

Portland Observer Auto Review

2011 Cadillac Escalade ESV AWD Platinum

BY KATHLEEN CARR

The Escalade ESV is the stretched version of the Escalade and uses much of the same hardware as the Chevrolet Suburban. The Escalade ESV gets a full complement of luxury equipment, including leather seats, plenty of exterior chrome and optional 22-inch wheels. It's available with rear- or all-wheel drive. Cadillac now includes standard scheduled oil changes, tire rotations, replacement of engine and cabin air filters, and multipoint vehicle inspection for four years or 50,000 miles.

The Escalade ESV is 21 inches longer than a standard Escalade, seats up to eight and is able to haul up to 137 cubic feet of cargo with the second-row seats folded and the third row removed. The ESV offers the same basic layout and features as its shorter model, but adds more luggage room behind the rear seats and the option of a third-row flip-down DVD entertainment screen. The top-of-the-line Platinum Edition brings it all with exclusive 22-inch wheels, LED headlamps, upgraded full leather trim, unique wood and aluminum accents, heated and cooled cupholders and DVD screens for second-row passengers. A second-row 60/40-split bench seat (eight-passenger seating) is available on all models except the Platinum Edition, it has second row buck seats. Third-row occupants benefit from increased legroom, and cargo capacity behind them nearly triples. The liftgate opens and closes by pushbutton as a hatch or glass-only for lighter items, a convenient feature. The pull-type door handles are easy to grasp, particularly appreciable in cold

climates when wearing gloves. This type of door handle is more comfortable, less likely to snap away from your fingers and less likely to break fingernail than the more stylish, more aerodynamic kind.

Cadillac Escalade delivers responsive acceleration at all speeds due to its big 403-hp V8. Its handling inspires confidence, especially with the active Magnetic Ride Control suspension. The Magnetic Ride Control Suspension helps while driving over rough roads absorbing the impact of the driving terrain. Magnetic Ride Control uses a variety of sensors to measure road surface and vehicle parameters 1,000 times per second and adjust the shock damping accordingly.

That adjustment is done magnetically, changing the thickness of the shock fluid (that's filled with tiny magnetic particles) for maximum control of the shock. This system has been used advantageously on expensive imports and the Corvette for a few years, and is often paired on the Escalade with the 22-inch wheels. A relatively tight 39-foot turning circle helps with overall drivability, but maneuvering in tight quarters can be a hassle even with the aid of the standard rearview camera. The towing capacity is 7,600 (RWD) or 7,800 pounds (AWD) when properly equipped.

The Cadillac ESV is a large, luxurious SUV that delivers performance and style. Classy and powerful, it looks great for a night on the town or can haul everything. Cadillac has opened a new door for those who want luxury and capabilities in a Luxury SUV.



Tested Vehicle Information: Vortec 6.2L V8 SFI, 403 HP with Flex-Fuel Capability and Active Fuel Management; 6-Speed Heavy Duty Automatic; 13 City MPG, 18 Highway MPG; MSRP \$87,345, Tested MSRP \$88,295.

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