Interior enhancements are striking in the QX50

From pg. 1

But it is the interior where the enhancements are most noticed, with wonderfully supple leathers and tight panel and trim fits throughout.

For 2016, the QX50 is 80 mm longer and 20 mm higher with rear passengers reaping the benefit of 109 mm greater legroom.

While there is a rear-drive version in the U.S., all Canadian models have Infiniti's Intelligent All-Wheel-Drive with a rear-drive bias that routes up to 50 per cent grip to the front wheels as needed.

I drove both during the press launch in San Diego that saw us taking the freeway east and then up into the hills and to the charming town of Julian.

Thanks to the southern California climate with its pristine pavement devoid of potholes and frost heaves, the ride quality really showcases the efforts by Infiniti to create one of the quietest cabins in its segment.

On the freeway, for example, there seemed to be no wind noise even at an indicated 65 mph. There was some tire intrusion that seemed less on the FWD version, which I put down to the larger 19-inch alloy wheels on the AWD model.

The surprising part, my co-driver agreed, was how well the QX50 transitioned from side to side through tight switchbacks with negligible body lean, despite sitting higher (20 mm higher that the outgoing model) off the road than a the previous model.

The OX50 platform is based on a coupe with the engine behind the front wheel centerline, which really helps position the weight between the two axles.

We also agreed the FWD felt a tad sharper in the twisty bits that was probably due to the AWD adding about 200 lb to the overall curb weight.

Standard content has been increased for

2016 and now includes leather seats that are tinted glass moonroof.

Depending on trim level, optional items include Adaptive Front Lighting System (AFS) with auto-leveling headlights, Maple interior accents, driver's seat headrest coat hanger, Bose Audio System with 11 speakers, Advanced Climate Control System (ACCS) with Plasmacluster air purifier, power up-folding second row seat and 19inch wheels and tires.

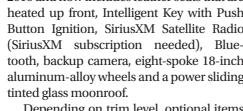
Technology abounds with a host of items, again depending on trim level, that include Infiniti Hard Drive Navigation System, Blind Spot Warning (BSW) system, Around View Monitor with Front and Rear Sonar System, Lane Departure Prevention system (LDP), Intelligent Cruise Control (Full-Speed Range), Distance Control Assist (DCA) and Intelligent Brake Assist (IBA) with Forward Collision Warning.

I had forgotten Infiniti was the first to offer a 360-degree surround view camera sys-

The model I drove in the afternoon was the fully loaded Premium Navigation Technology AWD model and I was very happy for the Forward Collision Warning system when the car in front braked hard for a covote running across the road.

The Infiniti navigation system remains one of the best in the business, because its intuitive design makes it simple to operate without a needless rotary HMI (Human Machine Interface) knob down on the centre console, where you can't see which buttons to push to make selections.

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heated up front, Intelligent Kev with Push Button Ignition, SiriusXM Satellite Radio (SiriusXM subscription needed), Bluetooth, backup camera, eight-spoke 18-inch aluminum-alloy wheels and a power sliding

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