



Mercedes-Benz GLK350

ROAD-TEST SCORE
77

The compact GLK is for drivers who want an engaging, entertaining, full-featured SUV but don't need a lot of rear-seat room or cargo space. That might not seem like your typical SUV buyer, but the GLK is not your typical SUV.

With strong acceleration and agile handling, our GLK350 is thoroughly enjoyable to drive. For 2013, it received a new direct-injected 302-hp V6 that's mated to a smooth-shifting seven-speed automatic transmission. The pair powers the GLK to a 6.1-second 0-to-60-mph sprint that's as quick as a Porsche Boxster's. And plenty of pull is available at every speed.

In addition, the new V6 is a guilt-free pleasure because in addition to its brisk acceleration, fuel economy climbed to 21 mpg overall. That's 3 mpg better than the last GLK we tested, although it's slightly less than other top models in this class. Like most competitors, it needs premium fuel.

Helping its gas mileage is a relatively smooth start/stop system that automatically shuts off the engine when the vehicle is stopped and restarts it when it's time to go. For even better fuel mileage, you can opt for the GLK250 BlueTec model,



PACK LIGHTLY The rear cargo area is rather modest for an SUV, although the compartment is beautifully finished.

with a turbodiesel four-cylinder engine.

In corners, the GLK feels compact and light on its feet, with well-contained body roll. The steering is fairly quick and well weighted, although it doesn't give much feedback.

When pushed to its handling limits at our track, the GLK was secure and predictable, providing decent driver confidence while negotiating our avoidance maneuver.

Normally, the GLK rides well, but some uneven roads can cause quick side-to-side motions, especially at low speeds.

Inside, the cabin is very nicely finished, with the update imparting a luxurious, substantial look and feel. Occupants are treated to comfortable, supportive front seats, with plenty of room, and refreshingly good visibility. But we found it shocking that our \$45,000 GLK didn't have a backup camera.

Rear-seat passengers, on the other hand, will find very tight accommodations and difficult access. And the cargo area is rather modest for the class.

Overall, the controls aren't as complicated as in Audi and BMW models, but some take getting used to.

Reliability has been above average.

Best version to buy. We recommend getting the Premium 1 Package, which includes a nice panoramic sunroof, an MP3 interface, and a power liftgate. Skip the optional running boards because they just get in the way. We'd also pass on paying extra for leather upholstery because the standard MB-Tex upholstery is a great imitation. A backup camera is available only with the \$2,860 Multimedia package that includes a navigation system. Our car's stand-alone Becker navigation system didn't have one.

Tested vehicle

HIGHS	Acceleration, agility, visibility, front-seat comfort, fit and finish
LOWS	Tight rear seat, ride can be rocky, some controls, rear access
TRIM LINE	350 4Matic
DRIVETRAIN	302-hp, 3.5-liter V6 engine; seven-speed automatic transmission; all-wheel drive
MAJOR OPTIONS	19-inch wheels, Premium Package (seat memory and power lumbar, power liftgate, panorama sunroof, media interface, satellite radio), Becker Map Pilot navigation
TESTED PRICE	\$44,995

More test findings

BRAKING	Wet stops took longer than expected, and long pedal travel takes getting used to.
HEADLIGHTS	Standard halogen low beams don't shine far enough.
ACCESS	Good to the front; a narrow foot path restricts rear access.
VISIBILITY	Very good, although a backup camera is available only in a pricey option package.
CABIN STORAGE	Modest.
HEAD RESTRAINTS	Center-rear must be raised for adequate protection.
CHILD SEATS	Seat belts are too narrow to secure rear-facing seats in the center. LATCH anchors in the outboard seats are easy to access.



How they compare

Rec.	LUXURY COMPACT SUVs	0	100
		P	I F G V E
✓	BMW X3 xDrive28i (2.0T)	80	
✓	Acura RDX	79	
✓	Mercedes-Benz GLK350	77	
✓	Audi Q5 Premium Plus (2.0T)	77	
✓	Volvo XC60 T6	70	
	Cadillac SRX Luxury	62	