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## Evoque gets a grip on the compact luxury SUV segment

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The 2012 Range Rover Evoque is a breakthrough vehicle in many ways. It is the lightest and most fuel efficient Range Rover ever built and brims over with new technologies.

Finally, a Range Rover that looks modern. I never got the Range Rover "thing" about why people think they are so chic and upper crust. There's no denying how luxuriously they are fitted out and Range Rover's redoubtable ability to go across/over/through any terrain on the planet is unquestioned.

But, to my eye, Range Rovers tend to look about the same as they did 30 years ago. Now there are a lot of people who will buy them simply for that reason alone, but with the number of high-quality competitors, many at lesser money, Range Rover needed a breath of fresh air and they have it with the 2012 Evoque.

The Evoque (pron. eve-oak) started out as the LRX concept that was visibly different in every way.

Instead of the square-rigged look of Range Rovers (or the Land Rover LR3 and LR4 for that matter) with their tall glass windows, the LRX was smaller, squatter with a dramatically low roofline. But most of all, the LRX caught the eye with a perfectly proportioned use of wheels and tires that matched the character lines, not overpowered them.

While a few signature design cues remain such as the clamshell hood. But there is also a rising beltline character line that is a first for Range Rover, but I bet it won't be the last.

A Range Rover starts at \$94,200. The Evoque starts at \$46,995 for the five-door and \$52,595 for the coupe not including a \$1,270 shipping fee. Instead of the huge V8 in the Range Rover, the Evoque uses a turbo-charged, direct fuel injection 2.0-litre inline four-cylinder producing 240 hp and 250 lb/ft

of torque with a six-speed automatic transmission. Running on premium, fuel consumption is 7/11.4/9.5L/100 km city/highway/combined.

The Evoque has an all-wheel-drive system, not the four-wheel-drive of its big brothers.

But it wouldn't be a Range Rover if it couldn't do what the brand does best — being able to traverse whatever it comes up against.

The Evoque uses what Range Rover calls Terrain Response that factors in the engine, gearbox, centre Haldex coupling and the braking and stability systems to match the

terrain.

It is incredibly complicated but, for the driver, simple to use.

Mounted on the transmission tunnel is a control which the driver selects for General Driving (on-road and easy off-road), Grass/Gravel/Snow (slippery or wet), Mud and Ruts and lastly Sand. Perhaps the toughest test of any off-road-vehicle is sand.

The Evoque also includes Hill Descent Control (HDC) that automatically restricts speed downhill with the anti-lock brakes and throttle. Also on tap is Gradient Release Control as part of the HDC. It progressively

releases the brakes on very steep grades or more gradual slopes for maximum control.

Lastly there is Hill Start Assist that holds the brakes for a few seconds so the driver doesn't roll backwards when going uphill for a standing stop. Trailer Stability Assist is also included.

On the inside the Evoque is everything you would expect from a Range Rover, richly fitted out and precise shut lines on doors, panels, speaker surrounds and, of course, the seats that, while firm and supportive, look like armchairs.

For the driver, controls are centred on an eight-inch HD touch screen that displays the audio, video, navigation and phone systems. Hard keys on each side of the screen are there as short cuts to the most used screens such as Home, Audio/Video, Navigation and Home.

There is an additional five-inch colour display between the two main gauges on the instrument panel for primary vehicle information. A neat part of this is a voice control system that works with "Say What You See" prompts in the display.

Besides a full range of connectivity, the Evoque offers a sound system with Meridian that has a 380-watt, 11-speaker setup as standard with a 825-watt, 17-speaker system optional.

Another nifty touch is puddle lamps that project the Range Rover logo on the ground.

Compared to its big brothers, the Evoque is more like a runabout and while it is a compact SUV, it doesn't feel like one.

The first impression on closing a driver's door is one of immense solidity. There's a satisfying "thunk" when you close any door.

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