

Vibe should prove popular

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The interior is well thought out starting with a 60/40 split/fold rear seat that gives 1,399 litres (49.4 cu ft) of cargo space. And with the front passenger seat folded flat, sliding in a 10-foot ladder is no problem. And when I said, "sliding" I meant it because the seat backs and cargo floor are finished in a tough composite material that can take a lot of abuse. That cargo floor also flips up forward to reveal a stowage compartment with reconfigurable dividers and grocery bag hooks.

Between the front seats is a multi-use console with cupholder that can be adjusted to cradle different-sized beverage containers. At the front of the console is a standard three-prong, 115-volt AC plug. In addition, the sound system has an auxiliary jack for MP3 players.

The Vibe with AWD has a list price of \$22,995 which is pretty good and includes six air bags, air conditioning, cruise control, roof rack and rear washer/wiper. But my tester came with \$3,860 worth of options like a \$1,100 power sunroof I could live without and the \$800 Premium Sound Package that I would have to think about. But the younger demographic the Vibe is aimed at all want something like the 320-watt Monsoon sound system with seven speakers including a big, 10-inch subwoofer in the cargo wall. Another option was \$950 for 17-inch chrome clad alloy wheels where the

standard 16-inchers would be good enough for me.

But what I would want is the \$385 security system with content theft protection. Besides the normal horn blasts and flashing lights, there is also a motion sensor and glass breakage sensor that immediately shuts off gasoline flow so the car can't move.

With the \$1,160 shipping fee, the cost of the Vibe AWD as tested was \$28,115.

I hope what I am hearing is wrong about predictions of \$2/litre gasoline by end of the year. That is bound to change perceptions, but North Americans still will want to travel long distances in comfort with associated utility. To these factors has been added cheap cost of operation.

With all-wheel-drive and a cleverly thought out interior, the 2009 Pontiac Vibe should prove more popular than ever.

PONTIAC VIBE AWD 2009 AT A GLANCE

BODY STYLE: Compact five-door hatchback.

DRIVE METHOD: front-engine, all-wheel-drive

ENGINE: 2.4-litre, DOHC inline four-cylinder (158 hp, 162 lb/ft.)

FUEL ECONOMY: 10.3L/100 km (27 mpg) city; 7.8L/100 km (36 mpg) highway.

PRICE: \$22,995, as tested, \$28,115 including \$1,160 shipping fee.

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