

# Steve Says This Escalade Is The Biggest, Techiest, SUV Ever



In a crazy year like this one press junkets are on hold so new product launches come to me. And I've got 24 hours with this all-new, top-of-the-line Escalade Platinum Sport; the first complete redesign of Caddy's boldest SUV in 6 years.



GM's extra-large, body-on-frame SUVs have all recently undergone comprehensive transformations but this one is the headliner. It's America's aspirational SUV and has been for over 20 years.

I've driven all of them, but this 5<sup>th</sup> generation Escalade is by far the most ambitious evolution. Bigger, techier, and far more sophisticated, this is the Escalade at the pinnacle of success.



It's a 6-figure, ostentatious symbol of over-the-top American living where 16mpg matters not and supersized is a way of life. But this one also sweats the details with attention paid to even the minutest particulars.

Key upgrades include an independent rear suspension with air springs which both refines the Escalade's ride and handling and makes for a more useable 3<sup>rd</sup> row, dramatic increases in both passenger and cargo space and a new focus on boutique fashion with faceted quilting, steel speaker grilles and mind blowing visual displays.



The Escalade has always had big presence from the outside and now it finally has that same wow factor inside. And at the forefront of that is this massive, yet thin, organic led display blending GM's excellent electronics ease of use with new cutting edge features that create a lot of buzz. Plus, there is a 36-speaker AKG studio reference system that's powered by 3 amps setting a new bar for in-car audio.



For me, this is the feature that steals the show. AKG's first foray into automotive yields a sound system that's so immersive I can't stop listening. I'm hearing nuances in my music that I've never heard before. It is brilliant in every way and outdoes any B&O or Bowers & Wilkins system I've ever tested. Even if you're not in the market, go listen to one of these AKG setups and you'll be blown away.



As for the huge, super high res curved display, it's equally as impressive with touchscreen functionality from side to side and features such as Augmented Reality with navigation overlay, night vision, and this amazing 360 degree camera ratcheting up the wow factor to 10.



And much like the Honda Odyssey but better, there's an easy conversation feature which uses microphones and the speakers to facilitate talking amongst the front and rear seats and it even includes a button right on the steering wheel to activate it.

The seats include massage, there's a rear view camera mirror, wireless Apple CarPlay, and a very smart and modern rear seat entertainment system that allows for sharing content from screen to screen and for sending navigation suggestions to the driver...the kids will love this.



And how about a refrigerated center console that also has a freezer setting? Indeed, the Escalade has you covered. Unfortunately, none of the initial testers are equipped with updated Super Cruise; Cadillac's pioneering, lidar-based hands-free driving tech that actually is hands free as long as you're on specific highways. And now, it adds automatic lane change like Mercedes has offered for a number of years now.

What hasn't changed is the powertrain. There's still a 6.2-liter V8 and a 10-speed automatic with all-wheel drive but gas mileage has decreased and with a smaller tank the driving range drops from 442 miles to 384. It's rated at 420 horsepower and 460 pound-feet of torque or 600 newton-meters as this metric badge indicates.

A diesel option is also available. And one note about the 22' all-season tires...there is no winter fitment currently available nor is one expected.



I'm very impressed with this Escalade. It's everything you'd want a \$100k SUV to be. The truck-ish ride has been left in the past, replaced with a tighter, more sophisticated drive, the cabin is ridiculously quiet, the tech is off the charts and it's finally made better use of its size so now people in all 3 rows and their cargo have more spaciousness.



I've been driving it now for about 4 hours and so far I wouldn't change a thing.



The approach lighting from front to back is very cool and with the air suspension the Escalade can be raised or lowered to suit your needs. The liftgate can be opened by pressing the crest or by a kick of the foot and includes a separate button for the rear glass.

There are power folding 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> row seats and remember, if you need even more room, the ESV model adds 20 cubic feet of cargo room.



Exquisite craftsmanship, supple and precise drive...it's all here. Starting at about \$80,000 this 4WD Sport Platinum with options tallies \$110,565 or about \$1,200 per month on a 4 year lease.

Sales are just starting and with such an impactful first impression get ready to see lots of these on the road very soon. It'll no doubt be a big hit. **By TestDriveNow Auto Critic Steve Hammes for SouthFloridaReporter.com, Oct. 20, 2020**

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