

T & C has everything expected in a minivan-and more

From front page

is mated with a four-speed automatic transmission. Keeping in mind that this is a minivan, we're talking about with a weight of 2,069 kg (4,562-lbs) and not a luxury sedan, it offers power aplenty.

Despite being loaded down from floor to ceiling with camping and vacation gear, my wife and I both remarked at how quiet, smooth and nimble the minivan was in heavy Hwy. 401 traffic en route to the Brighton area.

There was plenty of pep when it was needed to pass and in normal driving, engine noise in the cabin was virtually non-existent. The all-wheel drive feature would surely be appreciated in snowy winter weather, but you wouldn't know it was there in summer.

Handling was excellent for a vehicle of this size and during a couple of panic stops when traffic came to a dead halt with little or no warning, braking was certainly up to par.

Transport Canada lists gas consumption at 14.7L/100 km (19 mpg) city and 9.5L/100 km (30 mpg) city and the beauty of it all is that it takes requires only regular unleaded gasoline.

My tester came with one of the new colours for 2003—Butane Blue Pearlcoat—a beautiful choice in my opinion.

Inside, the leather and suede seats (power operated of course) are extremely comfortable and sumptuous. The first two rows are captain's chairs with a 50/50 split bench in rear that we removed for extra cargo space. Despite being a van neophyte, these 'Easy Out' roller seats lived up to their name and were out in seconds. Certainly not a problem, but perhaps a touch outdated compared with other minivans offering seats that fold flat into the floor.

Behind the third row of seats is 566 litres (20 cu. ft.) of cargo space. With the seats out, you have 1,535 litres (54.2 cu. ft.).

We didn't get a chance to test the rear seat entertainment system, which plays music or movies with a single

disc DVD player with fold-down seven-inch screen, but I'm sure it would be well used by families with kids heading out on a long trip or for commutes to the cottage and back. It comes with a wireless remote control and wireless headphones. Auxiliary input jacks allow connections with video games, MP3 players, video cameras and the like. With 130-degree viewing capability, this screen offers comfortable viewing for all rear seat passengers.

However, the three-zone (driver, passenger and rear area) climate control system did prove to be a hit with my wife who prefers a little less chill in the air than I do.

Also impressive was the one-touch power sunroof, which Chrysler boasts as being one of the largest in the segment. It was a welcome addition on a couple of days when I cruised in to town to pick up groceries and supplies for the campsite.

The remote keyless entry, which also controls the sliding doors and rear liftgate, also worked like a charm when I finally got the hang of which button actually opened

which door.

The sound system features an Infinity AM/FM stereo radio with cassette player, a six-disc in-dash CD player and rear audio controls.

All in all, the Chrysler Town and Country offers virtually all of the amenities and more that one would expect in today's minivan.

At \$50,000-plus, it's anything but cheap. But if you're looking for the utility of a minivan with the luxury of a full-size sedan, the Town and Country Limited AWD should be at the top of your wish list.

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