

Smooth, edgy and glorious

A SPORTY AMG PERFORMANCE COUPE WITH SUV BONES BY JOE SAGE

The whole premise of an SUV coupe seemed odd when the first one appeared a decade ago, satirized as the answer to a question no-one had asked, seeking to be the best of both worlds and satisfying neither. But now the landscape has changed. The market today is heavily interested in crossovers and SUVs. Yet who doesn't like a sleek sports car? Now you can combine the two, with a sleek performance car you don't need to squeeze down low to enter. Just walk over and step in like an SUV—because below the roofline, that's what it is, with all that implies about rugged, wide-ranging use as a significant bonus.

Such a machine is now the answer to questions anyone might ask. Crossover utility? Check! Sporty, aerodynamic shape? Check! Still plenty roomy inside? Check! AMG performance powertrain? Check! This vehi-

cle format has gone from being arguably a trade-off to incorporating the best of all possible worlds.

Mercedes-Benz doesn't call this an SUV, per se. The full-roof model is officially called the GLC SUV, while this is the GLC Coupe. Punto. But the coupe version clearly has all the traits of its two-box sibling, from ample ground clearance to commanding driver position to 4MATIC all-wheel drive.

Both are handsome beasts. Each has mastered the finer points of its particular form. We spent zero time in the GLC43 Coupe wishing it were the boxier SUV, and we suspect owners of the SUV will spend zero time wishing it were a coupe. The appeal of either goes straight to the heart.

The GLC replaces the original compact GLK that had been intended to bookend the old somewhat curvaceous M-Class between the big GL and sort of a small GL. The concept was great, but the downsizing was a bit awkward. The new GLC, on the other hand, echoes the midsize GLE (the M-Class's

replacement), and it does it so well it's hard to have a preference between the two.

GLC is to GLE as C-Class is to E-Class, compact versus executive size. The GLC SUV has a wheelbase just 1.7 inches shorter than GLE, but is 6.1 inches shorter overall, though the bigger GLE actually has a foot tighter turning circle. Cargo volume is noticeably more in the GLE. The engines are basically the same, though the GLE is tuned for 23 more horses (torque is the same). But the GLE weighs 852 pounds more than the GLC, giving the smaller GLC a 0-to-60 time of 4.7 seconds to the GLE's 5.6.

And there are AMG GLC63 models. The GLC63 has a 479-hp AMG 4.0L biturbo V8 that hits 60 in 3.8 seconds. And a GLC63 S with uptuned to 503 hp shaves another tenth of a second off that.

It's a lot of alternatives and variables, but the actual buying decision should prove simple.

SUV or Coupe? If curvaceous streamlining appeals, the interior volume is less, but its lower drag improves 0-to-60 time to 4.5 seconds—though the AMG GLC43 Coupe costs \$3,400 more than the SUV. The decision should be easy, either way.

AMG or regular? You know who you are.



Mercedes-AMG GLC63 SUV and Coupe

GLC43 or GLC63? This may be the only one that makes you think for a minute or two. The GLC43 and GLC63 start at roughly \$60k and \$73k—and the GLC63 S at \$81k—before options.

Oh, and one more thing—if the general style and layout of the GLC Coupe ring your bell, but you are lighter on the pedal and want to stay lighter on your wallet, there's a non-AMG GLC 300 Coupe, also with 4MATIC AWD, capable of hitting 60 in 6.4 seconds and starting at just \$46,600.

We enjoyed the AMG GLC43 Coupe enough to not think about the others (other than to tell you about them). Very possibly, the first one you try on will be the one you take home, so choose well.

We loved driving it, and we even enjoyed just looking at it. We'd park and find ourselves looking back at it, often more than once. The Coupe has such a pleasing shape—what may have once been such a vehicle's most controversial element has turned out to be the most pleasing in the GLC.

It seems to evoke something powerful from nature—possibly an egg, maybe an ocean predator—striking a balance and presence seldom achieved. We always find a few minor nits—we wish the heads-up display were lower; we wish we didn't need a flashlight to find overhead lights; we would still recommend a more conventional console shift (also freeing up the lefthand side of the wheel by migrating one or two of its three stalks); we wish for a more linear feel to the electric steering.

But where it counts—when your foot hits the pedal and the rubber meets the road—it is glorious. Give it some gas and holycow. We had the GLC43 during monsoon, and it ruled the road in the worst wet conditions—including a sudden high-speed straight line stop in deep water when a full-size pickup in front of us decided to brake for a hallucination. It has the power, the exhaust note, and no matter how much you think you're pushing it, there is always headroom to push it some more. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	AMG-enhanced 3.0L biturbo V6
DRIVETRAIN	AMG Performance 4MATIC AWD
HP/TORQUE	362 hp / 384 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	AMG Perf 9G-TRONIC auto
0-TO-60 / TOP SPEED	4.5 sec / 130 mph (elec lim)
SUSPENSION	AMG Sport Suspension based on Air Body Control: F/R: Indep multi-link w air spring, double-tube gas pressure and stblz bar
STEERING	speed-dep electro-mech rack & pinion
BRAKES	AMG-enhanced: F: 14.2" / R: 12.6"
WHEELS	F: 8.5x20 cast / R: 9.5x20 cast
TIRES	ext mobil: F: 255/45R20 / R: 285/40R20
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	186.1 / 113.1 in
TURNING CIRCLE	39.7 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	6.7 in
SEATING CAPACITY	five
CARGO CAPACITY	56.5 / TBA cu.ft
WEIGHT	4140 lb
FUEL CAPACITY	17.4 gal
MPG	18/24/20 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	\$60,400
IRIDIUM SILVER METALLIC	720
CRANBERRY & BLACK LEATHER	1620
AMG PERFORMANCE EXHAUST	1250
AMG TRACK PACE APP	150
HEADS-UP DISPLAY	990
21" AMG WHEELS W ACCENTS	1000
BURMEISTER SURROUND SOUND SYSTEM	850
HEATED REAR SEATS	580
LED LOGO PROJECTORS	200
ADVANCED LIGHTING PKG:	Active LED heads, adaptive high beam assist, 3-color ambient lighting, illuminated sills
MULTIMEDIA PKG:	Comand nav (w 3 yrs map updates), SiriusXM traffic/weather (5 yrs), voice control, 8.4-in high-res display, touchpad
AMG NIGHT PKG:	black body trim items
ADV PARK ASSIST PKG:	Parktronic, active park assist, surround view, hands-free access
DRIVER ASSIST PKG:	Active blind spot assist, DISTRONIC Plus w steering assist and stop & go pilot, active lane keep assist, Pre-Safe Plus, BAS Plus w cross-traffic assist, Pre-Safe brake w pedestrian recog, speed limit assist
DESTINATION CHARGE	995
TOTAL	\$75,745

Mercedes-AMG GLC43 Coupe 4MATIC

