

Cars.comparison: Living Large — Full-Size Sedans

By [Mike Hanley](#), [David Thomas](#) and [Joe Wiesenfelder](#)

Full-size sedans don't usually grab the kind of attention their smaller brethren do, but there's been quite a bit of talk about the segment lately thanks to the introduction of the Hyundai Genesis and Lincoln MKS. Both models are critical to their respective brands, and here they take on a performance-oriented version of the Buick Lucerne to see which wins large-car bragging rights.

✔ = Category winner

The Contenders

[2008 Buick Lucerne Super](#)



[Zoom](#)

[2009 Hyundai Genesis 4.6](#)



[Zoom](#)

[2009 Lincoln MKS AWD](#)



[Zoom](#)

Base MSRP

\$38,980

\$37,250

\$39,555

Price as tested

\$42,780

\$42,000

\$46,070

Country-club cred

Par: Buick's probably the most invested of these three in golf — it sponsors Tiger Woods, after all — but while the Lucerne might hold appeal for older folks heading to the club for a hand or two of gin rummy, it's not going to interest the youngest members.

Birdie: While the Hyundai brand probably gets as much respect as a knock-off Big Bertha driver, the Genesis is the automaker's best shot to change that perception, with its well-proportioned Lexus-like looks.

✔ **Eagle:** Like the guy who won't back down from a tough tee shot over water, the MKS has an aggressiveness to it, thanks mostly to its toothy chrome grille. Overall, it's an elegantly styled sedan that will look at home in the members-only parking lot.

Ride comfort

The Lucerne cruises comfortably, but its suspension is more taut than you might expect from a Buick. Rough pavement can be jarring, and large bumps produce boat-like body motions — though many shoppers may expect that from a car in this class.

✔ The Genesis' firm suspension is more like what you'd find in a small sport sedan. The sedan rides comfortably, but the suspension also transmits road imperfections to the cabin. Though their results are inconsistent, the Lucerne and MKS' suspensions are tuned mainly for comfort.

Here, as in the Buick, the ride is firmer than you might expect and not as comfortable as you'd like. There is noticeable road noise, which was augmented by the optional 19-inch tires on our test car. Many automakers will tweak a new model's suspension the following model year if necessary, and we hope Lincoln can make the MKS more comfortable without giving anything up in the handling department.

Handling

The Lucerne Super's standard Magnetic Ride Control keeps body roll in check, but it doesn't lend enough sportiness to excuse its jarring ride in some

✔ Despite its large size, the rear-wheel-drive Genesis' balanced chassis and limited body roll let you drive it like a sports car, which helps justify its firmer ride.

Body roll when cornering is well-checked in the MKS, but a quick turn can produce floaty boat-like sensations as the large chassis adjusts. Here again, the taut ride

conditions. Its front-wheel-drive layout can't compete with the Genesis' rear-wheel-drive architecture.

probably isn't worth the resulting handling.

Acceleration

The Super's V-8 works well with a smooth-shifting four-speed automatic, but its 292 horsepower comes mostly at higher engine speeds. For a V-8, it has relatively modest output. A pronounced exhaust rumble emerges when you hit the gas.

✔ The Genesis' 375-hp, 4.6-liter V-8 will propel the sedan forward like an unstoppable force of nature if you let it. It doesn't hurt that the six-speed automatic it teams with is a good one, delivering quick kickdowns when needed.

The 3.7-liter V-6 — currently the only engine offered — is reasonably powerful, but the six-speed automatic is fussy and sometimes slow to downshift. The manual shift function is clunky to operate and doesn't provide any added driving thrill, either.

Thirst (city/highway, mpg)

15/22

The automatic transmission's low gear count doesn't help the Lucerne's gas mileage, which is the lowest of the three.

✔ 17/25

Power and fuel efficiency coexist happily in the Genesis, which gets the best gas mileage of the trio while also producing the most horsepower.

16/23

If you don't need all-wheel drive, choosing the front-wheel-drive MKS brings better estimated gas mileage of 17/24 mpg.

Seat comfort



[Play](#)

[Video](#)

The cushy leather- and suede-covered front bucket seats are heated and cooled, but their support is only so-so, and the power height adjustment doesn't allow the seat to go very high off the floor. The rear bench seat's cushioning is too soft.



[Play](#)

[Video](#)

Standard heated leather bucket seats give the driver and front passenger good high support and are finished in a higher grade of leather than the V-6-powered Genesis 3.8's seats. A cooled driver's seat is optional. Backseat comfort is equally good.



[Play](#)

[Video](#)

✔ Whether you're sitting in the front or back, the MKS has soft, comfortable seats that offer terrific support on long drives. The front ones also have standard heating and cooling functions.

Roominess

The Lucerne's 108-cubic-foot passenger cabin is slightly smaller than the Genesis'. There's plenty of room in front, but the mushy cushions in back diminish overall comfort even though legroom back there is good.

✔ With 109.4 cubic feet of passenger volume, the Genesis offers the most space. It feels like it, too; there's plenty of room in front, and the spacious backseat treats passengers well.

The MKS' 105.8-cubic-foot passenger compartment is slightly smaller than the Lucerne's, and you feel it up front, especially in the knee area. In back, there's plenty of legroom despite its numbers, but headroom is sacrificed when you opt for the dual-panel moonroof.

Luxury doodads

Though the Lucerne's optional navigation system is a touch-screen, which we typically prefer, it's showing its age in terms of inadequate street labeling and quirky operation. There's also no backup camera, though rear parking sensors are included. An

Hyundai follows luxury brands like BMW and Audi in introducing a navigation and entertainment system that's controlled by a knob in the center console. Part of the Technology Package, the system is reasonably intuitive, and the dash screen's graphics are

✔ Standard features such as the heated and cooled seats and options like the dual-panel moonroof take things up a notch in the luxury department. The optional voice-activated entertainment/navigation system is remarkably well-done. It's one of the best in

MP3 player input and cooled seats are two contemporary features.

impressive. Additional package features include a Lexicon audio system and a backup camera.

the market — in any class — because of its simplicity, crystal-clear touch-screen and useful features, like real-time gas prices.

Trunk room

Measuring 17 cubic feet, the Lucerne's trunk almost splits the difference between those in the Genesis and MKS. A pass-thru to the passenger compartment is standard.

The Genesis' 15.9-cubic-foot trunk is small compared to the Lucerne's and MKS', but like those two it has a standard pass-thru. .

✔ The MKS' 18.7-cubic-foot trunk soundly beats the Lucerne's and Genesis' in terms of overall size, and like those models it has a pass-thru for carrying long items inside the car.

Overall value

Because it's based on a Cadillac, the V-6-powered Lucerne CX looks like a bargain, but this Super trim level demands a lot more pay for not enough play, even when compared to the middle, CXL trim level with its optional V-8.

✔ No matter how you measure value — lots of features for the money, low operating costs or just a low price — Hyundai comes through by giving the Genesis plenty of standard features, a long warranty, best-in-test gas mileage and the lowest as-tested price.

Choosing the front-wheel-drive MKS lowers the base price to \$37,665, which makes it more competitive with the Genesis. Expensive options like the navigation system are almost a must, though, so the out-the-door price quickly ratchets upward. Still, the all-wheel-drive MKS comes in thousands of dollars less than its platform mate, Volvo's S80.

Editors' choice

A satisfying drivetrain is a Lucerne plus, but it comes with gas mileage that's hard to swallow. The Genesis and MKS make the Lucerne's lower-grade interior and relatively bland looks more apparent.

✔ The Genesis is an impressive car however you look at it. It offers the best engine, a comfortable ride, spacious accommodations and luxurious amenities. To do so with the lowest price in the Faceoff makes the feat that much more remarkable.

Lincoln has a winner in terms of looks outside and comfort inside, along with a slick multimedia system. Still, that's not enough to triumph over the Genesis, which is a better car overall.

Posted on 9/2/08