

Positioning

BY JOE SAGE

When fastback versions of SUVs first came to market a few years ago, they struck some as the answer to a question no-one had asked. Whether due to evolution, the broadening of the segment, or the specific attributes of this one, the Mercedes-Benz GLC may well be the answer to every question, all rolled into one. Compact cross-overs, now the hottest selling segment, offer a lot of choice at the affordable end. For the basic format but with luxury brand, style and fitments, the GLC fills the bill. And for a sportier overall demeanor, we arrive specifically at the GLC Coupe.

This luxury sportster with a sleek yet rugged bearing seems to have been created clean sheet-style, but actually arrives in context. Mercedes-Benz renamed all its utilities almost three years ago, with new GLA, GLC, GLE and GLS models paralleling A, C, E and S sedans by size. The GLC's predecessor was the GLK, conceived to look a bit like a very small GL (now GLS), though shrinkage left its styling a bit awkward. The new alphanumeric may seem to toss out a lot of equity, but actually translated it, allowing a few lane changes

in the lineup. Rather than a wide variety of styling that used to be an unavoidable part of choosing size among the old GLK, M and GL, the new lineup presents a staircase of clearly related vehicles.

The GLC300 SUV, new last year, is beautifully proportioned, closer in spirit to its bigger siblings. GLC solves two goals of relativity: when you want a Mercedes-Benz utility but want to pick your size, or when you want this size but want a Mercedes-Benz. That sounds simple, and now it is, with prior tradeoffs in style or format among sizes erased.

The GLC300 Coupe, new this year, is stunning from every angle, applying cues from the halo series of AMG GT sports cars everywhere from its grille to instruments and air handling vents.

If those cues strike your fancy, an AMG GLC 43 Coupe is now arriving, with a 362-hp 3.0L biturbo V6, zero-to-60 time of 4.8 seconds (the GLC300 does it in 6.4) and base price of \$59,650. Want even more? In early 2018, there will be an AMG GLC 63 Coupe with 469-hp biturbo V8 and a zero-to-60 time of 3.9 seconds, then an AMG GLC 63 S Coupe, with 503 horses and a 3.7-second acceleration time. Since the GLC300 with options already crosses into this pricing realm, these will be easy upgrade decisions for many buyers. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	2.0L aluminum-alloy inline-4 turbo
DRIVETRAIN	4MATIC AWD
HP/TORQUE	241 hp / 273 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	9-GTRONIC 9-spd auto, paddles
SUSPENSION	F&R: Indep multi-link coil, shock, bar
STEERING.....	speed-dependent electro-mech rack & pinion
BRAKES	F: 13.5 / R: 12.6 discs
WHEELS/TIRES	8x18 cast / 235/60 R18
LENGTH/WB/GRND CLEAR	186.3" / 113.1" / 6.1"
TURNING CIRCLE.....	38.7 ft
WEIGHT	4001 lb
LUGGAGE CAPACITY	19.4 / 56.5 cu.ft.
FUEL CAPACITY	17.4 gal
MPG.....	22/27/24 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	\$42,095
<i>(per our evaluation vehicle's sticker, now stated as \$45,950)</i>	
BRILLIANT BLUE METALLIC	720
NATURAL GRAIN BLACK ASH WOOD	160
HEATED & ACTIVE VENTED FRONT SEATS	1030
AIR BODY CONTROL AIR SUSPENSION	1900
BURMESTER SURROUND SOUND SYSTEM	850
PREMIUM PACKAGE: Keyless entry/start, COMAND® with nav, CD, 8.4" display, touchpad, ambient lighting, illuminated door sills, PRE-SAFE braking w/ped recog, blind spot assist, lane keep, cross-traffic, air balance, LED heads	6400
LEATHER SEATING PACKAGE: incl pnsgr power/mem	1900
SPORT PACKAGE: AMG body styling, MB-TEX dash/door panels, topstitch, perforated front brake discs, sport exhaust	2800
ADVANCED PARKING ASSIST: Parktronic active parking assist, surround view system, hands-free access	1550
DESTINATION CHARGE	925
TOTAL.....	\$64,185

