

2009 Hyundai Genesis 4.6

A rear-drive V-8 with the Power of Tau

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DAMASCUS, Md. (MarketWatch) -- "Gee, it is real quiet in here," was my thought as I first tooled down the interstate in Genesis.

Simultaneously two other thoughts emerged. "How fast am I going," and "Oh boy!" The new Genesis is so swift and so refined that I no idea that I was well beyond the posted limit. Fortunately, those friendly folk with the radar guns were not around for what would have been a most embarrassing and costly experience. Drivers: set the cruise control!



2009 Hyundai Genesis.

The bottom line here is that for the first V-8 (known as Tau) and first rear-drive vehicle that Hyundai has produced, the Genesis is one heck of a car, with a couple asterisks that we will get to in a bit.

Under the hood was the 4.6-liter, 375-horsepower V-8, good for 333 lb-ft of torque at 4,500 RPM. Only when really pressed will the engine make its presence known, and then it is a good growl. Those not wanting a V-8 can opt for the 3.8-liter, 290-horsepower V-6 and save a few bucks without losing much in performance.

The V-8 is smooth out on the highway and is EPA rated at 17-25 miles per gallon. In city, country, and interstate travel, I got 22 mpg. For the best performance, Hyundai recommends premium fuel for the 8, and regular unleaded for the 6. The 8 will scoot the 4,012-pound sedan to 60 in under 6 seconds, aided by a responsive 6-speed automatic that can be manually shifted by moving the husky center console-mounted shifter to the right. In its literature on the Genesis, Hyundai calls it a sport sedan. Then it should have paddle shifts, something that is not available.

The suspension is another issue. For the large majority of those attracted to the Genesis, they will be happy with the ride. Those who enjoy driving will quickly find that Hyundai calibrated the suspension on the soft side, with too many up and down floating motions if you hustle along over less than very smooth roads. Dampening is the problem. You can bet your next candy bar on the fact that the upcoming Genesis coupe will have a stiffer suspension. Yet, given the soft suspension, the car hung in there better than expected on country roads, helped by very good grip from the 235/50R18 tires.

Inside, the Genesis was full luxury. Exposed stitching on the dash was a nice touch, with lots of soft surfaces. The instruments were easy to read and controls came readily to hand. Yet the seats, like the suspension, were on the soft side, and a bit of added firmness with more side support would make them more suitable for long days behind the tilt and telescoping wheel.

The center console also housed Hyundai's answer to the BMW i-drive, and it's much easier to learn. Buttons to the right of a large silver knob select what you want to listen to, while those on the right control the navigation system. The Lexicon audio system cranked out some good sounds and the total feel of the interior was one that was well upscale of the price. I loved the fact that on satellite radio, for instance, one could simply turn the knob one notch to channel surf. Things remained serene inside even with the sunroof open. Interior fit and finish were first class. Real adults, two of them, could fit quite comfortably in the back seat and the trunk will haul home a fair amount of stuff with 16 cubic feet at your disposal through a very low and wide opening.

With the \$4,000 technology package, our top-of-the-line Genesis sold for \$42,000, including \$750 for freight. That tech package included the upgraded audio system, navi system, a good rear backup camera, and front and rear sensors that triggered beeps when I parked the car. Fortunately, this system was easy to turn off. If that price is too much, Hyundai quotes \$33,000 for the base model with the 6-cylinder engine, and that includes a fair amount of standard equipment. I think if Hyundai were to firm up the suspension and the seats, this would be a perfect car. Even without that, fit, finish, a solid build, and good power were among the reasons why Genesis became the North American Car of the Year. In the words of that old Smith Barney TV pitchman, "They earned it."