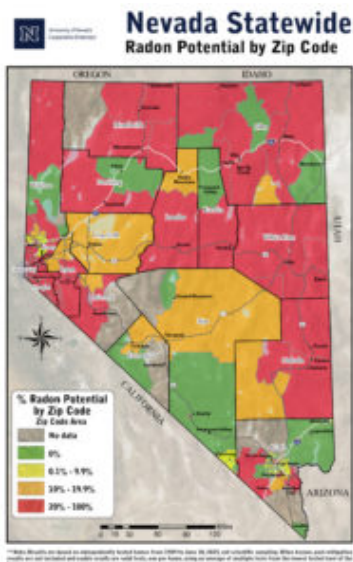


Radon a serious issue in Nevada



Nearly 25 percent of homes tested in Nevada found radon concentrations at or above the EPA action level.

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension's Radon Education Program is offering free radon test kits and educational presentations at various locations across the state.

Free test kits are available at Cooperative Extension offices and partner offices statewide from Jan. 1 through Feb. 28, and will also be available at presentations.

Radon is a naturally occurring, radioactive gas that is colorless, odorless and tasteless. It comes from the ground and can accumulate in homes, raising the risk of lung cancer. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates 21,000 Americans die each year from radon-caused lung cancer, killing more people than secondhand smoke, drunk driving, falls in the

home, drowning or house fires.

In Nevada, one in four homes tested show radon concentrations at or above the EPA action level. According to experts, living in a home with radon concentrations at the action level poses as much risk of developing lung cancer as smoking about half a pack of cigarettes a day.

The risk of radon-caused lung cancer can be reduced. A simple three-day test can determine if a house has a radon problem, and winter is an ideal time to test a home for radon. If radon problems are found, they can be fixed.

January is radon awareness month. Here are some scheduled presentations:

Jan. 11: CVIC Hall, 1604 Esmeralda Ave., Minden, at 6pm

Jan. 18: Carson City Senior Center, 901 Beverly Drive, Carson City, at 6:30pm

Jan. 23: Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, 128 Market St., Stateline, at 6pm

Feb. 1: Incline Village GID Public Works, 1220 Sweetwater Road, Incline Village, at 6pm.

Road Beat: 2017 Hyundai Santa Fe, another winner



Hyundai Santa Fe is one of the better looking crossover utility vehicles on the market. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

Recently voted Full Size CUV (crossover utility vehicle) of Texas, the Hyundai Santa Fe is hardly full size in its exterior dimensions. It rides on a mid-size 110-inch wheelbase and Santa Fe's length is a mid-size 193 inches. Width is a manageable 74 inches and with its AWD capability it tips the scales at a svelte 4,169 pounds.

And it still packs a total interior volume of over 160 cubic feet, which is in full size territory. Most full size SUVs weight a 1,000 pounds more, and are at least 10 inches longer but have little if any more room. Santa Fe is a home run in the size versus utility comparison and has three full rows of seating.

Santa Fe is also a homerun in the looks department from its signature grille to its rear bumper. It is one good looking

ride with perfect proportions in the sleek design and window line. There are no wasted creases in the metal to obscure or detract from its beautiful lines and shape beyond its diminutive size. It is smooth and easy on the eyes. Co-efficient of drag is a low for an SUV 0.34.

With the “full-size” Santa Fe you get a choice of one engine, a 3.3L DOHC, 24 valve V-6 cranking out 290 hp at 6,400 rpm along with 252 pounds of twist at 5,200 rpm (according to the hp/torque equation where one pound of torque is equal to exactly one hp at 5,252 rpm means at peak torque rpm – 5,200 – the engine is developing 250 hp). While there is no choice in powerplants, why would you want a different unit as this is one of the best V-6s in production. It is absolutely silky smooth and makes power far beyond its diminutive size. It drives all four wheels with the AWD option (\$1,550 and buy it) through a six -speed torque converter auto cog-swapper. A couple of times it had trouble making up its mind in selecting which gear to use, but otherwise it is smoother and slicker than your proverbial greased pig.



Specifications

Price Santa Fe Limited
Ultimate AWD \$41,150 plus
\$895 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) 64.1/64.5 inches

Weight 4,169 pounds

GVWR 5,622 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 6.84 seconds

50-70 3.65 seconds

50-70 mph uphill 5.68
seconds

Top speed governed at 130
mph

Fuel economy EPA rated
17/22/19 mpg

city/highway/combined.

Expect 23-24 mpg in rural and suburban driving and 30-31 mpg on a level highway at legal speeds.

Getting down the road is quite an easy affair for the Santa Fe with beaucoup power from its sublime powertrain. It knocks off 0-60 mph in an effortless 6.84 seconds and backs that very high performance elapsed time with simulated passing times from 50-70 mph of 3.65 seconds and the same run up a steep grade (6-7 percent) of 5.68 seconds. That is getting it done.

But here is where it gets interesting. The EPA says the Santa Fe should return 17/22/19 mpg city/highway/combined. My real world testing found those numbers extremely conservative as in a two-way run on a level highway at 70 mph returned 30.7 mpg, or almost nine mpg better than the 22 mpg shown in the EPA testing. Some of that performance is due to Santa Fe's slow turning V-6 which spins at just 1,900 at 70 mph. And other testing showed this not to be a fluke. In a 150-mile round trip from Placerville to South Lake Tahoe averaging at least the speed limit the Santa Fe averaged 26.6 mpg. Overall the Santa Fe averaged about 23-24 mpg including acceleration testing. Those numbers are obviously far better than the EPA numbers. One other important point is the Santa Fe's large 19-gallon fuel tank allowing for a 500-mile range according to my highway mpg numbers. Maybe the EPA does their testing in the Lincoln Tunnel at 5pm on a weekday trying to go from NYC to New Jersey. What a superb powertrain.

Handling in a tall vehicle benefits from 7.5 inch-wide 19 inch wheels shod with copious 235/55 tires. Suspension is state of the art four wheel independent with stab bars at both ends plus coils and gas filled shocks in all four corners. Track is very wide at 64 and 65 inches front and rear respectively. Steering is a reasonably quick electric power rack that is 2.95 turns lock to lock creating a turning circle of just 37

feet. So when you are doing the fast tango in the twisties you will find yourself with gobs of cornering power but with slightly numb steering feel. That means you need to pay a bit more attention, but the Santa Fe gets it done when pushed hard. Body roll is well controlled and minimal which also reduces head tossing over uneven terrain. With AWD there is no torque steer as might be felt in the FWD version under extreme conditions, such as a tight corner at full throttle. How often does that happen?

Ride quality is sublime (see above regarding state of the art suspension). It handles big and small road imperfections well. It's quiet is remarkable and there is no wind or road noise. Something of note is the huge weight capacity of this CUV of almost 1,500 pounds with a GVWR of over 5,600 pounds. Some, if not many, light duty half ton pickups don't carry that kind of load. Most mid or full size sedans have payloads of less than a thousand pounds. Notwithstanding its supple ride qualities, Santa Fe is one stout vehicle.

Brakes are large four wheel discs (front ventilated) and they are powerful. Of course it has all the safety acronyms including a couple of new ones, LDW (Lane departure Warning) and AEB (automatic emergency braking). HID head lights are fabulous looking more like the landing lights on a Boeing 747. But with their sharp cutoff, they don't blind the oncoming driver. Those last three items are part of the Ultimate Tech Package (\$2,100).

Internally you will find a comfortable leather interior. Everything is powered, heated or cooled including the passenger's seat, rear seats and steering wheel. Most of the interior is all soft touch and the instrument panel is well designed with a large speedo and tach flanking the central info center and trip computer. Everything is where you would expect it to be and a five-minute one-time orientation is all that is necessary. Ditto for the sound system and center stack of HVAC controls.

Getting into a Santa Fe is a welcoming experience and almost sanctuary like. Rear seating in my tester was two bucket seats which makes third row seating a breeze. But I prefer the option of a second row semi bench which provides excellent outboard seats with third passenger center seating.

With 80 cubes of volume behind the front chairs there is plenty of room for a major Home Depot or Lowe's run. Even behind the third row there are 13.5 cubes of cargo volume which will easily take your in-laws and their luggage to the airport. Don't mistakenly drive to the FedEx terminal.

Pricing for this extremely loaded Limited Ultimate Santa Fe AWD large mid-size CUV starts at \$41,150 plus \$895 for the boat/truck from Ulsan, Korea. The Ultimate Tech Package (\$2,100) and the obligatory fancy floor mats are \$150 which brings the pre-negotiated price of admission to \$44,295. If you haven't checked out the prices of luxury SUV/CUVs lately, that number on its face appears to be a bargain. And then there is the factory 10-year/100,00-mile warranty to sweeten the deal. It's no wonder Hyundai is on a roll.

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.

Panning 'Alice in Wonderland'

By Kathryn Reed

Just because it's a classic doesn't mean it's a good book. Such is the case with "Alice in Wonderland."

That was my opinion and that of the majority of the book club I'm in. A classic was chosen for the December book, and this children's selection was the book of choice.

I'm not sure 92 pages have ever been so painful. As I was reading it, I kept thinking – no wonder I have never read this before.

I can handle talking animals just fine, after all, "Charlotte's Web" is one of my all-time favorite books. But there is something about Alice that isn't likable. This seems out of place in a children's book, that the main character is not someone you are rooting for, so to speak.

I really didn't like any of the characters. I didn't even like the story. I'm still trying to figure how it has relevance today and why it's still in circulation.

Alice is definitely adventurous. Precocious would be another word to describe her. All of that is good. The best part about this book is that a girl is the lead character – and that she is strong. Remember, this was written in 1865.

Each book club member rates the book on whether they liked it, would recommend it and its literary value. Most of us didn't like it and would not recommend it. I argued it had literary value. Any book this old, that is still being talked about, and is read by adults and children has staying power for some reason. I just can't figure out that reason.

Reverberations of death of

Northstar ski instructor

By Jules Older, San Francisco Chronicle

It was the last place and he was the last person you'd associate with death.



Dennis Baltimore and Jillian Torrez

In the middle of the day, on a gentle beginner slope at the generally gentle Tahoe area ski resort of Northstar, a skilled ski instructor wearing a helmet and all his safety equipment died.

What apparently happened was this. To avoid a snowboarder who had lost control on an icy patch, the 35-year-old instructor veered off the groomed slope and skied into the woods. There, his skis may have hit a snow-covered rock, and he was tossed into a ditch. Despite the life-saving efforts of first responders, he succumbed to his injuries where he lay.

The instructor was Dennis Baltimore, only child of grieving parents, father of a 6-month-old daughter named Zoe, loving partner of Jillian Torrez.

Read the whole story

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Delilah

Delilah is a beautiful 10-year-old cat who arrived here with three other nice cats when their owner could no longer take care of them. Delilah and her brother, Eli, would like to go home together. Adoptions for the rest of December are sponsored.

Delilah is spayed, microchipped, tested for FIV, and vaccinated. She is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes. Go to the Tahoe animal shelter's Facebook page to see photos and descriptions of all pets at the shelter.

Call 530.573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet.

For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go **online**.

Stop unwanted calls, texts on cellphones

By Kim Komando, USA Today

You may find this surprising. Many of us remember when people's names, addresses, and phone numbers were listed in the telephone book and distributed for free. All we ever worried about were junk mail, telemarketers, and the occasional prank call.

Times have changed. Phone books are now history. You can message anyone you know (or don't) on Facebook, Twitter, or other means. And most important, your phone number is a gateway to your primary means of communication, entertainment and safety. Once your number is compromised, it's far more intrusive than ever before.

Every year or so, a hoax burns like a wildfire through email inboxes and social networks warning that all cellphone numbers are about to go public. It also says there's a deadline to register your cellphone, and, once registered, it only blocks your number for five years.

Read the whole story

Reid leaves Senate with few regrets

By Gary Martin, Las Vegas Review-Journal

WASHINGTON – Harry Reid didn't start the partisan polarization that has stymied Congress in recent years. But he played a central role in sharpening the tone of discourse on Capitol Hill, dividing lawmakers and eroding the collegiality that once was a hallmark of the U.S. Senate.

In that atmosphere, Reid is stepping down from leadership and leaving the chamber with few regrets – and an armful of legislative victories from three decades of serving the Democratic caucus and his home state of Nevada.

His legacy includes the Affordable Care Act, a major Senate rule change on filibusters and success in blocking nuclear waste shipments to Yucca Mountain – to name just a few accomplishments.

At age 77, Reid remains irascible, unrepentant but humbled.

Read the whole story

Create Mail Art at Bona Fide Books

The first Maker's Monday of the New Year will be Jan. 9 in Meyers.

The focus will be Mail Art. This art form, also known as

postal art and correspondence art, is an artistic movement centered on sending small scale works, interesting/fun inclusions, and unique mailings through the Postal Service.

The free event starts at 6pm at Bona Fide Books, 1069 Magua St., No. 4, Meyers.

Tribal liaison is a bridge to the USFS



Grace Newell has been a bridge between the U.S. Forest Service and local Indian tribes. Photo/Jeremy Spoon

By Erica Hupp

When asked to describe her job, Grace Newell said with pride, "I serve as a bridge between the tribes and the U.S. Forest

Service. And it's a two-way bridge; that's very important."

Newell is the tribal liaison for the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, stationed at the supervisor's office in Sparks. She goes on to explain that she communicates the agency's mission to the Nevada tribes and relates their perspective to the Forest's leaders.

As a Paiute Shoshone tribal member, Newell grew up on Lone Pine Reservation in the Eastern Sierra. She now lives in Truckee. Though certainly not required for the job, she said that her heritage has helped her establish positive working relationships.

"It's a welcome change for the tribes. They feel comfortable having a fellow Native American as their liaison," said Newell. "However, it can also be awkward at times. I work for the agency, not vice versa."

Her career began with an academic scholarship to Dartmouth College, where she studied history. After graduation in 1978, she continued working for the university as the director of its Native American Program. She recruited academic Native American students from across the Western United States.

After her father passed away in 1983, Newell returned home to Lone Pine to be with her family. She took a summer job with the Sequoia National Forest as a wildland firefighter on the Horseshoe Meadow Hotshots, the first fire crew composed primarily of tribal members. She was one of only two women in the group.

"At that time, there were very few women in wildland firefighting," Newell said. "So I was breaking through barriers."

That summer job turned into a lifelong career. "I fell in love with the Forest Service and never left," she said.

For many years she served in a variety of wildland fire positions in California and Nevada, including helitack crew, fire engine operator, rappel crew, hand crew captain, fuels specialist, and fire management officer.

“Early in my career I was advised to get a wide range of experience in order to move up in the agency,” said Newell.

Nearing the mandatory firefighter retirement age of 57, Grace decided to take on a new role so that she could keep working. “Fifty-seven just seemed too young to retire,” she said. So in 2012 she started to work in Sparks as the tribal liaison for the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest.

Newell said her most memorable experience from her current role has been representing tribal perspectives during the development of bi-state sage-grouse management policies.

“The tribal voice really needed to be heard,” she said. The policies were designed to manage sage-grouse habitat, where pinyon trees had encroached upon sagebrush ecosystems, rendering them uninhabitable for the birds. However, the tribes viewed the issue differently.

“To them, the pinyon represents the tree of life,” said Newell. “It’s a food source as well as a cultural center for family gatherings. To the tribes, the tree goes where it needs to. There’s no such thing as encroachment.”

Newell’s efforts helped managers reach a compromise to restore the sage-grouse’s habitat while still respecting tribal views and needs.

Now 61, Grace said she is finally ready to retire and looks back on her career with satisfaction. “I feel proud of the work I’ve done,” she said. “I think I’ve played a role in helping the Forest Service, the land, and the tribes.”

Erica Hupp works for the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest.

Road Beat: An improved Lexus RX450h FWD



The Lexus RX450h FWD has plenty of new features to brag about. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

Sometimes all new vehicles are rehashed old designs. But not so with the new Lexus RX; it is all new.

It is the best-selling Lexus, so messing with success can be dangerous, but not in this case. While the new design is an evolutionary step forward, having a shape relationship to the prior generation, that too is much improved with a new found edgy appearance defined by its extreme character line, new

muscular hood, triple headlights, new window line with an extended rear quarter window treatment and so much meaningful detail. The rakish, beautifully proportioned profile looks sleeker, longer and lower. About the only negative is the signature character grille which attempts to dominate the otherwise terrific front end.

Growth is another aspect of the new RX and it is in almost every direction as it is 5 inches longer at 193 inches, on a 2-inch longer wheelbase at 110 inches, width is up by half an inch at 75 inches and it has grown taller by an inch or so at 68 inches. RX even has an inch more ground clearance at 8 inches. Weight, however, has been held in check only growing by about 100 pounds to 4,608 for FWD models and 4,740 for AWD issues. Only the fuel tank remains the same 17.2 gallons.

Under the hood is a new version of the Atkinson Cycle, 3.5L DOHC 24 valve V-6 which makes a bit more power at 259 hp at 6,000 rpm and 247 pounds of twist at 4,800 rpm, up by numerical values of 14 and 13, respectively, at the same rpm. It is probably due in large part to the increased compression ratio of 13:1. Adding to that output is an electric hybrid system that can add as much as 50 hp, bring total output to 309 hp. Literature on the RX may say 308 hp, but 259 hp plus 37 kW equals 308.6 hp. Anyway, power in my tester is sent to the front wheels through an extremely smooth CVT. In AWD models, an electric motor power the rear wheels. It is a pretty simple system.



Specifications

Price \$52,235 to about \$62,000

Engine-conventional

3.5L DOHC 24 valve V-6 259 hp @ 6,000 rpm

247 ft.-lb. of torque @ 4,800 rpm

Electric motor front axle 155 hp

Electric motor rear axle 67 hp (AWD only)

Sealed nickel metal hydride (Ni-MH) 50 hp

Transmission

CVT

Configuration

Transverse mounted front engine/front wheel drive/all-wheel drive (rear axle is electrically powered)

Dimensions

Wheelbase 109.8 inches

Length 192.5 inches

Height 67.7 inches

Width 74.6 inches

Weight (FWD) 4,608

Track (f/r) 64.4/64.0 inches

Ground clearance 8.2 inches

GVWR 5,864 pounds

Tow capacity 3,500 pounds

Fuel capacity 17.2 gallons

Cargo volume (second row up/second row folded) 40.0/80.3 cubic feet

Seat belts (passenger

capacity) 5

Wheels (std/opt)

18X7.5/20X7.5 inch alloys

Tires (std/opt)

235/65X18/235/55X20

Turning circle 38.0 feet

Steering lock to lock 2.70
turns

Coefficient of drag 0.34

Performance RX450h FWD

0-60 mph 6.48 seconds

50-70 mph 3.42 seconds

50-70 mph uphill 4.50
seconds

Top Speed Electronically
limited to 112 mph

Fuel economy EPA rated at
31/30/30

city/highway/combined mpg
(AWD). Expect 30-31 mpg in
rural country driving with
some stop and go and 33 plus
mpg on the highway at legal
speeds.

Smoothness is the key word for this system. The throttle is very predictable and linear. Combining the two systems is imperceptible and Toyota/Lexus has really made hybrids undetectable in the way they perform as everything in the system is seamlessly integrated. But (don't you love it when the "but" appears), the auto stop and start of the system can still be felt from a dead stop when the brake is released (brake release starts the engine after stopping). Now, however, many cars (hybrids and conventional, alike) with auto stop and start "suffer" from this. But in the RX, most drivers will be unaware of it.

Hybrids are about improved fuel economy and performance and this rig does well at both. This new RX flat out got it done, with a 0-60 mph elapsed time averaging 6.48 seconds, about a quarter of a second improvement over the prior generation. Passing times also reflected a significant improvement with a 50-70 mph time of 3.42 seconds and an uphill run of just 4.50 seconds. The prior generation posted times of 6.75, 3.72 and 5.75 seconds respectively.

Fuel economy is also improved, in this case by about 10 percent. EPA numbers are 31/30/30 mpg city/highway/combined. But in 350 miles of varied driving with about 15 percent spent on the freeway, the RX 31.7 mpg. On a level highway two way run at 70 mph, 33.3 mpg was the average. The new 450h averaged 32.7 mpg in a roundtrip from Placerville to South Lake Tahoe. Prior generation numbers were about 28 mpg overall and 30.3 mpg in its 70-mph highway run. Think of it, driving a luxo, 4,608-pound SUV that accelerates from 0-60 mph in less than six and a half seconds and yields a solid 30 plus mpg. Not too shabby.

Handling can be best described as secure. My RX tester came with the Luxury Package (\$3,125) which means upgraded semi-aniline leather seats, but it also means 20X7.5 inch alloys shod with 235/55 series tires (standard are 18X7.5 inch alloys with taller profile 235/65 series rubber) and that means crisper grip and more tire feel. Suspension is MacPherson struts up front and a double wishbone system in the rear and steering while quick at 2.7 turns lock to lock is the only negative in its numbness which means you will have to guide the big RX to get the most out of its sophisticated suspenders. But it will do the twisties at speed with confidence. No problem here.

Ride quality is enhanced by the RX body and construction which feels like it was carved out of a steel ingot. It is just that solid. Just open and close a door, feels more like closing a bulkhead door on a battleship. The ride is solid, it absorbs

everything the road can dish out, big or small, smoothing out every road and there is no float. Wind and road noise are non-existent. There is no tach so engine rpm at speed while unknown is probably at or below 2,000 rpm. But here is the deal, this RX will operate on pure electric below about 45 mph and then things get really smooth and quiet, amazingly so. But any throttle pressure brings on the gas engine. It's a small, Nickel Metal Hydride battery.

I don't know the engineering requirements or space available, but if the battery was just a bit bigger (a cubic foot or so) allowing a more continuous power draw and a higher pure electric top speed of 55-60 mph and the ability to do this for perhaps three or four miles would be wonderful. I am not talking plug in hybrid, just a hybrid with a bit more battery. Doubling the current battery might only add a hundred pounds. Another question is if there is enough energy recapture to make it work. Lexus, give this idea some thought.

Braking is by huge (13 inch), ventilated four wheel discs with all the acronyms and they are firm and strong. No less than 10 airbags protect the driver and passengers along with electronic aids like an enhanced vehicle stability control system. But nothing replaces good judgement. Headlights are amazing.

Getting back to the luxury package makes for extremely comfortable seating. The quality of the appointments is outstanding, everything you touch exudes a dense softness. Instead of a tach, there is a meter showing the hybrid system operation. Centered between the speedo and system gauge is an info/trip computer. While the speedo is large, my tester had a handy heads-up display (\$600). Most everything is standard including moonroof, full power (10-way front seats) and even a drivers' seat, mirror and steering wheel memory. Rear seating is copious for three and cargo space is large at 80 cubic feet.

Pricing for the RX450h FWD is not cheap at a base of \$52,235 plus \$940 for the train and truck from Ontario, Canada. My tester had about \$8,000 in options including the Luxury Package bringing to total with destination to \$61,420. The least expensive of the options is worth noting as it was \$430 for the huge 12 inch NAV system stuck on top of the center stack. After understanding the all-purpose nature of the RX, it is no wonder it is the top selling Lexus.

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.