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Minivan Shootout: How it was done

► **Shootout.** USA TODAY, Cars.com and MotorWeek TV tested six full-size minivans in the Ultimate Minivan Shootout — “ultimate” because automakers were invited to provide vans up to \$45,000 (before shipping), well beyond the average minivan selling price of about \$33,000. All had Bluetooth,¹ power sliding doors, power liftgate, rear entertainment system, V-6 engine, backup camera. Key additional features are noted in the accompanying articles. Testing was done over three days in and around Atlanta.

► **Judges.** Vehicles were rated by expert testers and a family. Experts: USA TODAY's James R. Healey, Cars.com writers David Thomas, Kristin Varela and Jennifer Newman, MotorWeek TV's Brian Robinson. Family: Travis and Heather Weatherby of suburban Atlanta and their three children.

► **Scoring.** Each was scored on: First impression, comfort and cargo space, fit of child safety seats, family-oriented features, kids' impressions. Also: Handling, visibility, ride, acceleration, braking. Experts' totals: 65% of the final score; family's, 25%; real-world fuel economy, 10%. (Best test mileage got 100 points; others, a percentage of that.) Final scores ranged from 715.15 to 854.55

of a possible 1,000.

► **Tests.** One-day highway gas mileage drive of roughly 175 miles, rotating drivers. One day of features comparisons and driving by experts. One family day: The Weatherbys compared features and cargo space and drove each van.

► **Results.** Articles on this page tell the tale.

Vehicle	Experts' score (65%)	Family score (25%)	MPG score (10%)	Total score (out of 1,000)
Honda Odyssey Touring Elite²	524.6	230.0	100	854.6
Chrysler Town & Country Limited	517.4	215.0	90	822.4
Nissan Quest SL	483.6	202.5	83	769.1
Volkswagen Routan SE	455.0	205.0	97	757.0
Dodge Grand Caravan Crew	451.1	182.5	88	721.6
Toyota Sienna XLE	442.7	187.5	85	715.2

No.1 2011 Honda Odyssey Touring Elite

Shootout score: 854.6 points

Price as tested:³ \$43,525 (most expensive)

Mileage rating:⁴ 19/28 mpg; 22 mpg combined (best rating)

Mileage in shootout highway test: 25.9 mpg (first place)

Pros: “It doesn't look like such a Mommy car,” Heather said. “The outboard seats in the second row are the comfiest seats in the shootout, and the expandable second row seats three car seats,” Newman noted. “By far the best handling of the bunch!” Rob-

inson enthused. “This face-off proved . . . just how good the Odyssey is,” Thomas wrapped up. “It does everything very well.”

Cons: That look. It's angular, it's different and our reviewers loved it or hated it. “Crossover-like styling fools no one,” Robinson said. “Looks atrocious . . . distressingly ugly in profile,” Healey said. The Weatherbys and Thomas were happy with the looks, though. For Newman, “A lot of road noise crept into the cabin.” And, she noticed, “the Odyssey has floppy seat belt buckles, which are a major annoyance to older kids in

booster seats.” Finally, Varela pointed out, “For more than \$43,000, I demand power folding third-row seats. I'm also surprised at this price point that the Odyssey doesn't have push-button start.”

Overall: The combination of ride, features and handling made this one the winner for our experts and our family. Our family might have been a little biased toward the Odyssey because the Weatherbys previously owned one. Odyssey was the highest-priced and scored first, but that wasn't a theme. Sienna, the second most expensive van, came in last.

Key additional features:

- 16.2-inch video screen in 2nd row; HDMI⁵ input
- Navigation
- Only competitor with seats for eight
- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration five-star overall safety score (2011 methodology)⁶
- Second row has adjustable seat width to allow three child seats, removable center seat
- Leather seating
- 115-volt house-style power outlet
- Blind spot monitoring system
- Backup radar



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