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**2018 Mercedes-Benz  
GLC 350e**

**Base Price:** \$59,900  
**Price as Tested:** \$71,465  
**Engine Type:** 4-cylinder turbo  
**Power:** 315 hp  
**Torque:** 413 lb.-ft.  
**Fuel Consumption**  
**City:** 9.8 L/100 km  
**Highway:** 8.6 L/100 km  
**What's Best:** Quiet, sophisticated styling  
**What's Worst:** Paying a premium price for a plug-in hybrid  
**What's Interesting:** In cold weather pre-entry climate control turns on seat and steering wheel heater at entry

# Living large in the HOV lane

The sands continue to shift in the automotive world. Major manufacturers carry on deleting cars from their lineups to make room for more sport utility vehicles. And they continue to improve fuel economy by offering more hybrids, plug-in hybrids and electric cars to their product lines.



Kathy Renwald

gas-only GLC, and the right to travel in the high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes even with a single occupant.

The perks come with a price. The GLC 350e is almost \$13,000 more than the standard GLC, and the storage of the lithium ion battery reduces cargo space behind the rear seats by 155 litres. My test car was \$71,465. Base price for this model is \$59,900.

Putting the technology aside for a moment, the GLC 350e is laced with loveliness inside and out. The exterior is beautifully executed, balanced, graceful and free of gimmicks.

Inside, the sophistication continues. Mercedes does beautiful interiors. The leather seats are sculpted and

padded to the hilt and dark ash wood trim sets off the brushed metal instruments. The view from the driver's seat is of a well-organized dash layout, free of clutter.

Right off the bat, I liked two things about the 350e: it's quiet and powerful. No road or wind noise infiltrates the cabin and, for the most part, the ride is smooth.

The 315 horsepower produced thanks to the electric motor and four-cylinder turbocharged engine is more than enough for confident driving. The 413 lb.-ft of torque keeps the SUV pulling hard too.

To reap the benefits of the hybrid system, the 350e should be plugged in every day. The fully charged system is capable of

34 kilometres of electric-only driving. While underway, armchair engineers will be intrigued by the many ways the driver can choose modes that will save fuel and charge the battery. Certain economy modes actually increase pedal resistance so that the temptation to drive fast is squelched.

And there's the irony. The 350e is the most pleasurable to drive in the Sport and Sport-plus modes as it's quicker and more responsive, but it uses more gas. During the week I tested the SUV, I averaged 10.3 litres per 100 kilometres, while the official fuel economy numbers are 9.8.

Major options on my tester included the Premium Package at \$4,500. This included the GPS navigation, power liftgate, and a panoramic sunroof that brightened the very spacious backseat area. Premium Plus and Sport Packages packed a lot of goodies, but adaptive cruise control – one of my favourite features – was missing. It is part of the \$2,700 Intelligent Drive Package.

The addition of so many features means the cabin can be a very busy place. There's a computer-based cockpit management system (COMAND) at the centre console, rows of buttons on the dash and, on the steering wheel, there are more stalks to contemplate than a head of celery.

The gear selector is on a stalk on the right side of the steering wheel column. Mercedes must have some reason for this design, but I find it fussy and vague in its execution. Wipers, cruise control and steering-wheel adjustment are all on separate stalks on the left. It's best to do a familiarization tour before your first shakedown cruise.

Like all Mercedes, the GLC 350e will make you feel pampered and special. To justify the premium price just make sure you drive it with fuel-sipping precision and wave to us from the HOV lane.

*Kathy Renwald is an award-winning automotive writer, photographer and videographer.*

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