

Regal has long list of standards

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The car was developed in Germany, tested and refined on the famed Nurburgring proving grounds and it earned 2009 European Car of the Year honours, along with a list of 30-plus prestigious awards, recognizing the qualities that have made it the best-selling midsize sedan in Europe.

And, wearing the Buick badge, the Regal is one of the reasons why Buick, an American original, is now selling more cars in China than at home.

In Canada, the new Regal came to market in early 2010, quickly achieving critical acclaim as a finalist in the Canadian Automotive Jury's Best of the Best, while also winning first-place honours in AJAC's 2011 Best New Family Car (over \$30,000) category.

The 2011 Buick Regal was initially launched in upscale CXL trim, priced at \$31,990 and loaded with a long list of standards that includes a full suite of six airbags, dual-zone climate control, ABS disc brakes with brake assist, StabiliTrak stability control with traction control, tire pressure monitoring, remote keyless entry with power group and heated power exterior mirrors, power driver seat, tilt telescopic leather-wrapped steering wheel with audio controls, cruise control, OnStar with six months subscription, Bluetooth phone connectivity and a seven-speaker AM/FM/XM system with CD player, MP3

playback and a USB port. There's more to the list but you get the picture.

The Regal harnesses a 2.4-litre ECOTEC direct injection four-cylinder that makes 182 hp at 6700 rpm and 172 lb/ft of torque, mated to a six-speed automatic. While some of us might have to get used to the idea of a four-banger in a Buick, that's acceptable get-up-and-go for a base engine with fuel economy rated at a fairly frugal 10.8/6.5L/100km (city/hwy).

A few months after the CXL intro, General Motors Canada added the CXL Turbo model tested here. The CXL Turbo bumps the Regal's power level with a 2.0-litre turbocharged ECOTEC direct injection engine that makes 220 hp at 5300 rpm and 258 lb/ft of torque at 2000 rpm.

There's not a lot of drama to the added power—no boost gauge or significant turbo whine—but the engine grunts forth with nice level of bottom end launch, surging up to speed quickly.

There's little in the way of a pump penalty for the added power, with a fuel economy rating of 11.5/7.0L/100km (city/hwy) with the six-speed automatic. My combined fuel economy average worked out to an acceptable 10.5L/100km. Premium fuel is recommended for best performance, but the turbo engine will run just fine on regular.

Of course, power without control means nothing, but this is where this Buick's European bloodline really shows.

The car handles with a kind of well-



Inside, the 2011 Buick Regal CXL Turbo bolsters European sports sedan styling and quality with top-of-the-line content and amenity levels.

balanced elan that complements the extra oomph. An independent MacPherson strut front suspension with hydraulic ride bushings works in conjunction with a four-link independent rear suspension.

The sure and stable platform complements a more performance-oriented power variable-effort steering system. The overall effect is a taut, controlled feel that inspires cornering confidence.

The Buick Regal CXL Turbo starts at \$34,990 but, along with the increase in horsepower, the \$3,000 price premium covers a bump up in the standard amenity level with the upgraded steering system, more power adjustments on the front seats, dual bright exhaust tips, a rear 120-volt household-type power outlet and an ultrasonic rear parking assist system.

All these elements combine in a very proficient package, well styled inside and

out with above-average quality and construction, crafted with a definitive Euro-sport flair and flavour.

GM's original plan was to bring the upscale CXL models out first, followed by the base CX version later.

That may still be the intent, but for now, Buick's focus seems to be on two new 2012 models coming this fall, a mild hybrid and a high-output turbo version.

The 2012 Regal eAssist combines the 2.4-litre base engine with hybrid electric power, regenerative braking, automatic engine shut-off and fuel cut-off during deceleration, to promise a thrifty 8.0/5.4L/100km fuel economy rating.

And the 2012 Regal GS, a high-performance sport sedan boasting race-inspired fittings, harnesses a high-output version of the Ecotec 2.0-litre turbo engine with 255 hp and 295 lb/ft of torque.

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