

## 2007 ACURA MDX ELITE



This year's redesign of the MDX brings in a new engine, more supportive seats, a new all-wheel drive system, and more. The vehicle gains several centimetres in wheelbase, length and width but is lower than before. The second-generation MDX puts more emphasis on the "sport" in its sport-utility designation.

### **Interior and cargo**

The front seats are easily accessible and extremely comfortable, with very good side bolsters running right to the top of the backrest to hold occupants snugly in place. The driving position is good but would be better with more room for the left leg, and the footrest is too flat. Headroom is good, even with a sunroof.

The second-row bench seats two very comfortably. The middle of the seat can take a passenger in a pinch, but it doesn't have a head restraint. The 60/40 split backrest reclines to several different angles. When the backrest is folded forward, there is a space between it and the front seats, and the floor that is formed slopes up slightly towards the front. Access to the third-row bench is from the right, and it is difficult. This seat is intended only for very small people. It folds flat to the floor.

With the last bench seat in place, cargo space is practically non-existent. Things improve, of course, when the seat is folded and get very interesting when both benches are folded down. The sill to the cargo area is high, and the tailgate does not quite clear the head of a tall person.

## **Convenience and safety**

Interior fit and finish are excellent and materials are of very good quality. Soundproofing is adequate, much better than before, but road noise still intrudes from time to time. There are good storage spaces, including a roomy centre console.

Instruments and controls are well laid out. Everything is lighted at night. It is disappointing in a vehicle in this price range to have a rear wiper with only an intermittent cycle; it should have a continuous cycle, too.

The heating system is efficient, but to obtain the heat that other systems provide at 20°C, it has to be set at 23°C.

Safety-wise, the MDX comes with two front, two side and two side curtain airbags; two active front head restraints; four-wheel ABS disc brakes; stability control; and the SH-AWD (Super Handling All-Wheel Drive) system. The head restraints on the second-row bench do not adjust high enough for tall people. The Xenon headlights have good intensity and light a deep, wide path. The headlight washers are below average. Three-quarter rear and rear visibility is a problem when backing up, but otherwise the view is good.

In U.S. government tests, the MDX obtained five out of five stars for front-occupant protection in a front crash and in a side impact. It earned four stars for rollover resistance. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety awarded the MDX a Good rating, its best, for driver protection in an offset front crash. Its performance in a rear crash earned it a Marginal rating, the second worst.

## **Engine and transmission**

The 3.7-litre V6 churns out 300 hp and 275 lb-ft of torque. Acceleration and pickup are relatively lively, but the 2,000 kg-plus weight makes itself felt, especially at launch. Fortunately, the very progressive accelerator makes it easy to modulate acceleration. The engine runs smoothly, climbing eagerly through the gears with a pleasing sonority. It meets strict Tier 2 Bin 5 emissions standards.

The five-speed automatic transmission is well geared and always shifts very smoothly. It lets the vehicle start off in second. The manual mode is quite quick. There is not enough resistance to the shifter, and it is easy to shift past D to D3.

The SH-AWD system is flexible in the way it handles torque distribution between the front and rear wheels. At highway speed, distribution is 90/10, front to rear. In acceleration and in a corner, it is 50/50. In a turn where lateral acceleration is below 0.6 g, the system channels 100% of torque available for the rear axle, or 50% of all torque, to the outside wheel to ease cornering. If lateral acceleration is higher than 0.6 g, 20% of torque goes to the inside wheel and 80% to the outside wheel. It may seem complicated, but it works, and you can feel the vehicle pivot effortlessly as you wing it through a fast turn.

## **On the road**

In general, the ride is firmly comfortable. The Elite version has an active damper system that changes the viscosity of the shock-absorber fluid very quickly. In Comfort mode, the suspension is more compliant and shock absorber dampening does not change. In Adaptable mode, there can be firm and even very firm reactions that not everyone will appreciate. Road holding is a pleasant surprise for the type and size of vehicle. The MDX is stable and predictable, and it has a tenacious grip in corners. Honda even took the MDX to Germany's celebrated Nürburgring racetrack to fine-tune the suspension, and it shows.

Unfortunately, the power steering is heavy, particularly at low speed. On the plus side, it is steady, precise and quick. It sends back little in the way of road feel. The turning circle is short. The four-wheel disc brakes are powerful and resist well to fade.

In an inspection at a CAA-Quebec technical inspection centre, we found that the engine oil and transmission fluid dipsticks were hard to access. The washer fluid level cannot be checked. The underside of the vehicle is sturdy, but anti-rust protection is skimpy and several joints are not sealed. There is a big opening under the front bumper through which debris could enter and damage the power-steering cooler and the air-conditioner condenser. The camshafts are belt driven.

## **Conclusion**

Compared to its former self, the new MDX is more comfortable, more balanced and more fun to drive. It succeeds in allying undeniable utility and a more sporty compartment. And Honda is finally beginning to pay more attention to soundproofing. With its sharper handling, the MDX is more like a performance wagon than an off-roader.

**PROS:** comfort, quality of assemblage, well-adapted engine, efficient SH-AWD drive system, road comportment, smooth transmission

**CONS:** heavy steering, real room for four only, resistance lacking for shifter, improvable headlight washers, three-quarter rear and rear visibility when backing up, lack of room for driver's left leg

## **ACURA MDX 2007**

**Engine:** 24-valve, 3.7-litre, V6

**Horsepower:** 300 hp at 6,000 rpm

**Torque:** 275 lb-ft at 5,000 rpm

**Transmission:** 5-speed automatic

**Suspension:** fully independent

**Brakes:** disc/disc

**Wheelbase:** 275 cm

**Length:** 484.4 cm

**Width:** 199.4 cm (223.8 with mirrors)

**Height:** 173.3 to 175.3 cm

**Weight:** 2,064 to 2,093 kg

**Tires:** P255/55R18

**Maximum towing capacity:** 2,268 kg

**Airbags:** dual front, plus two side and two curtain airbags

### **Fuel consumption**

Transport Canada rating:

City 13.8 L/100 km (20 mpg)

Highway 10 L/100 km (28 mpg)

Test result: 15 L/100 km (19 mpg)

Test temperature: - 12<sup>0</sup>C to 3<sup>0</sup>C

**Fuel tank capacity:** 79.5 litres

**Fuel requirement:** premium grade gasoline

### **Acceleration**

0–100 km/h: 7.9 seconds

60–100 km/h: 5.1 seconds

**Competition:** BMW X5, Cadillac SRX, Infiniti FX, Jeep Commander, Land Rover LR3, Lexus RX350, Mercedes ML, Saab 9-7X, Volkswagen Touareg, Volvo XC90

**Warranty:**

- Full basic coverage: 4 years/80,000 km
- Major components: 5 years/100,000 km
- Surface corrosion: 4 years/80,000 km
- Perforation damage: 5 years/unlimited km
- Emissions control system: 4 years/80,000 km (full coverage); 8 years/130,000 km (catalytic converter, electronic control module, onboard diagnostic system).

**Factory replacement parts:**

- Rear bumper: \$549
- Front brake disc: \$126
- Brake pads: \$77
- Muffler: \$647
- Front fender: \$277

**Average insurance premium** (Quebec City, replacement cost endorsement, claim-free insurance record, male or female driver 30 to 40 years old): \$904 to \$1,501

**Price according to trim level:** \$52,300

**Main options:**

- Technology package: \$4,600
- Elite package: \$9,600

**Price as tested:** \$61,900

**Freight and preparation:** \$1,430

**Dealers:** Quebec: 11          Canada: 41

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