

Road Beat: The ultimate luxury ride



The Genesis G90 redefines the luxury automobile.
Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

In my 20 years of testing cars and trucks, driving the most luxurious cars in the world, Mercedes S550, Audi A8, VW Phaeton, Cadillacs, Lexus LS, BMW 7 Series, Infinitis and even a Bentley and Rolls now and then, I have finally driven perhaps the best luxury ride of them all, the entirely new Genesis G90, which in my tester's case was powered by a small, 3.3L V-6 turbo engine. A 5.0L V-8 is available for another \$1,700, but more on engine choice later.

Genesis came to America as an upscale near luxury/luxury ride from Hyundai in 2009. They also brought us the Equus a couple

of years later as a full-on luxury ride. But with this new generation, Hyundai has raised the bar to a new level.

About a month ago, I tested another new Genesis, the G80, which I rated as the best luxury car I had ever driven (especially when price is considered), that is until the Genesis G90. While the aggressive front end of both models are similar, it is the formal design of the rear that sets apart the G90 from its smaller brother. It is a clean, simple design with perfect proportions especially with respect to the upper window line. It is a beautiful, classic look.

G90 is a large car, its wheelbase stretches out over 10 feet at 124 inches an increase of 6 inches over the G80 and its length is 205 inches, 8 more than the G80. But what makes the G90 manageable is its reasonable width of 75 inches, the same as the G80 and 5 inches narrower than most every full-size SUV. Inside is a cavernous saloon with rear seat leg room like a Maybach. When I drove it I kept thinking “where is my chauffeur’s hat as any chauffeur would love to drive this vehicle.” If this were to be chauffeur driven, I might apply for the job and here’s why.



Specifications

Price

\$69,050 - \$72,150 with destination

Engine

3.3L turbocharged, direct

injected, DOHC, 24 valve V-6
365 hp @6,000

376 lb.-ft. of torque from
1,300-4,500 rpm

5.0L normally aspirated
DOHC, 32 valve direct
injected V-8 420 hp @ 6,000
rpm

383 lb.-ft. of torque @
5,000 rpm

Transmission

Eight-speed torque converter
automatic with paddle
shifters (on a limousine?)

Configuration

Longitudinal front
engine/RWD/AWD

Dimensions

Wheelbase 124.4 inches

Length 204.9 inches

Width 75.4 inches

Height 58.9 inches

Track (f/r) 64.5/64.5 inches

Weight 4,630 pounds

Fuel capacity 21.9 gallons

Trunk capacity 15.7 cubic
feet

Passenger capacity 113.2
cubic feet

Wheels (f/r) 19X8.5/19X9.5
inches

Tires 245/45X19/275/40X19
inches

Brakes (f/r) 14.2/13.4-inch
diameter; ventilated

Steering lock to lock 2.55
turns

Turning circle 39.2 feet
Co-efficient of drag 0.27

Performance

0-60 mph 4.81 seconds
50-70 mph 2.48 seconds
50-70 mph uphill 3.19 seconds
Top Speed Perhaps escape velocity?
Fuel economy EPA rated 17/24/20 mpg city/highway/combined.
Overall in rural and suburban driving expect 20-22 mpg and on the highway at legal speeds 28-29 mpg.

First is the power train. My tester was powered by the best V-6 turbo engine ever, the 3.3L V-6 with twin turbos and every other advanced feature including DOHC, 24 Valves, direct injection and twin turbos plus a high 10:1 compression ratio to make turbo lag history. It cranks out 365 hp at 6,000 rpm and 376 pounds of incredible twist from between an off-idle 1,300 rpm to 4,500 rpm. The normally aspirated 5.0L V-8 makes 55 more peak hp (420 hp at 6,000 rpm) but just seven pounds more peak twist (383 at 5,000 rpm), and although I haven't reviewed the torque curve of the V-8, you can bet dollars to donuts that between idle to 4,500 rpm, maybe even to 4,700 rpm, the V-6t actually makes more hp than the V-8 and those are the rpms that you really drive with, unless you are on a racetrack where you can keep the engine boiling at or near 6,000 rpm.

In most acceleration tests the V-6T is just as quick as the V-8. Zero-60 mph testing consisted of five runs averaging an astonishing 4.81 seconds with all five runs below 5 seconds and all within a 0.13 second bracket. That is consistency in

super sedan performance. If my memory is correct, this is one of the quickest sedans ever tested by the Road Beat, especially if we don't consider any AMG Mercedes or a BMW M cars. In fact, it is a tenth of a second quicker than the lighter G80 5.0L V-8 tested a month ago and this larger G90 weighs in at 4,630 pounds, about a hundred pounds more than the G80 V-8.

Passing tests also reflect the prodigious power of this diminutive powerplant. Fifty to 70 mph simulated passing times on a level highway required just 2.48 seconds and up a steep grade (6 to 7 percent) only slowed that time to 3.19 seconds, all super sedan times. There is no slow in the G90 in any form, V-6t or V-8 as I have also driven the V-8 and found the performance virtually identical except for the perhaps barely audible wonderfully melodious sound of the V-8 engine. Step hard on the throttle and G90 V-6t will snap your neck performing its own imitation of a rocket sled ride. The V-6t is so smooth, quiet and responsive that many drivers will think that this V-6t is a V-8. There is virtually no turbo lag with the V-6t as well and it will provide perhaps an mpg or two better fuel economy from reduced friction hp and pumping losses. For comparison, the times for the G80 V-8 were 4.92, 2.44 and 2.99 seconds or virtually identical.

As to fuel economy, the EPA rates the G90 V-6t at 17/24/20 mpg city/highway/combined. My overall average for 525 miles of varied driving with less than 10 percent on a four-lane highway, 20 percent in suburban traffic and all performance testing was 22.2 mpg. In a 180-mile run to South Lake Tahoe and back from Placerville the big "G" averaged 25.9 mpg. Interestingly the EPA rates the AWD version of the "G" identically. Fuel capacity is large at almost 22 gallons. Also helping is a coefficient of drag of 0.27.

The other part of this incredible story is the ride and ambiance which is wonderfully smooth and quiet. It is the best vehicle that I have encountered, period, end of story. It does

this with almost no float as well as the ride is solid, like a bank vault carved or machined from a steel ingot. The engine spins at a very low 1,750 rpms while cruising at 70 mph and there is no tire, wind or road noise. This vehicle is isolated making one think in a quiet whisper, like a golf tournament. And at nearly 16 cubic feet, it will swallow your foursome's golf bags easily.

Now here's where you ask the question of how did they do that while keeping its handling crisp? It's the same system that gives the ride quality Genesis Adaptive Control Suspension with Electronic Damping Control and Intelligent Mode and it obviously works as this G90 can change directs with aplomb. It also has all the credentials with five link independent suspension at all four corners, solid stab bars at both ends, super wide 19 x 8.5-inch front and 19 x 9.5-inch alloys front and rear shod with 245/45 front and 275/40 series rubber in the rear. Those are some meats. It also has super quick steering at just 2.55 turns lock to lock. The suspension keeps the attitude flat and the tires exhibit gobs of cornering power. The steering is accurate like the scope on a sniper rifle with very quick turn in and perfect on and off center feel with just a bit of numbness and isolation. It is amazing at how adept the G90 is in the twisties and how easy it handles. While long by today's standards, its narrower width makes it easy in tight parking maneuvers. Who needs or wants a chauffeur when driving can be so much fun?

Safety is at the top of the class with every acronym. Brakes are huge (more than 14 inches in front and more than 13 inches in the rear) and all four discs are ventilated. Automatic emergency braking is standard as well as the multi-view camera which gives a top 360-degree view of the G90 and its surroundings with the front and rear camera at the same time at speeds below 10 mph from its massive 12-inch-wide center stack screen. But perish the thought of putting a scratch on this car and its absolutely perfect finish and remember what

pilots say if their engine quits at altitude, "I guess my insurance company just bought my airplane and now let's make a landing I can walk away from."

Inside is where you want to be with soft Nappa leather everywhere, quality soft touch materials on the dash and doors and polished wood in all the right places. Everything, besides its full complement of power accessories, has been thought of down to the heated steering wheel, the automatic induction phone charger and more. Comfort is beyond outstanding and the rear seat leg room imitates a fine Limousine, however only the G90 is a better and more capable vehicle (than a limo). Instrumentation is complete (speedo, tach, trip computer, etc.) and the center stack as complex as it looks and with a mini-mouse is actually very easy to operate. If you read the last sentence as Mickey Mouse you are wrong, if anything it should refer to "Tomorrowland."

All this super luxury will cost you \$68,100, plus \$950 for the suite on the boat from Ulsan, Korea. There are no options other than all-wheel drive, which is \$2,500. The V-8 is \$1,700 more and is called the "Ultimate" instead of the V-6t nomenclature of "Premium." Along with the V-8 you also get LED headlights instead of HID units which are outstanding anyway, and power rear seating adjustability which is probably more of the reason for the \$1,700 than the V-8 engine. AWD is also available on the V-8. This is the first time I would not recommend the V-8 over the V-6 unless you are hauling a lot of finicky rear seat passengers around like chauffeuring a third world dictator. The rear seat on the V-6 is absolutely fabulous anyway. Now \$68K-70K is a lot of money, but just remember the competition, if there is any, will cost you \$20-\$40K more.

I want to point out that a month ago, I called the G80 V-8 the best car I had ever driven. While I may still prefer the G80 as it is 8 inches shorter and it is almost \$15K less, the G90's classic looks, incredible performance and ultimate

features does make that decision a bit difficult for me.

Hyundai and Genesis have shown the world that when it comes to cars and value the Koreans can out Japanese the Japanese.

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.