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Acadia Denali is the 'pinnacle' of GMC CUVs

By **JIM ROBINSON**
*Metroland Media Group
Carguide Magazine*

Denali.

It sounds like an Italian fashion house but it isn't.

Denali is the First Nations name for the highest mountain in North America and means 'the high one'.

Also known as Mount McKinley, there is, however, a fashion tie-in.

GMC division reserves the name for its highest trim levels. If it's a Denali, it's the 'pinnacle' of a particular model.

Until now, Denali was only applied to GMC trucks. But for the first time, it has been used on a CUV, the Acadia.

When GM got out of the minivan business, it turned to full-size crossover CUVs as their solution to a seven- or eight-passenger vehicle for those who didn't want something big and thirsty like a Chevy Suburban or a GMC Yukon.

The first of these was the 2006 Saturn Outlook (now discontinued) followed by the Acadia, the Chev Traverse and the Buick Enclave.

So far there is no Cadillac version and that's sort of where the Acadia Denali fits in.

It's loaded standard with everything in the GMC parts bin including a few not even offered on the lower trim models such as 20-inch, two-tone alloy wheels and the signature honeycomb grille.

With a length of just over five metres (5,098 mm) it also has a wheelbase of 3,020 mm (118.9 in) so you can see most of the truck is dedicated to people and cargo.

The Denali just happened to come along as my daughter was moving out of her university apartment and head-



The 2011 GMC Acadia Denali is named after the highest mountain in North America and offers what GMC calls the 'pinnacle' of comfort and utility. This is the first GMC CUV to get the Denali trim level.

ing off to the real world of work.

She said she didn't have much stuff, but I had a hunch that her idea of not much meant a lot. After all, this is the girl who has so many half empty bottles of shampoo they take every inch of space on the bathroom vanity.

I'll save you the suspense. In addition to some 11 carryalls/back packs of clothes and 'stuff', there was double bed and mattress, some bar stools and even a ratty old couch.

Except for the mattress, the furniture went out to the curb where, amazingly, it was gone a few hours later.

The Acadia has what GMC calls its second row SmartSlide seats. When you slide it forward to increase access

to the rear, the cushion folds up as the seatback moves forward. But if you want to fold it for cargo, the seatback drops forward and the headrest tucks down to present a flat surface.

With both rows folded there is 3,282 litres (115.9 cu ft) of cargo space. With the relatively low lift over the power rear gate, my wife and daughter tugged and heaved and got the mattress in.

You always wonder when you buy a vehicle this size if you'll ever have to use the space. Well, the one time it does pay off, it's money well spent.

Of course, this move came at the same time as gasoline prices hit historic highs. Ergo I was glad I didn't rent a V8 moving van.

If I had to tow, the Denali is rated at 2,359 kg (5,200 lb).

The Acadia Denali is powered by the now familiar 3.6-litre, DOHC V6 producing 288 hp and 270 lb/ft of torque through GM's competent six-speed automatic transmission.

Thanks to direct fuel injection the fuel rating is 13.1/8.4L/100 km (22/32 mpg) city/highway. Also to help fuel consumption is the low (for a vehicle this size) drag coefficient of .344. This was partially achieved after some 5,000 hours in a wind tunnel where special attention was paid to tightening gaps between body panels.

See ACADIA, pg. 3

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