

Mercedes muscle

BY JOE SAGE

Going back a few years, to a time when the Mercedes-Benz utility lineup comprised mostly different vehicles, all with different names (for instance, the old GLK is now the GLC, and the old M-Class is now the GLE), there was the GL, which despite adding an S to its name, is essentially the same vehicle today. (GLC, GLE and GLS now follow suit to the C, E and S-Class cars: compact, executive and full-size). And it has long been one of our favorites—in the lineup, and in the marketplace.

We seem to have a sweet spot for three-row SUVs, even if we don't really need one—perhaps from all our years driving full-size pickups, perhaps because they offer such nice proportions, stance, ground clearance and capacity. Add the layer of interior style, comfort and creature features found in a German luxury model, especially the biggest in the series (not counting the world-of-its-own G-Series), and what else could you need?

How about the AMG treatment? Pop in an AMG handcrafted 5.5-liter aluminum-alloy turbocharged V8 pumping out 577 horsepower, add AMG Performance magic to the 4MATIC all-wheel-drive powertrain and to the 7G-Tronic transmission, upgrade the steering and brakes, add some brand satisfaction with subtle style and badging inside and out—and here's your ride.

It's a pricey beast, yes, at \$126,150. But think of its spot between, say, the \$87,000 707-hp Jeep Grand Cherokee Trackhawk and the \$200,000 650-hp Lamborghini Urus elsewhere in this issue, and you can see it falls just where you would expect it to. The options on ours are comprehensive, desirable and far more favorably priced than some such brands were charging ten years ago. Priciest is the B&O BeoSound 14-speaker 1200-watt audio system at \$4550, but that's a must—and who could resist heated and cooled cupholders, a too-cool item that will impress everybody every time, including yourself, especially in an Arizona summer.

Despite its rubber-to-the-road performance credentials, the AMG GLS bears decent ground clearance specs—if not for bouldering, certainly for accessing remote activities down sandy desert roads. And for \$575, we'd have added a Class IV trailer hitch, to take full advantage of the GLS 63's 7500-pound tow capacity (in addition to the 1565-pound payload in its almost 100-cu.ft cargo space).

Another potentially easy option is the rear seat entertainment system (\$1950), but if you're just hedging your bets, have a family coming later, just want it for resale, or want to save money today to deal with it later, you can get a prewiring option for this for just \$170, another slam-dunk.

Want one more option? Our striking Polar White GLS 63 with black highlights has silver calipers for its sizable disc brakes, but if you want to amp up the sporty factor—which would look especially sharp in this color combination, you can get a set

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE ...	handcrafted AMG 5.5L 32v alum-alloy V8 turbo
DRIVETRAIN	AMG Performance 4MATIC AWD
HP/TORQUE	577 hp / 561 lb-ft
TRANS	AMG SpeedShift Plus 7G-Tronic 7-spd auto
0-TO-60 / TOP SPEED	4.5 sec / 168 mph (electr lim)
SUSPENSION	F: indep multi-link w air spring, single tube shocks w contin adj damping, torsion bar; R: same specs as front but w/ tubular torsion bar
STEERING	speed-dependent electro-mech rack & pinion
BRAKES	F: 15.4" / 1.4" / R: 14.2" / 1.0"
WHEELS / TIRES	(standard) 21x10" cast / 295/40ZR21
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	203.2 / 121.1 in
TURNING CIRCLE	40.7 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	(w/max load) 7.8 in
APPROACH / BREAKOVER / DEPART	22 / 15 / 21°
SEATING CAPACITY	three-row, seven-passenger
HEADROOM (F/2/3)	41.2 / 40.0 / 38.9 in
LEGROOM (F/2/3)	40.3 / 38.5 / 35.0 in
CARGO CAPACITY	16 / 49.4 / 93.8 cu.ft
CARGO LENGTH	19.7 / 52.4 / 84.1 in
WEIGHT / GVWR	5754 / 7165 lb
PAYLOAD / TOW CAPACITY	1565 / 7500 lb
FUEL CAPACITY	26.4 gal
MPG	13/18/15 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE..... **\$126,150**

OPTIONS: AMG carbon fiber & piano black lacquer trim (1750); air ionization/filter (280); AMG performance steering wheel (500); manual 2nd row sunshades (380); heated/cooled cupholders (180); Bang & Olufsen BeoSound 1200w 14-sprk system (4550); rear seat entertainment prewiring (170); 22" AMG multi-spoke matte black wheels (1750).....9560

AMG NIGHT STYLING PKG: Exterior trim elements (A-wing, front apron insert, mirrors, roof rails, trim strip, weather-strip, twin tailpipe trim) in black.....300

DESTINATION CHARGE.....995

TOTAL..... **\$137,005**

of red calipers for a grand total of no cost at all.

With or without these variables, the AMG GLS 63 is ready to show up absolutely anywhere. ■

