

CAR AND DRIVER

SEPTEMBER 2012

INTELLIGENCE. INDEPENDENCE. IRREVERENCE.

NEW
CARS for
2013

COMPARO



HONDA
CR-V EX-L
AWD
PRICE > \$30,025
C/D OBSERVED MPG > 24
POWER > 185 HP
TORQUE > 163 LB-FT
WEIGHT > 3607 LB

FORD
ESCAPE SEL
4WD
PRICE > \$33,630
C/D OBSERVED MPG > 21
POWER > 178 HP
TORQUE > 184 LB-FT
WEIGHT > 3716 LB

TOYOTA
RAV4 LIMITED
4X4
PRICE > \$29,078
C/D OBSERVED MPG > 22
POWER > 179 HP
TORQUE > 172 LB-FT
WEIGHT > 3501 LB

KIA
SPORTAGE EX
AWD
PRICE > \$30,150
C/D OBSERVED MPG > 21
POWER > 176 HP
TORQUE > 168 LB-FT
WEIGHT > 3509 LB

HYUNDAI
TUCSON LIMITED
AWD
PRICE > \$27,420
C/D OBSERVED MPG > 22
POWER > 176 HP
TORQUE > 168 LB-FT
WEIGHT > 3421 LB

MAZDA
CX-5 GRAND
TOURING AWD
PRICE > \$30,515
C/D OBSERVED MPG > 26
POWER > 155 HP
TORQUE > 150 LB-FT
WEIGHT > 3486 LB

the MINORS

SMALL UTES ARE MAJOR-LEAGUE BUSINESS.
PICKING A CHAMP IS GOING TO TAKE A PLAYOFF.

by K.C. COLWELL | photography by A.J. MUELLER

NEW CARS *for* 2013

one. As the most affordable form of the species—generally starting below \$20,000—these small two-boxers are by far the most popular and numerous. Lucky for us, two earlier comparos helped pare down a list of contenders. In those tests, we had eight and nine examples to sort through; both times a V-6-powered Toyota RAV4 emerged victorious.

With the industry on a downsizing kick, at least when it comes to engines, we felt it best to look at the strongest-selling configurations this time around. In other words: four-cylinder engines and four-wheel drive. A targeted as-tested price of \$30,000 gave us most of the bells and whistles.

Despite its popularity, a RAV4 meeting those specifications was nearly impossible to find. Toyota was forced to borrow a Limited model from a dealer so it could defend its title as king of the small SUVs.

The Ford Escape and the Mazda CX-5 are all-new this year, so their inclusion was a no-brainer. While the CX-5 comes with just one engine, its four-wheel drive and Grand Touring trim bring its cost in line. The Escape offers a trio of engine choices: A

naturally aspirated, 2.5-liter inline-four is standard in front-drivers; a turbocharged 1.6-liter four is standard in four-wheel-drive models; and a 2.0-liter turbo four is optional in both.

Not quite as new but still warm from the oven, the latest Honda CR-V, like the CX-5, comes only with a naturally aspirated four-pot. A \$30,000 CR-V comes in EX-L trim (“L” for leather), with enough left over for a rear-seat DVD player/babysitter.







Rounding out this six-pack are two Korean siblings, the Hyundai Tucson and the Kia Sportage. They share a platform and powertrains but wear distinctly different sheetmetal.

With horsepower ranging from 155 to 185 and curb weights starting at about 3400 pounds, we didn’t expect these utes to break any speed records or redefine handling. That isn’t their mission. Comfort and versatility are high on the list of things we want out of a little SUV but not so much that we would ignore dynamics and refinement. Plus, the ideal compact companion had better be able to haul some friends and, just as important, some refreshments to a ball game.

Nearly one out of every three vehicles sold from January through May 2012 was some sort of SUV. Just look at any parking lot—the one in this photo, for instance. The damn things are everywhere.

And if you find yourself in the market for a compact SUV, good luck picking out



VEHICLE	 Ford Escape SEL 4WD	 Honda CR-V EX-L AWD	 Hyundai Tucson Limited AWD	 Kia Sportage EX AWD	 Mazda CX-5 Grand Touring AWD	 Toyota RAV4 Limited 4x4
BASE PRICE	\$30,445	\$29,325	\$27,320	\$26,200	\$29,090	\$27,530
PRICE AS TESTED	\$33,630	\$30,025	\$27,420	\$30,150	\$30,515	\$29,078
DIMENSIONS						
LENGTH	178.1 inches	178.3 inches	173.2 inches	174.8 inches	178.7 inches	181.9 inches
WIDTH	72.4 inches	71.6 inches	71.7 inches	73.0 inches	72.4 inches	73.0 inches
HEIGHT	66.3 inches	65.1 inches	65.2 inches	64.4 inches	65.7 inches	68.7 inches
WHEELBASE	105.9 inches	103.1 inches	103.9 inches	103.9 inches	106.3 inches	104.7 inches
FRONT TRACK	61.5 inches	61.6 inches	62.4 inches	63.5 inches	62.4 inches	61.4 inches
REAR TRACK	61.6 inches	61.6 inches	62.4 inches	63.6 inches	62.5 inches	61.8 inches
INTERIOR VOLUME	F: 52 cubic feet R: 46 cubic feet	F: 53 cubic feet R: 48 cubic feet	F: 55 cubic feet R: 48 cubic feet	F: 53 cubic feet R: 46 cubic feet	F: 53 cubic feet R: 49 cubic feet	F: 55 cubic feet R: 49 cubic feet
CARGO BEHIND	F: 68 cubic feet R: 34 cubic feet	F: 71 cubic feet R: 37 cubic feet	F: 56 cubic feet R: 26 cubic feet	F: 55 cubic feet R: 26 cubic feet	F: 65 cubic feet R: 34 cubic feet	F: 73 cubic feet R: 36 cubic feet
TOWING						
MAX AS TESTED	2000 pounds	1500 pounds	2000 pounds	2000 pounds	2000 pounds	1500 pounds
POWERTRAIN						
ENGINE	turbocharged DOHC 16-valve inline-4 97 cu in (1596 cc)	DOHC 16-valve inline-4 144 cu in (2354 cc)	DOHC 16-valve inline-4 144 cu in (2360 cc)	DOHC 16-valve inline-4 144 cu in (2360 cc)	DOHC 16-valve inline-4 122 cu in (1998 cc)	DOHC 16-valve inline-4 152 cu in (2494 cc)
POWER HP @ RPM	178 @ 5700	185 @ 5700	176 @ 6000	176 @ 6000	155 @ 6000	179 @ 6000
TORQUE LB-FT @ RPM	184 @ 2500	163 @ 4000	168 @ 4000	168 @ 4000	150 @ 4000	172 @ 4000
REDLINE	6500 rpm	7100 rpm	6500 rpm	6500 rpm	6600 rpm	6400 rpm
LB PER HP	20.9	19.5	19.4	19.9	22.5	19.5
DRIVE/LINE	6-speed automatic	5-speed automatic	6-speed automatic	6-speed automatic	6-speed automatic	4-speed automatic
TRANSMISSION	all	all	all	all	all	all
DRIVEN WHEELS	all	all	all	all	all	all
GEAR RATIO:1/	1 4.58/4.9/32	1 2.79/6.6/47	1 4.21/6.0/39	1 4.21/6.0/39	1 3.55/5.0/33	1 3.94/6.8/44
MPH PER 100 RPM/	2 2.96/7.5/49	2 1.61/11.5/82	2 2.64/9.5/62	2 2.64/9.5/62	2 2.02/8.8/58	2 2.19/12.1/77
MAX MPH	3 1.91/11.7/76	3 1.08/17.1/119	3 1.80/14.0/91	3 1.80/14.0/91	3 1.45/12.2/81	3 1.41/18.9/121
	4 1.45/15.5/101	4 0.77/23.9/119	4 1.39/18.1/110	4 1.39/18.2/110	4 1.00/17.8/117	4 1.02/26.2/123
	5 1.00/22.3/117	5 0.57/32.7/112	5 1.00/25.1/110	5 1.00/25.2/110	5 0.71/25.1/111	
	6 0.75/30/117		6 0.77/32.6/106	6 0.77/32.7/107	6 0.60/29.7/110	
AXLE RATIO:1	3.51	4.44	3.20	3.20	4.62	3.08
CHASSIS						
SUSPENSION	F: struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar R: multilink, coil springs, anti-roll bar	F: struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar R: multilink, coil springs, anti-roll bar	F: struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar R: multilink, coil springs, anti-roll bar	F: struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar R: multilink, coil springs, anti-roll bar	F: struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar R: multilink, coil springs, anti-roll bar	F: struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar R: multilink, coil springs, anti-roll bar
BRAKES	F: 11.8-inch vented disc R: 11.0-inch disc traction off	F: 11.8-inch vented disc R: 12.0-inch disc partially defeatable	F: 11.8-inch vented disc R: 11.2-inch disc fully defeatable	F: 11.8-inch vented disc R: 11.2-inch disc fully defeatable	F: 11.7-inch vented disc R: 11.9-inch disc partially defeatable	F: 10.8-inch vented disc R: 11.2-inch disc partially defeatable, traction off
STABILITY CONTROL						
TIRES	Continental ContiProContact 235/50R-18 97H M+S	Bridgestone Dueler H/P Sport AS 225/65R-17 102T M+S	Kumho Solus KL21 225/55R-18 98H M+S	Hankook Optimo H426 235/55R-18 100H M+S	Toyo A23 P225/55R-19 99V M+S	Bridgestone Dueler H/T 687 225/55R-17 101H M+S
C/D TEST RESULTS						
ACCELERATION						
0-30 MPH	2.8 sec	3.1 sec	2.9 sec	3.2 sec	3.1 sec	3.2 sec
0-60 MPH	9.1 sec	8.6 sec	8.8 sec	9.3 sec	9.4 sec	9.0 sec
0-100 MPH	31.4 sec	23.8 sec	28.9 sec	30.1 sec	30.8 sec	27.3 sec
0-110 MPH	46.7 sec	30.8 sec	—	—	43.2 sec	38.4 sec
1/4-MILE @ MPH	16.9 sec @ 81	16.5 sec @ 86	17.0 sec @ 83	17.3 sec @ 82	17.3 sec @ 82	17.0 sec @ 84
ROLLING START,						
5-60 MPH	9.9 sec	9.5 sec	9.2 sec	9.8 sec	9.8 sec	9.4 sec
TOP GEAR, 30-50 MPH	4.8 sec	4.9 sec	4.3 sec	4.6 sec	4.8 sec	4.2 sec
TOP GEAR, 50-70 MPH	6.5 sec	5.7 sec	6.2 sec	6.5 sec	6.6 sec	6.0 sec
TOP SPEED	117 mph (gov ltd)	119 mph (gov ltd)	110 mph (gov ltd)	110 mph (gov ltd)	117 mph (redline ltd)	123 mph (drag ltd)
CHASSIS						
BRAKING, 70-0 MPH	174 feet	179 feet	180 feet	179 feet	181 feet	174 feet
ROADHOLDING,						
300-FT-DIA SKIDPAD	0.81 g*	0.77 g*	0.77 g	0.79 g	0.78 g*	0.75 g
610-FT SLALOM	40.3 mph*	39.1 mph*	39.4 mph	39.9 mph	40.8 mph*	39.2 mph
WEIGHT						
CURB	3716 pounds	3607 pounds	3421 pounds	3509 pounds	3486 pounds	3501 pounds
%FRONT/%REAR	56.5/43.5	56.5/43.5	58.2/41.8	57.3/42.7	56.5/43.5	57.5/42.5
CG HEIGHT	25.5 inches	25.5 inches	25.5 inches	26.0 inches	26.0 inches	26.0 inches
FUEL						
TANK	15.1 gallons	15.3 gallons	15.3 gallons	14.5 gallons	15.3 gallons	15.9 gallons
RATING	91 octane	87 octane	87 octane	87 octane	87 octane	87 octane
EPA CITY/HWY	22/30 mpg	22/30 mpg	21/28 mpg	21/28 mpg	25/31 mpg	21/27 mpg
C/D 200-MILE TRIP	21 mpg	24 mpg	22 mpg	21 mpg	26 mpg	22 mpg
PRACTICAL STOWAGE						
BEER CASES,						
SEATS UP/FOLDED	15/42	20/45	13/33	11/31	15/41	22/46
LENGTH OF PIPE	125.3 inches	128.0 inches	123.5 inches	125.5 inches	124.5 inches	130.5 inches
LARGEST FLAT PANEL,						
LENGTH X WIDTH	66.5 x 40.5 inches	62.8 x 38.8 inches	69.3 x 40.0 inches	68.8 x 39.5 inches	64.0 x 41.0 inches	64.0 x 41.0 inches
SOUND LEVEL						
IDLE	45 dBA	41 dBA	38 dBA	38 dBA	39 dBA	42 dBA
FULL THROTTLE	83 dBA	77 dBA	75 dBA	75 dBA	75 dBA	76 dBA
70-MPH CRUISE	71 dBA	70 dBA	72 dBA	70 dBA	70 dBA	71 dBA

* Stability-control-inhibited.

tested by K.C. COLWELL in Chelsea, Michigan

NEW CARS for 2013

6. HYUNDAI TUCSON LIMITED AWD

“Meh.” Those three lonely letters were scribbled on the last page of notes in the Tucson’s logbook, foreshadowing its last-place fate.

Little about the Tucson stood out. This, the least-expensive ute in the test, might have fared better if it had been loaded up with options like the Kia was.

We were split right down the middle when it came to comfort. Half of us found the seats supportive, while the remainder felt the front buckets were flat and unbearable on long hauls. But the Tucson’s back seat easily swallows two adults (three’s a stretch) with plenty of kneeroom, and feet slide comfortably under the front buckets. The HVAC and radio controls also are commendable, with legible buttons and a logical layout. Many test drivers noticed large blind spots—especially in the D-pillar areas—a trait the Hyundai shares with its Kia platform-mate despite the styling differences.

A 176-hp, 2.4-liter inline-four scoots the Tucson to 60 mph in 8.8 seconds, second to the CR-V, the only other contender to break into the eights. Transmission kickdowns occur on command, without delay.

Be wary if you live on a dirt road, though: Rough surfaces expose Tucson riders to a barrage of suspension and tire thwaps as the steering wheel bounces around in the driver’s hands.

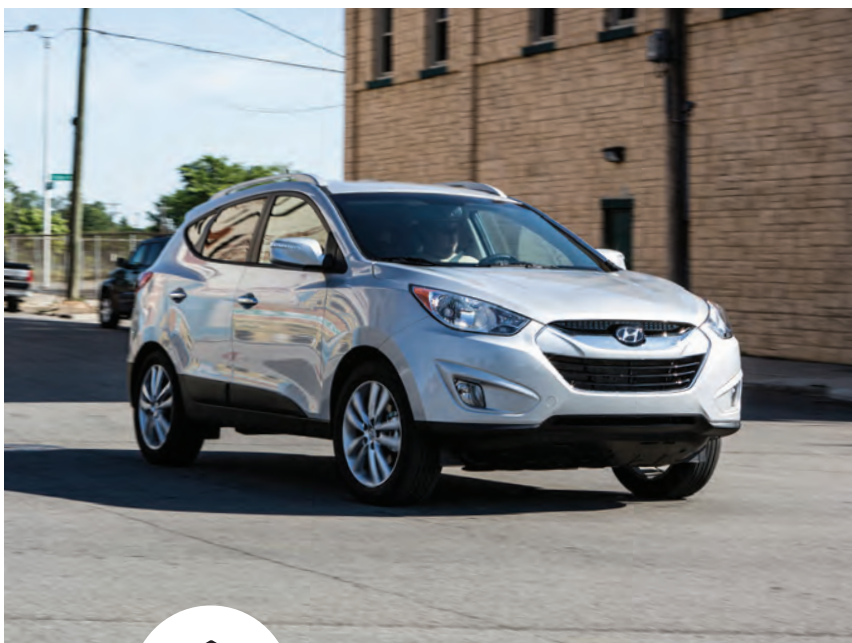
The old saying “You get what you pay for” applies here.

5. KIA SPORTAGE EX AWD

Hyundai and Kia have built quite a few cars from the same parts bins before, and the latest Tucson and Sportage certainly will not be the last. That noted, these little utes are proof that the companies develop their products separately.

Aside from the styling, chassis-tuning differences were most obvious to us. The Sportage rides more firmly and sometimes veers into areas of jiggliness, but it is somehow better at absorbing larger potholes with less head toss. Neither Korean communicates sufficient info to the steering wheel, though the Tucson is ever so slightly better. Despite the lack of feel, the Sportage held on to the skidpad for a second-best 0.79 g.

With a powertrain identical to the Tucson’s, the Sportage takes half a second longer to reach 60 mph. That gap shrinks to



Hyundai Tucson Limited AWD

- Clear interior layout, lowest price, pretty quick.
- Big blind spots, excessively loud suspension, small cargo hold.
- Cheap isn’t always bad. But it isn’t always good, either.

0.3 second at the quarter-mile line—a 17.3-second event for the Kia. The difference could be attributable to the Sportage’s extra 88 pounds (3509 total), most of which is found in its giant sunroof.

Both SUVs’ cargo holds are by far the smallest in this test, and like the Tucson’s, the Sportage’s back seat is best limited to two occupants.

Styling is, quite possibly, the most sub-

❏ THANKS IN PART TO ITS LOWEST-IN-TEST CURB WEIGHT, THE TUCSON POSTED THE SECOND-BEST 0-TO-60-MPH ACCELERATION. SO THAT’S GOOD.

jective element of our scoring, but we all agree that the Kia is the better-looking sibling, inside and out, though a few find the rear end “dumpy.” If the interior and exterior styling categories were removed from the tally, the Koreans would tie for last. Maybe these two are more similar than we thought.

4. TOYOTA RAV4 LIMITED 4X4

Despite some cosmetic surgery just last year, the RAV4 has a full redesign looming, though this 2012 model will remain in dealerships for the time being. The new edition will have a tough act to follow.

This 179-hp four-cylinder lacks the zest of its V-6 stablemate. Power flows through a four-speed automatic, short at least two cogs by today’s standards. But the 2.5-liter is torquey, with a peak 172 pound-feet at 4000



Toyota RAV4 Limited 4x4

- Great sightlines, cushy ride, cargo king.
- Dated interior, inaccurate and overboosted steering, side-hinged cargo door.
- Our favorite mini ute for the past six years. It's time to pass the torch.

ing yacht. The steering feels overboosted, inaccurate, and sometimes out of control.

As the only vehicle in this group that offers a third row (an \$850 option not on our test car) and stores its full-use spare tire (another “only” in the group) on its cargo door, we expected the RAV4’s luggage hold to swallow the most beer cases, and it just edged out the CR-V. But this is also the only

❑ THE SPORTAGE’S CLEAN, ORIGINAL STYLING CAN’T MAKE UP FOR ITS RUDE ENGINE, LIMITED CARGO SPACE, AND WORST-IN-TEST STEERING FEEL.



Kia Sportage EX AWD

- Great-looking face, surprisingly high grip levels.
- ❑ Unrefined engine, smallest boot.
- ❑ Beating your brother out for last earns some mild praise from parents but few others.

rpm. The result is respectable, midpack acceleration (0 to 60 mph in 9.0 seconds). Fuel economy doesn’t take a huge hit, either, as the RAV4 returned 22 mpg in our hands, 1 mpg better than the Escape and Sportage.

A low cowl and a high seating position provide the best forward sightlines in this group. The front seats are comfortable but not exemplary, and the aging interior took some hits for its relatively hard materials and general lack of panache.

The RAV4’s ride is another strong suit. It can’t compare with the CR-V in this regard, though it is clearly smoother than the bounding Koreans; also, suspension movements happen with far less noise.

That cushy ride exacts a toll in handling as the RAV4 rolls over in corners like a tack-



❑ ON THE EVE OF ITS REDESIGN, THE TOYOTA RAV4 FINALLY RELINQUISHES THE SEGMENT’S TOP SPOT. YES, IT STILL HAS THE SILLY SIDE-HINGED CARGO DOOR.

NEW CARS for 2013



❑ FORD NO LONGER BOTHERS EVEN TRYING TO MAKE THE ESCAPE LOOK LIKE AN SUV. THIS WORRIES US NOT AT ALL. ITS HIGHEST-IN-TEST PRICE DOES, THOUGH.

ute that has a side-hinged cargo door, which can frustrate curbside loading.

Since the RAV4's previous comparo wins, the competition has improved its game significantly. Without its V-6, the RAV4 seems stalled in the middle of the pack.

3. FORD ESCAPE SEL 4WD

Spec'd out in SEL trim, with an additional \$3185 in navigation, keyless start, white tri-coat paint, and other less crucial stuff, this \$33,630 Escape is the priciest vehicle in the test by a wide margin.

It also has the most features and gadgets—for example, with the keyless-entry fob in hand (or pocket), you can open the hatch by waving your foot under the rear bumper. Ford's Sync infotainment integration handles most of the driver's inputs, but there are a few redundant switches for some HVAC settings and basic radio controls. Sync's interface logic takes some getting used to. We're still acclimating.

This new Escape rides on a modified Focus platform. The chassis' abilities exceed the sense of confidence they give the driver; the Escape posted the best roadholding and stopping performance even while getting knocked for its steering and brake feel on the road. It was also the only ute other than the CX-5 to crack 40 mph in our slalom exercise.

Ford selected the Escape as the first North American recipient of a 1.6-liter turbo with EcoBoost. In this application, the inline-four makes 178 horsepower and 184 pound-feet of torque. While these outputs



Ford Escape SEL 4WD

- ❑ High-tech and -rent interior, a looker outside, capable chassis.
- ❑ Portly little guy, minimal chassis feedback, seats need more support.
- ❑ So close to greatness. Hold on a sec—it should be for \$33K!

are competitive, the Escape's 3716-pound curb weight is more than 100 pounds higher than anything else here. Thus, acceleration to 60 mph is just behind the group's average, and its quarter-mile time of 16.9 seconds is 0.4 behind the CR-V's.

Weight also factored in to the 21 mpg we recorded on our trip. This was the only vehicle in the test that dipped below its EPA city rating (22 mpg).

If the Escape were a little lighter, a little less expensive, and offered a little more feedback, it would challenge the winner for the title. Many littles add up to a lot.

2. HONDA CR-V EX-L AWD

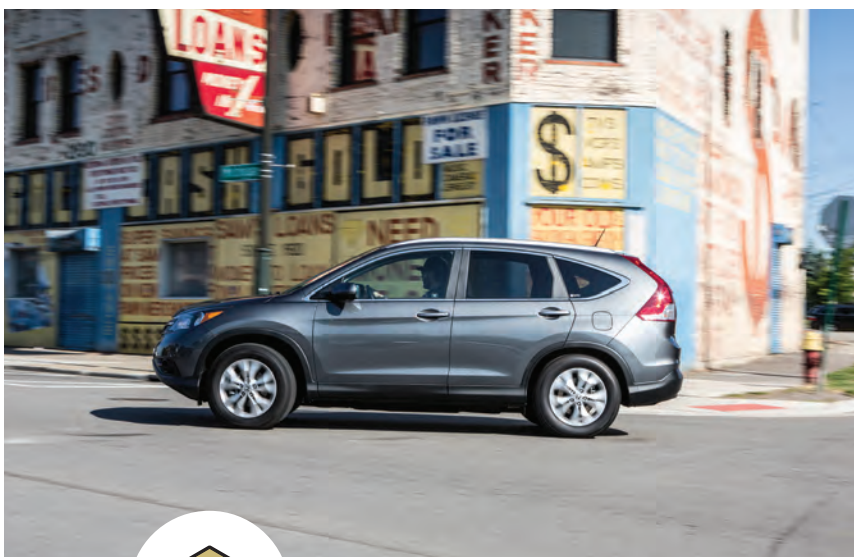
Calling the CR-V small just doesn't seem right. The RAV4 is larger, but the CR-V feels massive on the inside, even minivan-like. This is in part due to the Honda's low-slung center console that doesn't act as a DMZ for driver and passenger. The back seat is just as ample and best suited for three-abreast seating in this group.

A 2.4-liter inline-four is the only engine available. Hondaphiles looking for a V-6 in a small SUV are advised to seek out the Acura RDX. In our February 2010 comparison test of utes equipped with their makers' top engines, the CR-V was the weakest. Against these four-bangers, though, this 185-hp CR-V is the most powerful, yielding the quickest 0-to-60 and quarter-mile times.



Mazda CX-5 Grand Touring AWD

- ⊕ A gas sipper, crisp handling, comfortable cockpit.
- ⊖ Slowest of the group.
- ⊞ No one asked for a small SUV that handles like a car, but we'll take one and like it.



Honda CR-V EX-L AWD

- ⊕ Well-isolated interior, great seats, class-leading ride.
- ⊖ Soft responses, toaster-like looks.
- ⊞ A highway vessel built to coddle and cruise.

The CR-V was also praised for noise isolation and powertrain refinement, a Honda hallmark. This was the only engine we liked hearing spin above 5000 rpm. And it produced the second-best observed fuel economy, at 24 mpg, despite having only a five-speed in a world where six is the norm.

Driver comfort was tops in the test, with roomy easy chairs providing a Tempur-pedic-like combination of suppleness and support.

Over rough roads that caused the Hyundai and Kia to shudder and the Toyota to squirm, the Honda remained planted and

amply damped. Hustling the CR-V exposes its chassis weaknesses, though, with disconnected steering that doesn't inspire confidence. It was no surprise that it finished last in our slalom.

The CR-V scores high for its comfort, space, and speed. While two of those are key elements, we'd gladly trade some speed for better handling.

1. MAZDA CX-5 GRAND TOURING AWD

Mazda's new CX-5 replaces both the old Tribute and the CX-7 and is slightly smaller than the latter. Its cabin feels cozy and intimate, yet it'll hold nearly as much cargo as the Escape.

⊞ THE PAYOFF FOR THE CR-V'S MINIVAN-INTERIOR AMBIENCE IS THAT IT SEEMS PARTICULARLY ROOMY. THE HONDA REMAINS A SENSIBLE CHOICE.



NEW CARS for 2013

FINAL RESULTS

RANK	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Mazda CX-5 Grand Touring <i>Maximum points available</i>	Honda CR-V EX-L	Ford Escape SEL	Toyota RAV4 Limited	Kia Sportage EX	Hyundai Tucson Limited
VEHICLE						
DRIVER COMFORT	10	9	9	8	7	7
ERGONOMICS	10	9	9	8	7	8
REAR-SEAT COMFORT	5	5	5	4	4	4
REAR-SEAT SPACE*	5	5	5	4	5	4
CARGO SPACE*	5	4	5	4	5	1
TOWING CAPACITY*	5	5	4	5	4	3
FEATURES/AMENITIES*	10	8	7	10	7	10
FIT AND FINISH	10	8	8	7	8	8
INTERIOR STYLING	10	8	7	9	6	8
EXTERIOR STYLING	10	8	7	8	7	8
REBATES/EXTRAS*	5	0	0	0	1	0
AS-TESTED PRICE	20	18	18	15	19	18
SUBTOTAL	105	87	84	82	80	79
POWERTRAIN						
1/4-MILE ACCELERATION*	20	16	20	18	18	16
FLEXIBILITY*	5	4	3	3	4	4
FUEL ECONOMY*	10	10	8	5	6	6
ENGINE NVH	10	8	9	8	9	7
TRANSMISSION	10	9	7	8	7	8
SUBTOTAL	55	47	47	42	44	43
CHASSIS						
PERFORMANCE*	20	19	17	20	17	18
STEERING FEEL	10	9	7	7	6	6
BRAKE FEEL	10	9	8	8	6	6
HANDLING	10	9	7	9	6	7
RIDE	10	8	9	8	8	6
SUBTOTAL	60	54	48	52	43	42
EXPERIENCE						
FUN TO DRIVE	25	18	15	16	11	14
GRAND TOTAL	245	206	194	192	178	174

* These objective scores are calculated from the vehicle's dimensions, capacities, rebates and extras, and/or test results.



■ YES, THE CX-5 IS SLOW, BUT SO ARE ALL OF THESE TRUCKLETS. THEY'RE NOT ALL FUN TO DRIVE OR FUEL EFFICIENT. THE CX-5 IS BOTH.

Equipped with Mazda's Skyactiv technology suite, the \$30,515 CX-5 Grand Touring returned the best fuel economy—24 percent better than that of the Escape or Sportage—at 26 mpg. (Skyactiv is a range of engines and transmissions, as well as the platform that underpins the CX-5, aimed at pairing exceptional fuel economy with driving enjoyment.)

The heart of Skyactiv is a high-compression 2.0-liter inline-four that makes just 155 horsepower, the lowest in the test. Thus, the 3486-pound CX-5 takes the longest to reach 60 mph and ties the Kia for the slowest quarter-mile time: 17.3 seconds. But the engine is quick to respond, and the six-speed automatic shifts crisply and swiftly into the most efficient gear.

Obviously, the Mazda didn't win this test at the stopwatch. It won it with its compelling dynamics. All of our test drivers agreed that the CX-5 is a cut or two above the others in this regard. It's not just carlike, it's like a good car. Supportive leather seats keep you in place when directing the precise and well-weighted steering on a winding road. The brakes respond like a sports car's, with an initial bite that's always easy to modulate.

Fantastic dynamics come at the cost of a firm ride, though not so much that we considered it abusive, even versus the CR-V.

We said we weren't looking for the quickest, and we weren't kidding. But it turns out a really good car wearing a ute body makes for a great little SUV. 🇺🇸

