

Subtly but effectively green

BY JOE SAGE

GLC is closest to GLE in the Mercedes SUV lineup—GLC a compact and GLE a mid-size very similar in style and spirit, easy in fact to mix up at a glance, though distinct side by side.

GLC is in its tenth year for 2025, as generation two, available as both box-SUV and Coupe (see sidebar). We had a consistent run of GLC Coupe drives in generation one, but for generation two, we have been getting the SUV—most recently the base GLC 300 rear-driver in fall 2023, just over a year ago. A bump in dimensions brought generous legroom, especially up front, along with decent cargo capacity. A more powerful 255-horsepower turbo-four with EQ Boost had become standard for all non-AMG versions, all as GLC 300.

We had noted the GLC 300's new digital instrument panel and central touchscreen (derived from

the flagship S-Class, as are other details), with voice control and navigation, and a "transparent hood" camera feature available on the 4MATIC.

We had said the base unit (the only rear-drive version) "speaks for itself"—it's exactly what you expect, generous in all regards, even before considering its highly competitive pricing, delivering on high expectations while still keeping it simple.

This year adds something new atop the seven other builds of GLC and AMG GLC. The GLC 350e brings a third powertrain—a plug-in hybrid (or PHEV). Our sample is the Pinnacle version (which, as you can see in the sidebar pricing chart, is a trim level officially achieved as a package).

Our sample came in Verde Silver Metallic paint, which looks like a rich silver at first glance, but has a definite subtle green cast to it when in the com-

pany of other silver vehicles (or in certain light, as in our photo, below). This matches the spirit of the 350e's PHEV powertrain. By both measures, ours is subtly yet effectively "green," in both its color and mission, in this era of expanding full electrification.

Plug-in hybrids, long been considered a "best solution" by many, used to be harder to explain—run on gas only, run on electric only, keep track of either or both and drive accordingly. Now that EVs are common, PHEVs' skills are more invisible and more apparent, both, able to simply and transparently tackle the job at hand at any given moment.

Tradeoffs include a bit higher purchase cost and a bit more weight, as well as complexity, although Mercedes has long since mainstreamed their powerful EQ Boost systems. But they deliver the potential of using one as an EV for your weekly commuting—this one with a range of up to 54 miles in pure electric mode, at up to 87 mph, rechargeable in 30 minutes—while also able to road trip freely,

without the concerns of range, charging locations or charging time spent on longer travels. Nice. Road miles can also replenish the battery, perhaps enabling a return to EV-only at your destination.

The gasoline-only fuel mileage rating is 28 mpg highway, which is not hard to match or beat. But the alternate MPGe formula for combined usage jumps to 70. More significantly, the combination brings a 201-horsepower turbo-four up to a 313-hp combined system. All specifications, statistics and data aside, the PHEV also gives you its own sufficient bragging points with the green crowd.

Best of all is its ability to let you just forget all that, even if it's the main reason you bought it. It has a familiar feel, force and acoustics, whether you're used to gasoline or EV (and you may well be in one, one minute, the other the next). Some of this is PHEV-universal, to degrees, but this transparency reaches ideal balance with the new GLC 350e. And again, all with range or charging worries erased. The whole experience is seamless.

All that—and you get that thrill of driving your first EV at launch, as its 406 lb-ft of torque are im-

mediately on tap and flowing, providing a pleasing electrified whine and as much ramp-dominating power as you'll ever need. You'll notice right away that there's no auto start-stop defeat switch, as not only is the gasoline engine expected to shut off at a red light, but you don't need it when the light turns green—no delay. While some such systems are more conditions-based, this one guarantees the EV start. Punch it and go, go, go. That, in fact, may be all you need to try, to be sold. ■

A JUDGMENTAL OBSESSION: As noted on others, a current interior design point uses smooth black plastic membranes atop certain controls—some touch and slide, others concealing pushbuttons, that mix itself confusing, and in some cases combining multiple functions. They are surely intended to be sleek, sexy and uncluttered, but to us have a degree of uncertainty of touch, and when functions are combined, uncertainty of aim—e.g. it can be quite difficult to set seat memory without turning on the heated seats or vice versa, as they share the same membrane. The surfaces are also very cold in winter, yet do not seem to work with gloves on. Various other Mercedes models have discrete metallic controls, easily as sexy and much more functional. Those get our vote. •



SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Bremen, Germany
ROWS / SEATS	two / five
ENGINE/TRANS BUILT	Poland / Germany
PARTS CONTENT	Germany 40% / US/Can 0%
ENGINE	2.0L inline-4 turbo plug-in hybrid, diecast alloy block and head
HP/TORQUE	201 hp / 236 lb-ft
ELECTRIC MOTOR & BATTERY	
BATTERY PACK	23.3 kWh (usable)
HP/TORQUE	134 hp / 325 lb-ft
COMBINED SYSTEM OUTPUT	313 hp / 406 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	9G-TRONIC 9-sp auto
DRIVETRAIN	4MATIC AWD
0-TO-60	(est) 6.2 sec
TOP SPEED	130 mph / 87 mph (all-elec)
SUSPENSION	4-wheel indep: (F) 4-link; (R) 5-arm multilink w self-leveling rear air suspension
STEERING	electromechanical power rack & pinion
BRAKES	(no information)
WHEELS	(F/R) 8x18 / 9x18 staggered 5-spoke
TIRES	(F/R) 235/60R18 / 255/55R18 a/s
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	185.7 / 113.1 in
HEADROOM (F/R)	41.3 / 39.7 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	40.7 / 37.4 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	tba
TURNING CIRCLE	38.7 ft
CARGO CAPACITY	24.4 / (folded tba) cu.ft
WEIGHT	tba
TOW CAPACITY	tba
FUEL / CAPACITY	prem unl / 13.0 gal
ELECTRIC-ONLY RANGE	up to 54 miles
MPG	(gas only) 23/28/25 (city/hwy/comb)
MPGe	(gas+elec) 60/70/64 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	\$59,900
PINNACLE TRIM	3,600
PAINT: Verde Silver Metallic	750
INTERIOR: natural grain black wood w aluminum lines trim	200
DASHBOARD: MB-TeX w Nappa look	350
VENTILATED FRONT SEATS	450
PANORAMA SUNROOF	1500
ADVANCED USB PKG	300
DRIVER ASSISTANCE PKG	1950
DESTINATION CHARGE	1150
TOTAL	\$70,150

2025 MB GLC 350e 4MATIC SUV

Standard	\$59,900
Exclusive	61,550
Pinnacle	▼ 63,500

2025 MB+AMG GLC FULL LINEUP

	RWD	4MATIC
GLC 300	SUV	\$49,250 \$51,250
"	Coupe	59,300
GLC 350e	SUV	▼ 59,900
AMG GLC 43	SUV	\$67,100
"	Coupe	72,900
	4MATIC+	
AMG GLC 63 S E Performance	SUV	\$86,050
"	Coupe	91,450