

And right on the heels of the Tahoe...

by Bill Schaffer

First out of the box was the fantastic new Chevrolet Tahoe. Now the General Motors truck company GMC has the Yukon and upscale Yukon Denali.



New from the ground up, the Yukon styling takes an evolutionary approach with a tighter-looking trimmed design that just happens to be a little larger. Up front, the attractive trademark GMC grille is squared-off in the upper corners and now resembles the silhouette of claw foot bathtub without legs. The Denali grille is the traditional chrome honeycomb design, while the Yukon is in black. The grille is flanked by large crystal-looking light modules. The smooth sides have a smooth raised bumper strip that corresponds to the top of the bumpers. The Denali is distinguished in the rear by tall clear taillight lenses, while the Yukon's are a more traditional red.

The interior includes a high level of quality materials and excellent fit and finish. I preferred the décor of Yukon because it used less wood trim and instead accented the center console surround with a clean aluminum look.

The best features of both new Professional Grade GMC trucks are their on road operation. The solid, quiet ride combined with big plush seats rivals the comfort of many luxury sedans.

Performance was impressive, too with a standard 5.3-liter (320-hp) V-8 engine and four-speed automatic transmission. The new engine is enhanced by GM's 5.3L V-8 with Active Fuel Management™ fuel-saving technology. When the driver doesn't need the extra horses, four of the cylinders shut down to save fuel. When power is needed for passing or pulling the grade, the V-8 is instantly active providing the full force of the powerful V-8. The result is best in class EPA fuel economy ratings of 16 mpg for city driving and 22 mpg on the highway for the two-wheel drive version. The four-wheel drive eats up one mpg on both numbers. Later in the model year, the standard two-wheel drive engine will become a 290-hp 4.8-liter V-8. The 5.3-liter engine is also offered with the Flex Fuel option that allow the engine to use E85 ethanol based fuel made from renewable farm products.

The Yukon Denali gets a more substantial 380-hp 6.2-liter V-8 engine with a new six-speed automatic transmission with an exclusive tap up/down control for manual shifting located on the face of the column mounted shifter. The pair produces and

unbelievable 0 to 60 mph time of 6.2 seconds. That means this 5,500-pound hauler accelerates at the same rate as cars like the Audi A6 4.2 V-8, Mercedes-Benz E350 and Volvo S60R. Roll the window down and the V-8 has a beautiful deep-throated V-8 exhaust rumble. Denali also gets a sophisticated Z55 Autoride suspension with real-time shock dampening to maintain a flatter, more controlled ride.

The Yukon rides on standard 17-inch wheels, while the Denali gets 18-inches. Both have available 20-inch wheels and tires. All models have an abundance of safety equipment include the StabiliTrak stability control system and tire pressure monitoring.

The two-wheel drive Yukon SLE starts at \$34,690, while the upper level and very well equipped four-wheel SLT goes for \$41,670. The top-of-the line full-time all-wheel-drive Denali starts at \$47,990. A moonroof, rear entertainment system and DVD-based navigation system add about \$4,500 to the SLT or Denali price. All three models are at dealerships now. The XL version, which is 20.4 inches longer, will be available later in the model year. ■

