

Road beat: Hyundai Santa Fe – a roomy ride



Hyundai Santa Fe is a head-turner. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

Naming a vehicle after the highest state capital of any of the 50 states and also the oldest state capital in the country gives the Hyundai Santa Fe lofty goals. On top of that, the city of Santa Fe is one of our country's art centers. Hyundai's Santa Fe meets that challenge by fulfilling and achieving goals befitting its name.

From a design standpoint the new Santa Fe (all new as a 2013 model) also fits its nameplate with perfect proportions, great lines and turning heads wherever it goes. The clean aggressive front end simply flows rearward enhanced with a perfect window

line that also keeps the cabin airy and bright. It is a great looking ride that promises an excellent driving experience.

Size-wise, the Santa Fe has grown over the 2012 model with a midsize wheelbase of 110.2 inches just 0.2 inches longer than its midsize Sonata sibling and a length of 193 inches. When you add in its wide beam of 74.2 inches you actually have a midsize “plus” SUV. Inside it provides a full-size interior with three real rows of adult seating and almost 60 inches of shoulder room. The very similar looking Santa Fe Sport now occupies Hyundai’s position as a compact CUV.



Specifications

Price Santa Fe Limited
\$33,790 plus \$855
destination

Engine

3.3L DOHC, 24 valve V-6 290
hp @ 6,400 rpm
252 ft.-lb. of torque @
5,200 rpm

Transmission

Six speed automatic with
manual mode

Configuration

Transverse mounted front
engine/FWD/AWD

Dimensions

Wheelbase 110.2 inches

Length 193.1 inches
Width 74.2 inches
Height 66.5 inches
Track (f/r) 64.5/64.5 inches
Weight 4,173 pounds
GVWR 5,512 pounds
Fuel capacity 18.8 gallons
Steering lock to lock 2.95 turns
Turning circle 36.9 feet
Wheels (std/opt)
18X7.5/19X7.5 alloys
Tires (std/opt)
235/60X18/235/55X19
Interior volume (2nd row up/down, 3rd row up)
40.9/80.0,13.5 cubic feet

Performance

0-60 mph 6.47 seconds
50-70 3.68 seconds
50-70 mph uphill 5.29 seconds
Top speed governed at 130 mph
Fuel economy EPA rated 18/28/21 mpg city/highway/combined.
Expect 22 mpg in rural and suburban driving and 30 mpg on a level highway at legal speeds.

Under the hood is Hyundai's potent state of the art 3.3L DOHC 24 valve V-6 that produces 290 hp peak hp at 6,400 rpm and 252 peak pounds of twist at 5,200 rpm. That equates to 250 hp at the same 5,200 rpm. In my non-AWD tester only the front wheels are driven via a six-speed auto cog swapper that can do some

thinking on its own to improve fuel economy by shifting more aggressively (getting into the next higher gear sooner so the engine operates at lower rpms). But not to worry, if you ask for flank speed, it will deliver instantaneously with near escape velocities.

Speaking of making the scene, the Santa Fe can do it in style with a 0-60 mph run of a near world class 6.47 seconds (any motor vehicle having a 0-60 mph time of less than 6 seconds is world class). That is a very quick time especially when you consider 1960 muscle cars with 7.0L V-8s and a rated 400 hp were lucky to break seven seconds and most could not break 8 seconds. A 1969 Pontiac Grand Prix with 400 cubes and 350hp did 0-60 mph in 7.5 seconds. It also was lucky to get 10 mpg.

Passing times were also super quick for the Santa Fe with a 50-70 mph simulated pass stopping the Chronodex is 3.68 seconds and the same run up a 6 percent grade only slowing that time to 5.29 seconds. The throttle was so responsive that a quick stab (not even half throttle) from a stop would produce wheelspin and that's with a vehicle with about 60 percent of its 4,173 pounds on the front wheels.

And the tires are wide 235/55 x 19 inches. The Santa Fe certainly does not lack power in any way, shape, manner or form. Escape velocities is not a misnomer. It can get it done. It is also rated to tow up to 5,000 pounds which it should do with ease. And it will also have the ability to pass gas stations. During a long highway run the Santa Fe averaged 30 mpg at 70 mph. Overall in rural/suburban driving it averaged about 22 mpg. EPA says 18/25/21 mpg city/highway/combined. With its large 18.8 gallon fuel tank the Santa Fe has a highway range of an easy 450 miles with reserves.

When pushed hard, its cornering power will surprise you. Suspension is state of the art four-wheel independent with stab bars at both ends and coils in all for corners. Steering is a quick electric rack that is 2.95 turns lock to lock that

allows for Driver Selectable Steering Mode (at least it is not passenger selectable or your friends could play tricks on you). There are three modes, comfort, normal and sport. It not only adjusts effort levels, but on center build up on the highway and the curves. Try it and see what you like. As a result changing directions in the Santa Fe is fun with good cornering power and a benign attitude. It was better than expected with none of the body roll or head tossing found in larger SUVs. Simply point the Santa Fe and go with confidence.

What is amazing is the ride quality. It's so good you hardly think about it as it absorbs just about anything a road can dish out and then some. On the highway it is extremely quiet and smooth, providing over the road comfort of the best luxury car. The engine spins a very low 1,900 rpm at 70 mph. Sure it's not designed to do the Rubicon, but when was the last time you were there and if you have that need, just tow the built up off roader behind you. At least you will be comfortable getting there and have a sublime ride home.

Braking is by large four wheel discs and all the acronyms. Stopping power is very good, bringing the Santa Fe to a stop from 40 mph in just 42 feet under perfect control. Extensive use of ultra high strength tensile steel is designed for collision energy management in the event of an accident and there are seven airbags including side curtain airbags that have a roll over detection system.

Other safety features include a Vehicle Stability Management system to optimize the electronic stability control. It also interacts with the electrically driven power steering system to apply steering assist when because of driving conditions the vehicle wants to pull. I didn't experience this system, but information says that when the vehicle starts to slide it will automatically provide countersteering. I think they mean an assist in a countersteering maneuver. Sounds impressive.

Inside the cavernous interior are beautifully appointed seats

and details. Everything is top quality in this Santa Fe Limited model with the Limited Technology Package. Understand that the package doesn't add more luxury, but things like HID headlights, parking assist, memory seat, Nav, ventilated front seats (heated front seats are already standard), sunroof and some other goodies. In other words the Limited comes extremely well equipped without any packages.



The Santa Fe has plenty of leg and shoulder room.

Seats are very comfortable and the instrumentation is complete with a dual cowl tach and speedo dividing by an information center. Its systems are easy to use. And the interior is voluminous and versatile with 160 cubic feet of volume, 80 cubic feet behind the front seats, 40.9 cubes behind the second row and 13.5 cubes behind the third row. If you need a bus, this surely beats a Greyhound, including the Scenicruiser which was designed by famed industrial designer, Raymond Loewy. The Scenicruiser was considered one of the 100 best industrial designs of the 20th century.

Price for the Santa Fe Limited FWD starts at \$33,790 plus \$855 for the boat from Ulsan, South Korea. The aforementioned Tech Package will add \$4,850. Carpeted floor mats are \$135. Hyundai's have come a long way as the Santa Fe is a world class vehicle. Their dramatic rise in quality and value speaks volumes as their U.S. sales continue to grow that when combined with their sister company, Kia, are knocking on

Honda's door. There is something to be said about their five year/60,000 miles bumper to bumper warranty and their 100,000 mile 10 year powertrain warranty.

Larry Weitzman has been into cars since he was 5 years old. At 8 he could recite from memory the hp of every car made in the U.S. He has put in thousands of laps on racetracks all over the Western United States.