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Genesis G90 Road Test

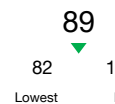
Just how serious is Hyundai at tackling the luxury market? Very. Not only have the Koreans created an entire Genesis sub-brand, they also built a world-class luxury sedan with the G90. Reconciling upscale luxury with the Hyundai brand's budget-minded origin is a tough sell to consumers. The solution is a separate brand, a-la Toyota's Lexus division. Unlike Hyundai's previous luxury sedan, the Equus, the G90 is a thoroughly capable and competitive luxury sedan that if you ignore brand cache, can challenge the world's best. It undercuts most ultra-luxury flagships by a good \$20,000, yet cedes very little to them.

Two different engines are available: a smooth and effortless 365-horsepower, 3.3-liter twin-turbocharged V6 and a 420-hp, 5.0-liter V8. We opted for the V6 which feels more powerful than the V8. Both engines use an eight-speed automatic, which shifts extremely smoothly. We also chose the all-wheel-drive option, which is available with either engine. This rectifies a shortcoming of the G90s predecessor, the Equus, which came only as a rear-wheel drive. As such, our G90 proved thirsty, and achieved 18 mpg overall -- which is not stellar, even for this class. In terms of dimensions and specs the G90 is positioned to go head to head with the BMW 7 Series, Lexus LS, and Mercedes-Benz S-Class, ultra-luxury sedans that hover around the \$100,000 mark. Price wise, however, at just over \$70,000, the G90 is positioned closer to high-end mid-sized luxury sedans like the Mercedes-Benz E-Class and BMW 5 Series. That cost savings might be a significant enough allure to some buyers that it compensates for the perceived lack of brand prestige.

ROAD TEST SCORE



3.3-liter V6 turbo, 8-speed Automatic



We found the G90 pampering and luxurious. Its powertrain is as smooth, punchy, and refined as any competitors' and the car is supremely quiet. While it falls short of the Mercedes-Benz S-Class's ultimate magic carpet ride, the G90 delivers a very comfortable, supple, and steady ride. Only very sharp ruts or ridges manage to creep in, but it's rare. Even though the G90 is a large and heavy car, it's responsive in the corners, but not sporty.

Competing against luxury heavy-hitters requires a decadent interior. Bathed in soft-touch materials and flanked with wood and chrome trim, the G90 checks all the required items including soft-closing doors. Hyundai clearly loaded the deck here, yet the overall effect somehow comes up short on wow factor, feeling more conventional than artistic. Don't look for snazzy stuff or silky-damped switches when you touch them -- features that the Germans use to further gild the lily.

Don't get us wrong, the G90 is plush and sumptuous. Thick and wide -- like a favorite armchair -- the driver's seat has standard 22-way power adjustments. However, as is typical for this class of cars, the backseat is really the place to be. Power massaging chairs and a bank of controls in the center armrest handle audio and climate settings as well as the side and rear sunshades. Audiophiles, take note: the Lexicon system in the G90 is one of the best we've experienced.

Unlike most elite brands, Hyundai boasts relatively user-friendly controls. There are plenty of familiar-looking buttons and knobs, plus a console-located controller knob to interface with the center screen. Unfortunately the monostable gear selector is unintuitive to use. The separate Park button is awkwardly placed and hidden from view, and reverse doesn't always engage on the first try. Fortunately, it will return to Park if you open a door with the car in Drive.

We like that the list of standard equipment includes all the advanced safety systems, including forward-collision warning with automatic braking and pedestrian detection, blind-spot monitoring and lane-keep assist. The G90 also has the ability to follow the road on its own for a few seconds. Rival luxury brands typically reserve these features as expensive added-cost options.

Despite our minor gripes, Hyundai is swinging for the fences with the G90 and proves that for the most part, it can run with the big boys.

The Driving Experience

Powertrain

The 3.3-liter V6 turbo is a delight. It pulls the G90 with authority and maintains a smooth, polished demeanor from low to high revs. With its abundant low-end torque and effortless demeanor, this engine feels more powerful than the larger 5.0-liter V8. It managed to sprint the G90 to 60 mph in 6 seconds. We registered 18 mpg overall with the optional all-wheel drive, which is not a standout even in this class but at least it takes regular. The BMW 750i and Audi A8 are more fuel efficient, thanks to lighter body construction.

The eight-speed automatic is as good as it gets, with shifts that are virtually imperceptible. Often, the only way to know the transmission has changed gear is to watch the tachometer needle move as the transmission does its job.

Handling

The G90 is a large car; because of this, one has to be aware of its flanks. That said, the G90 handles soundly with appropriate responses to the helm. Body lean is contained and the steering has a well-judged effort. Steering feedback is in short supply, however. The G90 is not sporty but it holds its own.

When pushed to its limits, the G90 was well behaved, posting 52 mph through our avoidance maneuver and instilling confidence. It felt balanced and benefitted from a nicely-tuned stability control to keep the big sedan on its course. Taking the G90 through its paces on the track proved that despite its large size and slightly clumsy handling, the Genesis remained secure and predictable.

Ride comfort

The G90 delivers a very pampering ride. Bumps are absorbed comfortably and the body remains steady and controlled. It's only when crossing a sharp-edged ditch or a ridge, particularly two of them in succession, that the suspension has some trouble coping. The result is a slight tremor, but it's rare. Otherwise, it's a smooth cruise. Sport mode tends to bring an underlying jitter that's not appropriate for the car. We think it's a frivolous setting.

Noise

The G90 provides a serene environment with hardly any road or wind noise. The engine has the slick, muted hum you would expect in a premium sedan. The double-layered, soundproof glass does its job well. In terms of noise insulation, the G90 compares favorably to other models in this class and is among the quietest cars we have tested. You have to spend much more money for a car that, in the end, is just incrementally quieter, such as the BMW 7 Series, Lexus LS, or Mercedes-Benz S Class.

Braking

The G90 performed very well with short stops on both dry and wet surfaces. The brake pedal had a very smooth action to it, making it very easy to modulate.

Headlights

High-intensity discharge (HID) headlights in our G90 3.3T do a good job of illuminating the road. A beneficial high-beam assist feature is standard and automatically switches between low and high beams when conditions allow, a convenience. Full LED headlights are standard on V8 models and, according to headlight ratings by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), are an improvement over the HID's due to their high-beam performance and less potential to cause glare for oncoming drivers.

Inside The Cabin

Interior fit and finish

The G90's cabin is stately and traditional. There's lots of wood and chrome trim, and plenty of soft-touch materials and detailed stitching. The soft-closing doors are a nice touch. The door and center armrests could use a little more padding, however, for an ultra-luxury car.

The seats are covered with supple leather, and feature contrasting piping, while the visors and headliner are covered in soft, padded suede. The glove box opens in a too-quick, barely-damped fashion, but it and the rest of the cabin cubbies are lined with felt. The cup holders have a grippy, rubber bottom, as well as anti-tip measures. Although the carpeting isn't anything to write home about, the floor mats are very plush.

Driving position

It's easy to get into a comfortable driving position in the big G90. The seat and power tilt/telescope steering wheel have ample adjustments. There's good elbow room and plenty of front headroom. The unpadded center console can rub against the driver's right knee at times.

Visibility

Front visibility is good, thanks to a big windshield and reasonably slim A-pillars. Tall front side windows and long rear side windows help with side visibility and over-the-shoulder glances, but the thick B-pillars are an obstruction and the high rear package shelf doesn't help.

There's a standard rearview camera to ease parking, as well as a very handy 360-degree-view overhead camera, along with a front side-view camera to help peek out both sides. Blind-spot monitoring and rear cross-traffic alert also come standard.

Seat comfort

The wide and substantial-looking front seats are fantastic, with soft cushions, good seatback side bolstering, and plenty of support. The driver's seat has adjustments galore (22 of them, in fact), including thigh, seatback side bolster, and even upper-back articulation. Some testers found themselves confusing the headrest adjustment lever with the seatback adjuster -- the seat controls consist of six different switches on the door panel.

The wide and supportive rear outboard seats are soft and extremely comfortable, comparable to those found in other top ultra-luxury cars. The seatbacks don't recline in the Premium model (you need the Ultimate for that feature), but are at a comfortable angle. There is plenty of legroom and headroom. The drop-down center armrest is nicely padded, but like the one up front, the door armrest could use a bit more padding under the leather. The center seat is narrow, board-hard, and not very useful.

Access

Large doors and an upright stance afford easy access to the cabin. When the G90 is shut off, the steering wheel powers up and out of the way. A wide foot path helps access to the rear cabin.

Gauges

Traditional analog dials are complemented by a seven-inch color display that can display audio and trip information. Making on-screen selections with the steering wheel buttons is fairly easy, but the system doesn't allow phone interaction via the steering wheel.

Included is a head-up display, which projects speed and other useful information on the windshield, minimizing the need to take your eyes off the road.

The 12.3-inch center screen can show a lot of information at once, allowing you to see, for example, both audio and navigation information. Since the screen is a far reach away, there's no need to use it as a touch screen. Instead, front-seat occupants can interface with the various choices by turning and pressing the center knob which takes some practice.

Controls

Like other high-end luxury cars, the G90 is packed with an abundance of features. Fortunately the controls are mostly driver friendly, especially compared to a Mercedes-Benz. Most controls are where you expect them to be, other than a few that are hidden by the left side of the steering wheel, including the electronic parking brake button; at least you never have to release it, it does so automatically.

We like the dedicated hard buttons for audio and climate controls, but the rows of similar-looking knobs and buttons can be confusing at a glance. There's a lot there to take in at once. Rear-seat guests also get their own controls for operating the audio and climate systems. The biggest frustration is the clumsy electronic shift lever. It pops back to its center position once a gear is selected. You push forward from Park into Reverse, but Reverse doesn't always engage on the first try. Park is selected by a small button located forward of the lever that is partially hidden from view and not easily reached by a thumb. Luckily, the car goes into Park if, at a standstill, you shut off the ignition or open the door with the car still in gear. Unfortunately, it's too easy to cancel the daytime running lights due to the headlight switch design.

Infotainment

High points

- Easy to use buttons and knobs
- 12.3-inch wide screen can show lots of information at once
- Many standard features including head-up display, and Qi wireless charging
- Sirius/XM data service shows weather, traffic, and nearest gas stations as well as latest gas prices

Low points

- Some on-screen menus are a bit overcomplicated
- Screen is prone to reflecting glare and showing smudges
- No Apple CarPlay or Android Auto compatibility (for now)
- No CD player

Navigation

The standard navigation system shows multiple route suggestions, and can actively reroute based on XM traffic data. It also supports Google Local search using Hyundai's Bluelink telematics system. Next turn information is duplicated on the head-up display.

Phone

Bluetooth hands-free phone and audio streaming comes standard.

Voice commands

Not class-leading, but adequate. You could use Siri Eyes Free or Google Local Search or the Bluelink onboard telematics instead.

Connectivity

A small cubby next to the shifter houses a USB port (for both data and charging), an AUX jack, and a Qi wireless charger. It is a tight fit for larger smartphones (5.5-inch and larger screens). But unlike other competitors, the system charges a phone without fully touching the surface. A second charge-only USB port is in the rear seat armrest.

The Bluelink telematics service is free for three years. It supports automatic crash notification, remote lock/unlocking, and vehicle tracking. It also connects to Amazon's Alexa for voice commands, allowing you to ask Alexa -- from inside your house -- to start the car remotely, condition the cabin to a specific interior temperature, and turn on the window defroster.

Climate features

The G90 comes loaded with just about every climate feature you can imagine as standard equipment, including four-zone automatic settings, front and rear. The front and rear seats are heated and the former cooled as well. Plus, the steering wheel comes with a two-stage heater (which is rare). Unfortunately, the dash vents are too low, and end up blowing air on your elbows.

Cabin storage

Options for front passengers looking for a place to stash a phone or other item are limited to a small covered bin in the center console and a second covered bin under the elbow rest between the seats. Even the map pockets in the doors are modest. Those lucky enough to ride in back get a fully loaded console between the seats, complete with a storage bin as well as climate and audio controls.

Cup holders

Front passengers get two cup holders near the shifter. Rear-seaters make due with two cup holders nestled into the fold-down center armrest. There are no built-in bottle holders in the doors.

Trunk area

A power trunk lid with hands-free opening are standard. The trunk can be opened using the key fob buttons or by walking up behind the car with the key in your possession. For the hands-free feature, you need be 1-3 feet behind the trunk. The carpeted trunk lid and cargo mat make for a nicely finished cargo hold, but the wheel housings intrude on space. The rear seatbacks do not fold, but a non-lockable pass-through allows long items to be carried. There is a valet switch in the lockable glove box that disables the touchpad and interior release, but the trunk is not securable due to the non-lockable pass through.

Spare tire

A compact spare tire is standard.

Safety

Crash-test results

The G90 is an IIHS Top Safety Pick Plus, thanks to good crash test results and standard crash avoidance features.

Crash-avoidance systems

Commendably, the G90 comes with a suite of standard active safety systems including forward-collision warning with automatic emergency braking, pedestrian detection, blind-spot warning, rear cross-traffic, and lane-keeping assist.

Forward-collision warning with automatic-emergency braking with pedestrian detection: This is designed to give three levels of warning with each its own audible and visual alert. In critical situations, the system will pre-charge the brakes to help the driver achieve the shortest stopping distance. If no action is taken, automatic emergency braking is activated. The pedestrian automatic detection system with braking works between 5 and 45 mph.

Lane-departure warning/lane-keeping assist: These systems work together at 40 mph and above. We find them most helpful on long highway trips. Active lane-keeping assist can keep the car in its lane of travel by moving the steering wheel accordingly.

Blind-spot warning: This system monitors a vehicle's flanks, indicating with a light in the side-view mirrors if a car is detected in an adjacent lane. An audible warning will sound if attempting to change lanes anyway. Rear cross-traffic warning: When in Reverse, sensors scan for vehicles approaching from either side and provide an audible and visual warning -- handy when backing out of a parking space.

Shifter

There are multiple safeguards to prevent the car from rolling away if the driver accidentally does not put the car into Park. The G90 automatically engages Park if, while at a standstill, the car is turned off or a door is opened with the car in Reverse or Drive. (If the engine is shut off with the car in Neutral, it stays in Neutral but shows a warning.)

Driving with kids

Forward-facing convertibles and some infant seats may be difficult to install in all seating positions. Outboard rear head restraints may need to be removed or raised for a booster seat to sit flush against the seatback. Three across child seats most likely will not fit.

Warranty


All cars come with basic warranty coverage, also known as a bumper-to-bumper warranty. This protects consumers against unexpected problems with non-wear items. Powertrain warranty protects against engine and transmission troubles. Rust through, or corrosion warranty, covers rust to non-damaged components.

Roadside aid provides on-location assistance in case of a breakdown and may include limited towing services.

Extended warranties provide peace of mind. Owners of models known to have worse-than-average predicted reliability can mitigate risks with an extended warranty. Generally, we recommend buying a model with better-than-average reliability and skipping this expensive add on. If you do buy an extended warranty, it is key to read the small print to understand what is covered and where you can bring the car for repairs.

Basic (years/miles)	5/60000
Powertrain (years/miles)	10/100000
Rust through (years/miles)	7/unlimited
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