

WHEELS & CAR CARE

Tips on maximizing fuel economy

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Vibe gets a grip on changing industry

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The 2009 Honda Pilot mid-size SUV is larger than the 2008, offering towing power of up to 4,500 lb and a V6 engine that can run on six, four or three cylinders depending on load.



Honda tackles a changing SUV segment with the Pilot

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The conundrum facing manufacturers of CUV/SUVs now is how to continue to offer the utility and towing capacity of the CUV/SUV as we know them, but make them affordable to maintain in a world of \$1.30/litre gasoline as this is being written.

Honda may have found a way in the 2009 Pilot SUV now on sale across Canada.

While the 2008 was nominally an eight-seater, the 2009 adds more foot and knee room in the second and third row, large enough for the 95th percentile male passenger.

In terms of fuel economy, the 3.5-litre V6 engine in the Pilot can run on six, four or even three cylinders depending on load. Estimated fuel usage numbers are 12.7/8.7L/100 km city/highway for the two-wheel-drive (2WD) version on 13.1/9.1L/100 km city/highway for the four-wheel-drive (4WD) version, which is an improvement over the 2008 model.

But what Honda has done is markedly improve the towing capacity of the 4WD up to 2,054 kg or about 4,500 lb. That means a person can cut back on fuel used by judicious use of cylinder deactivation, but still have the power to haul something like a big boat trailer when needed. The

2WD model has a towing rating of 1,590 kg (3,500 lb), which still includes most boats and U-Hauls.

With the 2WD model representing only about five per cent of anticipated sales, most 2009 Pilot buyers will opt for the big tow ability of the 4WD system Honda bills

as VTN-4. Honda calls its 4WD but it is really an advanced form of all-wheel-drive (AWD).

Unlike simple all-wheel-drive systems that only come into play after wheel slippage is detected, VTM-4 proactively routes torque under acceleration with up to 70 per cent that can be shifted to the rear wheels. There is also a lock-up function for use in extremely low traction situations like snow or mud. Activated by a button on the dashboard, it only works in first or second or reverse gears and disengages at speeds above 30 km/h. You won't use this very often, but in the near record snow conditions we had last winter, you'll be glad you had it.

Part of the ride-and-drive press introduction of the 2009 Pilot took place on a dedicated off-road course in a sand pit north of Montreal. Sand and gravel is the toughest surface to deal with in off-roading, so one would normally avoid a place like that unless the vehicle was rated for extreme traction conditions.

In normal AWD my co-driver and I tackled the heavy ruts and gullies carved

See HONDA, pg. 4

Free gas ups for grabs!

It may sound too good to be true, but it isn't: a handful of local retailers and *The Independent & Free Press* are banding together to give away \$500 of free gas.

With gas prices on the rise and the summer road trip season underway, the chance to win free gas is causing Halton Hills residents to flock to participating businesses to fill in ballots.

Ballots are available in Georgetown at *The Independent & Free Press* office in the Georgetown Market Place, Vision 2000 on Guelph Street, Outdoor Power Equipment at the corner of Guelph and Queen Streets, Turner Automotive on Armstrong Avenue, Flooring Diva Design on Guelph Street, Little India in downtown Georgetown and Quick Auto Repair/Krown Rust Control on

Guelph Street. Acton residents can fill out a ballot at Acton Auto Tech on Main Street and Acton Home Hardware on Queen Street East.

So far the month-long contest has been very popular with the people of Halton Hills. In fact, so many people have been participating in Acton that Acton Home Hardware ran out of ballots and had to get another batch.

Don't miss your chance to win \$500 in free gas. Visit any of the eight participating retailers or *The Independent & Free Press* office before July 31 to fill out a ballot.

The draw will take place on August 5, when one lucky winner will walk away with a \$500 gas card and the envy of everyone in town.

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