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## 2010 Hyundai Tucson

### A new Tucson impresses

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What's bigger yet lighter, longer yet shorter, broader yet nimbler? It's the 2010 Hyundai Tucson. Read on and I promise to explain. The 2010 Hyundai Tucson will arrive with base prices from \$18,995 to \$28,695, a 5 year/60,000 mile basic warranty, a 10 year/100,000 mile powertrain warranty and EPA fuel economy estimates from 21 mpg city/28 mpg highway to 23 city/31 highway. Let's drive.

#### *First Glance*

The 2010 Tucson represents a major reworking of Hyundai's popular compact crossover vehicle, which debuted as a 2005 model and has been left substantially unmolested since then. Every aspect of Tucson has been redesigned, from interior to exterior, from chassis to powertrain.

Exterior design was handled by Hyundai's studios in Frankfurt. A new fascia and new [grille](#) give Tucson a face with a cute pursed mouth that reminds me of Bernadette Peters. Detailed bends dress the hood and lend interest. Big round wheel arches frame the wheels (17" steel hoops with plastic covers on the base GLS to [18" alloys](#) on the top-of-the-line Limited model). Sharp body creases outline the wheel wells, giving a muscular look. Limited models get a flat black rocker panel that has the effect of visually lifting the car off of the pavement, a very nice look. The [tailgate](#) lifts from the bottom, and has a fixed glass window (the previous generation's window flipped open). An integrated roof spoiler is standard on all trim levels, which Hyundai says helps reduce wind resistance and improve fuel economy. Other nice exterior touches include turn signals integrated into the [side view mirrors](#), an optional [panoramic sunroof](#) (a Hyundai first), and a steeply-raked windshield.

My complaint about Hyundai design has been that their vehicles tended to look like compilations of the competition's features, rather than complete organic designs. Tucson is a big step forward, a crossover with an integrated exterior design that works as a whole.

#### *In the Driver's Seat*



*Clean lines and a nice level of refinement.*

HMA's President/CEO, [John Krafcik](#), used to head the company's product planning department. Now that he's in charge of the whole shebang, he's executing his vision for a streamlined model lineup. Tucson is available in two trim levels, and with packaging options, there are just 10 buildable combinations, with 9 exterior colors and three interior colors available. As a result, it's more likely that a dealer will have (or be able to find) the Tucson of a customer's choice when it comes time to buy. Tucson continues the Hyundai tradition of very well equipped vehicles, even base models, which simplifies pricing and ordering. There's no such thing as a stripped-down Tucson. Base models come with air conditioning, power windows and door locks, a USB/iPod interface, satellite radio and an ECO indicator that leads drivers toward more efficient operation. Both trim levels can be ordered with flash memory-based navigation systems, Bluetooth audio streaming, automatic climate control and CleanAir ionization.

Hyundai claims that Tucson's interior has a premium feel, and to that I say almost. The design is nice, with good storage, clean lines and a simple, logical layout. Start touching things, though, and surfaces and textures are a bit less than delightful. Things do feel solid, though, and not painfully cheap. Just not premium.

A minor quibble: It's great to have an iPod/USB connector, but it's in an open cubby in the center stack, not in a place where your iPod would be protected or concealed when you left the vehicle.

## ***On the Road***

Tucson gets only one [engine](#) choice for 2010, a new 2.4 liter inline 4-cylinder with Continuously Variable Valve Timing, tuned to produce 176 hp and 168 lb-ft of torque. GLS models can be ordered with a 6-speed manual transmission or a 6-speed automatic; Limited models get the automatic only. Both trim levels come with front-wheel drive or optional all-wheel drive. Hyundai will not be offering a V6 for the Tucson this year. They've decided that the weight savings across the trim lines from not needing to beef up the subframe to handle a V6 is worth the tradeoff. Indeed, it leads to good performance. It's a little thrashier when you whip the I4 in high demand situations, but good sound insulation and well-managed vibration makes for reasonable levels of noise on full-acceleration.

Hyundai has also replaced the hydraulic power steering pump with an electric motor, which saves fuel by running only when you're turning. Pretty cool. Four-wheel independent suspension (MacPherson struts in front/multi-link rear) with rather taut settings help Tucson achieve a sportier feel than before, and that's a good thing. A tight 34.7' turning diameter makes for easy

maneuvering in parking lots and around hairpin curves, and stabilizer bars front and rear keep things on the level.

Standard safety features abound on Tucson, including 6 airbags, a new sensor that keeps the side-curtain airbags inflated in the event of a rollover, hill start assist, downhill brake control and electronic traction control.

## *Journey's End*



*The new Tucson has an integrated spoiler for improved fuel economy.*

Hyundai has done a very good job in a very tough economy, following the maxim "Never waste a good crisis." Their market share is up to 4% (from just over 3% a year ago), and their Assurance program has really made a splash. Tucson has always been a popular seller for the company, but rather than relying on the status quo, they've totally remade the little crossover. A nicely-equipped GLS model with factory-installed navigation would be my choice, keeping it simple while getting the features I need for around 25 grand.

If you're considering a Tucson, you owe it to yourself to drive the competition. The [Honda CR-V](#) and [Toyota RAV4](#) are the leaders. [Nissan's Rogue](#), [Subaru's Forester](#), [Ford's Escape](#), [Chevy's Equinox](#), [GMC's Terrain](#) and [Mazda's CX-7](#) each represent a different way to cut the cake. Your taste may vary.

It's nice to see such a substantial improvement from the original Tucson to the new one. Hyundai has definitely listened to the marketplace, and has learned how to move forward. I'm impressed, and I like the 2010 Hyundai Tucson more than I expected to as a result. It's worth driving if you're in the market for a compact crossover vehicle.