching doorsills, rear access, seating only for four, low-beams lack range, steering heavy and slow to re-centre at low speed.

## 2010 MERCEDES-BENZ GLK350

**Engine:** 24-valve, 3.5-litre V6

**Horsepower:** 268 hp at 6,000 rpm

**Torque:** 258 lb-ft from 2,400 to 5,000 rpm

**Transmission:** 7-speed automatic

**Suspension:** fully independent

**Brakes:** disc/disc

**Wheelbase:** 275.5 cm

**Length:** 452.5 cm

**Width:** 201.6 cm (with mirrors)

**Height:** 169.9 cm

**Weight:** 1,830 kg

**Tires:** 235/50R19; 235/45R20

**Maximum towing capacity:** 1,587 kg

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

### Fuel consumption:

Natural Resources Canada rating:

City: 13.3 L/100 km (21 mpg)

Highway: 9.6 L/100 km (29 mpg)

Test result: 11.9 L/100 km (24 mpg)

Test temperature: 3°C to 14°C

**CO<sub>2</sub> emissions:** 5,585 kg/20,000 km

**Fuel tank capacity:** 66 litres

**Fuel requirement:** premium grade gasoline

### Acceleration:

0–100 km/h: 7.8 seconds

60–100 km/h: 6.3 seconds

**Competition:** Acura RDX, Audi Q5, BMW X3, Infiniti EX35, Land Rover LR2, Volvo XC60

**Warranty:**

- Full basic coverage: 4 years/80,000 km
- Powertrain: 4 years/80,000 km
- Surface corrosion: 4 years/80,000 km
- Perforation damage: 5 years/unlimited km
- Emissions control system: 4 years/80,000 km (full coverage); 8 years/130,000 km (catalytic converter, electronic control module, onboard diagnostic system).

**Factory replacement parts:**

- Rear bumper: \$940
- Front brake disc: \$152
- Brake pads: \$122
- Muffler: \$2,248 (2 mufflers and 2 catalytic converters included)
- Front fender: \$560

**Price according to trim level:** \$42,900

**Main options:**

- Bi-xenon headlamps package: \$1,000
- Premium package: \$2,000
- Navigation package: \$1,800
- Rear entertainment system: \$2,400
- Sunroof: \$1,500
- Leather seats: \$2,500

**Price as tested:** \$46,400

**Freight and preparation:** \$1,795

**Dealers:** Quebec: 12      Canada: 52

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