

ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

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**MERCEDES-EQ
BRONCO RAPTOR
NEW NISSAN Z**
**OFF-ROAD COMPAROS
ROUTE 66 WEEKEND
NASCAR - AUCTIONS
AND MUCH MORE!**

**OUR 20TH
ANNIVERSARY**



Mercedes-EQ EQS Sedan

VEHICLES • EQUIPMENT • TECHNOLOGY • PEOPLE • EVENTS • DESTINATIONS • ATTRACTIONS



The number of vehicles available in the US market has grown from about 350 to about 450 in recent years, and Mercedes-Benz has done their part, as growing stables of AMG, GT and Maybach models joined in with the natural growth of SUVs and crossovers to create one of the most diverse lineups in the biz. Now, with the emergence of a Mercedes-EQ family of pure electric vehicles, that number may head toward 500.

Names follow a recent trend—Mercedes-Benz, Mercedes-AMG, Mercedes-Maybach—with the full-EV family launching as Mercedes-EQ (except for AMG models, which are Mercedes-AMG EQ). EQ derives from EQ Boost electrified gasoline vehicles of the past few years, for which EQ was a play on IQ and stands for “electrical intelligence.”

We flew to Denver and the Colorado Foothills for a multifaceted, multi-vehicle event, equal parts breakthrough and update—both a deep dive and a 30,000-foot overview of the lineup so far. Included were drives of two SUVs and two sedans (one an

AMG), as well as a top secret (till now) static presentation of another SUV (and its AMG offshoot).

Of the six vehicles, two are 2022 models, three are 2023s and one is a 2024. (Anything wrapping up production by year’s end is a 2022, if just entering production and crossing over January 1 into the new year is a 2023, and if not starting production until after the first of the year is a 2024.)

One of the 2022s (the EQB SUV) is built on an earlier platform, while all the rest are on brand new EV-specific architecture, the EVA platform.

Two AMG models (one driven, one a prototype) are highly up-featured and performance-oriented, though familiar major distinctions such as an AMG-hand-crafted internal combustion engine are inherently set aside for EVs.

You’ll be noticing this wave of new vehicles as it happens, in two ways—both one-by-one, model-by-model; and as a phenomenon en masse, as this fast-moving transformation throughout a long-familiar industry continues to take hold.

S 2023 Mercedes-EQ EQS SUV The EQS SUV looms large among this group—we drove it the most, it’s the first new-platform EQ SUV to market, and, as an S-Class and an SUV, it actually is the largest. With the 2022 EQS Sedan already in existence (we drove it last winter; see our JanFeb 2022 issue), the EQS SUV can be seen as both evolutionary and revolutionary—a cross-pollination of GLS gasoline SUVs and the EQS Sedan—while as transformed as the EQS Sedan.

Introduced in the EQS Sedan, carried through with the EQS SUV, and benchmarks for all those quickly following are a fusing of technology, design, functionality and connectivity.

Innovations include enhanced aerodynamics, a range of artificial intelligence (AI) implementations, advanced cabin luxuries including soothing Energizing Comfort sound effects, elaborate HEPA air filtration, the latest MBUX Hyperscreen (filling the entire instrument panel with features for both driver and passenger), haptic-touch feedback, and

new styling cues from tip to tail.

Personalized suggestions are available within the driver interface, intended to simplify operation with less driver distraction.

Our first drive session in the EQS SUV was a challenging loop through the Foothills outside Golden, Colorado, a comprehensive route comprising twisty mountain two-lanes, maximum-grade Interstate, urban expressways and a return through the downtown Denver maze of one-way streets. This could be run in either direction, both an adventure.

Especially fun is the road over Lookout Mountain between Golden and I-70 near the Genesee exits. This road is as narrow as they come, includes successive hairpin turns all the way up and down, and adds the challenge of numerous cyclists, punctuated by the occasional TikTokker aiming for a land speed record on a skateboard. Steering, brakes and situational awareness are all essential. The EQS SUV was tops in its role, while we put ourselves in charge of the alertness factor.

The new EQ vehicles are enhanced by a standard feature—rear-axle steering (varying as standard or optional, as well as by steering angle, in



different models), fantastic through the switchbacks (and for tight downtown parking garages). We would put this feature to a supreme test on our second drive of the EQS SUV, the next day.

On day two, we headed back up I-70, this time for an astounding session off-road, outside Idaho Springs. And
(cont’d)

We’ve been driving off-pavement and way off-road for years throughout the mountain and desert West and Northwest (as far as Alaska and Canada’s northern territories), including regularly in off-roading comparo events throughout these regions, as well as participating in many new 4x4 launch drives with off-road components. Some of these have included particularly tight spots—whether planned, unplanned, or planned by others and unknown to us till we got to them, and therefore sometimes quite a surprise, the kind of thing you question the wisdom of even trying to tackle.

But it’s fair to say we’ve never driven an off-road course as tight and challenging as the one they happily ran us through in the EQS SUV—demanding for anything, even a dirt bike—and this is a 201.8-inch-long vehicle with a 126.4-inch wheelbase, 67.6 inches high and 84.9 inches wide including mirrors (or 77.1 without). What a way to show off its nimble rear axle steering, and show it off it did—jaw-droppingly impressive.

SPECIFICATIONS (EQS SUV)

ELECTRIC MOTOR(S).....	permanently excited synchronous motors, varying by model; 265 kW rear axle only; 265 kW combined dual axles; 400 kW combined dual axles
HP/TORQUE	355-536 hp / 419-633 lb-ft
BATTERY PACK.....	Lithium ion
RANGE	(var. by model) 285 to 305 miles
CHARGING TIME	(all models)
240V/32A wallbox (10-100%)	11.25 hrs
110kW DC Fast Charging (10-80%)	31 min
0-TO 60 MPH	(var. by model) 6.5 to 4.5 sec
TOP SPEED	(all models) 130 mph
DRIVETRAIN	(var. by model) RWD; or fully-variable 4MATIC AWD w Torque Shift
STEERING.....	10° rear-axle steering standard
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	201.8 / 126.4 in
WEIGHT	TBA
FUEL ECONOMY	TBA

2023 EQS SUV (base prices)

EQS 450+ SUV	\$104,400
EQS 450 4MATIC SUV	\$107,400
EQS 580 4MATIC SUV	\$125,950

Attitude at altitude

BY JOE SAGE



if we thought rear-axle steering was handy on paved roads, we would now have our socks knocked off. We've off-road four-wheeled many times on the tightest courses anyone could find, engineer or imagine, or so it seemed, until we arrived on this one—and this time in an almost 17-foot-long full-size luxury SUV.

We would be thinking we were absolutely pushing the envelope, navigating maximum boulders, forests and cliffs, when our host in the right seat—and here, we had two of the best—says, “turn here!” “Here?!?” Some spots look so impossible, you never would have considered them to even be in play, but you're already in motion and being directed by someone who knows it will work. For reassurance and amazement, rear-axle angles and trajectories are shown in the central display—and the standard 10-degree rear-axle steering in the EQS SUV (and Sedan) enables a turning circle of less than 36 feet, even tighter than many models in the compact class.

Pricing for the Mercedes-EQ EQS SUV will be announced any time now, as it arrives very soon.

E 2023 Mercedes-EQ EQE SUV 2024 Mercedes-AMG EQE SUV

Our drive sequence was not the same as the new Mercedes-EQ product release sequence. The EQS Sedan was the first new-platform model, the EQE Sedan the second, and the EQS SUV the third. In between, we met what will be the fourth. Prior to its televised world premiere, we had an unveiling of prototype versions of the EQE SUV and AMG EQE SUV—both of which we could sit in and investigate thoroughly, but which did not leave our top secret show space and we did not drive.

The Mercedes-EQ EQE SUV will arrive by year's end, in time to be a 2023 model, while the AMG version will deliver after January 1, thus a 2024.

The EQE SUV receives its cues from the long-standing GLE gasoline lineup, as well as from the bit-larger EQS SUV we'd just driven, and in this case also from its EQE Sedan sibling, which—as in the case of the EQS SUV following the EQS Sedan—has already entered the market.

A bit smaller than the EQS SUV—ten inches shorter on a wheelbase 7.1 inches shorter—the

EQE SUV is also differentiated by lower power output in the base model, though matching the EQS in higher trims. The EQE SUV is also shorter than the EQE Sedan, notably in its overhangs, bearing almost a coupelike stance. Styling aims to be “younger and more progressive,” a subtle refocus from a luxury emphasis on the bigger EQS SUV.

Zero-to-60 acceleration for the EQE SUV is two tenths of a second quicker than the EQS SUV, base-model-to-base model, though one tenth slower in the top model. Early indications suggest that estimated range may be more for the EQE SUV, also (based for now on comparing the top end of EQE SUV European ratings with EQS SUV full-range US ratings).

Prices are yet to be announced, to more fully measure value benefits between the two, though those key comparisons seem pretty clear. Another variable is that 10-degree rear axle steering is standard across the EQS SUV lineup, while on the EQE SUV lineup, it's standard only in the top trim, optional on the others. Again, the significance of this, if any, will be clear with pricing.

As on the EQS, the EQE SUV has AIRMATIC air suspension with continuously adjustable damping, offering a modest boost in ground clearance.

Color & Trim Design chief Occa Büchner was on hand for our reveal, appropriate because many details and features within her realm were particularly of note. The EQE SUV was stunning from our first sight of the prototype, in the same rich Velvet Brown Metallic paint shown below (a “desaturated” look, important to its progressive character, per Büchner). A comprehensive tour of the interior followed suit, with an atmosphere combining “avant garde and tradition,” using both velvet and high-tech materials—Nubuck leather and high-tech neoprene—with contrasting warm tones like Sable Brown against cooler tech tones including Neva Grey and Biscaya blue/black, while Rose Gold as a contrasting color evokes the electric coil at the heart of the vehicle's powertrain engineering.

Preceded by the AMG EQS Sedan, the AMG EQE SUV is the first all-electric performance SUV from Mercedes-AMG. The AMG exceeds the fundamentals of the non-AMG EQE SUV, with a dual-



motor system delivering 677 hp, AMG Performance 4MATIC+ drivetrain, rear-axle steering standard, and AMG-specific roll stabilization. The enticing AMG version's slightly later arrival may drive some buyers' decisions, while waiting for the AMG may also become clearer as final pricing is released.

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Top Mercedes-EQ personnel on hand for our reveal and presentation included:

- Christoph Starzynski, Christoph, Vice President of Electric Vehicle Architecture and Head of Mercedes-EQ
- Rahman Tasdemir, Produktmanagement EQS & EQE
- Daniel Nolte, Produktmanagement
- Occa Büchner, Color & Trim Design
- Holger Enzmann, Development Overall Vehicle, Electric Vehicle Architecture
- Michael Brunnquell, Development Overall Vehicle, Mercedes-AMG EQE SUV
- Michael Kofler, Product Management, Mercedes-AMG EQE SUV

SPECIFICATIONS (EQE SUV)

ELECTRIC MOTOR(S).....	permanently excited synchronous motors, varying by model: 215 kW rear axle only; 215 kW combined dual axles; 300 kW combined dual axles
HP/TORQUE	288-536 hp / 417-633 lb-ft
BATTERY PACK.....	Lithium ion
RANGE	up to 342 miles Euro; USA TBA
CHARGING TIME	(all models) 240V/32A wallbox (10-100%) 9.5 hrs
	110kW DC Fast Charging (10-80%) 32 min
0-TO 60 MPH	(var. by model) 6.3 to 4.6 sec
TOP SPEED	(all models) 130 mph
DRIVETRAIN	(var. by model) RWD; or fully-variable 4MATIC AWD w Torque Shift
STEERING	10° rear-axle steering: standard on 500 4M, optional on others
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	191.5 / 119.3 in
WEIGHT	TBA
FUEL ECONOMY	TBA

2023 EQE SUV (base prices)

EQE 350+ SUV	TBA
EQE 350 4MATIC SUV	TBA
EQE 500 4MATIC SUV	TBA

2024 AMG EQE SUV (base prices)

AMG EQE SUV	TBA
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E 2023 Mercedes-EQ EQE Sedan

There are two obvious points of reference for the EQE Sedan. One is the long lineage of Mercedes-Benz (and AMG) E-Class Sedans—as this is readily considered the new EV version of that. The other is the brand new EVA-platform-based EQS Sedan—as the EQE Sedan is just the second to market, following suit technologically.

We took this on a loop similar to the EQS SUV, over the hairpin climbs of Lookout Mountain, as well as on an extended route slightly to the south through Red Rocks and Morrison. To paraphrase boxing great Muhammad Ali, the EQE Sedan floats like a butterfly—its nimble handling of the curves was sportscar-like, atop its 21-inch wheels (19 are standard) and again benefitting from optional rear-axle steering—while the tanklike strength of its substantial body shell was striking when settled

comfortably inside its fully luxury-outfitted cabin.

The EQE Sedan offers a percentage-basis of the EQS Sedan experience. Its wheelbase is just 3.5 inches shorter (roughly comparable to the gasoline CLS, which falls between E and S in size in that lineup), while its price is roughly just 75 percent that of the EQS Sedan. The base EQE Sedan's horsepower and torque are 288 and 391, to the base EQS Sedan's 329 and 417—about 86 and 94 percent—giving more bang for the buck (though of course less bang is still less bang, if price is no object). Both of course have more models above base, giving you many ways to dovetail various comparisons. The interior is larger all around than the gasoline E-Class—wider and longer, and with a seating position 2.5 inches higher, which even starts to bring an SUV comparison into play for some. It's an intriguing and compelling model.

S 2022 Mercedes-AMG EQS Sedan

Thanks to our 90-minute flight to Denver instead taking about six hours, we did not get to drive the AMG EQS Sedan, which had departed early for a dealer presentation. We do drive the non-EV Mercedes-Benz S580 elsewhere in this issue. And we did drive the (non-AMG) EQS Sedan earlier this year (see our JanFeb 2022 issue), which we praised as a magnificent experience, sure to shake up the luxury EV segment. (We may have the AMG EQS Sedan in our rotation here soon, too.)

The first AMG EQ to market, the AMG EQS Sedan is described by the company as a “proof point,” a chance to see where the AMG and EQ subbrands are headed together. At its performance-oriented core are two powerful motors, front and rear, with fully-variable AMG Performance 4MATIC+ all-wheel drive. Output jumps from 516 hp and 631 lb-ft of torque in the regular EQS to 649 and 700 in the AMG—or to 751 hp and 752 lb-ft when using the boost function of Race Start, part of a standard AMG Dynamic Plus package in this build.

Gone are the “AMG hand-crafted” V8 and V12 gasoline engines we've known and loved, but the AMG EQ brand delivers plenty that's special.

B 2022 Mercedes-EQ EQB SUV

The first shall be last, and the last shall be first. The EQB SUV was not Mercedes-EQ's first EV globally, but it was the first in the US, though others have followed quickly. At the same time, it was the last one based on the gasoline model's architecture, before adoption of their new dedicated all-electric EVA platform, first in the EQS Sedan.

This was also the last vehicle we drove at this event—grabbing an hour or less within Denver. It was a solid drive in a nicely featured smaller SUV—quick and precise—though it was readily apparent (after just having driven all the others) that this model presents prior styling, engineering and features inside and out. That in itself, however, makes it a contender in its own way, as the prices we know so far for the new dedicated vehicles suggest the EQB SUV—bearing in mind various apples and oranges of size, content, and SUV vs sedan—is a bit of a bargain in the new lineup.

Early everyday EVs were on the small and simple side, cheaper, limiting and uninspiring to many. Then startup brands brought a new image to the genre, with slicker tech, quicker speeds and



higher prices. Without familiar luxury materials or build quality, analysts tortured themselves to call these luxury brands, by price (and novelty) alone.

Mercedes-EQ brings an era with all that technology and then some, as well as the real luxury driving experience and atmosphere—stunningly new, while reassuringly familiar. Real luxury EV competition is here now, and it's here in force. ■

2023 EQE Sedan (base prices)

EQE 350+ Sedan	.....\$74,900
EQE 350 4MATIC Sedan	.....77,900
EQE 500 4MATIC Sedan	.....85,900
AMG EQE Sedan	.....TBA

2022 EQS Sedan (base prices)

EQS 450+ Sedan	.....\$104,400
EQS 450 4MATIC Sedan	.....107,400
EQS 580 4MATIC Sedan	.....125,950
AMG EQS Sedan	.....147,500

2022 EQB SUV (base prices)

EQB 250+ SUV	.....\$52,400
EQB 300 4MATIC SUV	.....55,750
EQB 350 4MATIC SUV	.....59,300

