

Portland Observer Auto Review

News and reviews on new motor vehicles

2008 Ford Taurus X Limited AWD

The Urban Companion

BY KATHLEEN CARR

The Taurus name is back, and now it is used on two models, the Taurus sedan and the Taurus X crossover. The cars bearing the new name used to be the Five Hundred sedan and Freestyle. The Taurus name was resurrected to capitalize on the popularity of the brand that once was the best-selling car in America.

The exterior of the Taurus X picks up design cues from the Ford Edge, including the headlamps and distinctive Ford three-bar chrome grille that is becoming a Ford signature. The hood, fenders and front fascia are also new.

The crossover Taurus X has a sedan chassis, a tall body and seating for seven. The flat cargo floor makes it an ideal urban companion.

The Taurus X's chassis platform, shared with the Taurus sedan, is derived from the Volvo XC90. The body structure feels tight and solid, and it provides good handling and crashworthiness. Shared design is one benefit of Ford's ownership of Volvo.

A major upgrade for the Taurus X comes in the form of a 3.5-liter V-6 with 263 horsepower. That is nearly 30 percent more power than the Freestyle's engine provided, and the added oomph is certainly welcome. A six-speed automatic transmission replaces the CVT that was used on the Freestyle.

Taurus X's all-wheel-drive system, now similar to that of the Ford Edge, is new for 2008. It is less complex than the system it replaces, and it uses on-demand electro-mechanical center coupling to allocate a precise amount of torque from front to rear, up to 100 percent to either axle.



Specifications: 3.5-Liter, 263-hp @ 249 lb-ft. torque V-6 engine; 6-Speed automatic transmission, 17-City 24-Highway mpg; \$38,160. MSRP

The Taurus X has a 113-inch wheelbase that enables it to have three rows of seats. It is 10 inches longer, 2 inches wider and 4 inches lower than an Explorer, with roughly the same headroom and legroom. The space behind the third seat is actually greater than that in the Explorer.

The Taurus X is one of 12 new Ford, Lincoln and Mercury products to offer Ford SyncSync is a voice-activated, hands-free, in-car communications and entertainment system that was developed in collaboration with Microsoft. This system integrates mobile phones and media players into the vehicle using Bluetooth technology and USB connectivity.

The Taurus X can haul seven people or a load of cargo. Creating a flat load floor is a snap. The third-row seat is a clever design. The seatback folds down, and

then the whole seat pivots backward to make a load floor that aligns with the second-row seat. Even the front passenger seat can fold forward to accommodate something 9 feet long. The one drawback is that the cargo hold isn't very tall.

When the seats are upright, getting into the third row is easy because the second-row seat tips forward. Legroom in the third row is passable for adults and excellent for children. The third seat is available as a single bench or 50/50 split. The split-folding seat is the most useful configuration.

Inside, the Taurus X borrows from the Five Hundred sedan. Round air vents on the instrument panel, soft-touch paint finishes and leatherlike textures are all part of the package. The instrument panel has simple, chrome-trimmed gauges. Audio

and climate controls are large and easy to use.

Storage compartments are plentiful. A small lid atop the instrument panel is a great space to keep maps or other small items. Fingertip controls on the steering wheel are handy for operating the radio and cruise control.

Taurus X is rated the safest seven-passenger crossover in America after earning five-star ratings in all four categories of government crash tests and a 'Top Safety Pick' rating from the Insurance Institute of Highway Safety. Every 2008 Taurus X has standard anti-lock brakes and AdvanceTrac® electronic stability control, a feature nearly 70 percent of car shoppers are interested in, according to Ford customer research.

The AdvanceTrac® system can pre-

dict the vehicle's path using a sensor to detect and measure oversteer and yaw by monitoring the vehicle's speed, throttle position and steering wheel angle. When the system senses wheel slip or the loss of traction, it reduces engine torque and applies braking where needed to keep the car tracking safely on its intended path.

New reinforcements in the footwell area provide for better crash protection, while side impact protection is improved with pressurized crash sensors in the doors and redesigned interior door panels.

Available options include: Ford Sync; Eight-way power driver seat; Four-way power passenger seat; Leather seats; 18-inch chrome wheels; Heated seats; Power moonroof; Navigation system; Power liftgate; Reverse Sensing System; Universal garage door opener; Daytime running lights; and the following dealer-installed options: PowerCode™ remote start and TripTunes™.

Crossovers are part of the fastest-growing vehicle segment in the United States, outpacing even the remarkable growth SUVs achieved in the 1990s. CUVs surpassed traditional SUV sales for the first time last year and are expected to top 3 million sales annually by the decade's end.

Two distinct consumer trends have helped fuel the explosive growth of the CUV segment: car buyers seeking more spacious and flexible interiors along with the security of all-wheel drive, and traditional SUV buyers seeking more maneuverable and fuel-efficient vehicles that still make an active lifestyle possible.

The three-row Taurus X will complement the Ford lineup; demonstrating the company's commitment to crossover leadership. Not as fuel efficient as we would have hoped the Taurus X - by any name is accommodating, and remains one of the better people-movers available.

Oregon Health Plan to Open Rolls

continued ▲ from Metro

many Oregonians as possible with news about the reopening of OHP-Standard.

"We are inviting nearly 2,000 partners and providers to help us get the word out," he said. "We're working with education service districts, low-income health care clinics, county health departments, hospitals, tribal offices, legal aid organizations, faith organizations, advocates and oth-

ers. We want as many people to know about this opportunity as possible."

Among OHP-Standard's benefits are physician services, prescription drugs, chemical dependency and mental health services, emergency medical services, and limited dental, hospital and vision benefits. Most enrollees pay modest premiums.

Children and adolescents may receive coverage if they live in households with incomes

up to 185 percent of the federal poverty level even if adults in the household are ineligible.

Edge also noted that other Oregon Health Plan benefit packages continue to be open to new enrollees.

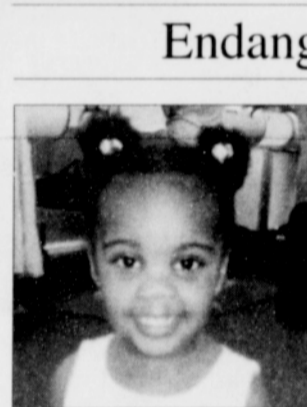
"I encourage people who do not have health care insurance to not only get their names on the OHP-Standard reservation list during February," he said, "but also to see whether they may qualify for other Oregon Health Plan coverage."

Have you seen me?

Missing and Exploited Children
1-800-THE-LOST



ANDREA BENITEZ-OJEDA
Current Age: 12
Date Missing: Dec. 21, 2007
Missing From: Wheaton, MD
Andrea was last seen wearing a red winter jacket and carrying a backpack; she likes to frequent the mall.



JEWELSTRONG
Current Age: 4
Date Missing: May 28, 2006
Missing From: Panama City Beach, FL
Jewel was last seen playing in the water at Panama City Beach; at the time she was wearing a floral two piece bathing suit with a pink bow. Local police believes she may have been lost at sea.

If you have any information please contact:
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