

Cadillac's new tall wagon

The luxury brand's new **XT4 wagon** that goes on sale later this year looks to be a critical addition to the lineup. This model offers plenty of space, especially for second-row passengers. The standard turbocharged 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine — 237 horsepower and 258 pound-feet of torque — should prove powerful and thrifty enough to satisfy most buyers. If there's a down side, it's a lack of cargo room compared to the XT4's major competitors, including the BMW X1, Audi Q3, Lincoln MKC and Lexus NX. Cadillac says that the XT4's starting price will be a shade under \$36,000, which is in line with other compact luxury brands.



The 2019 Cadillac XT4 aims to compete with the BMW X1 and Audi Q3.

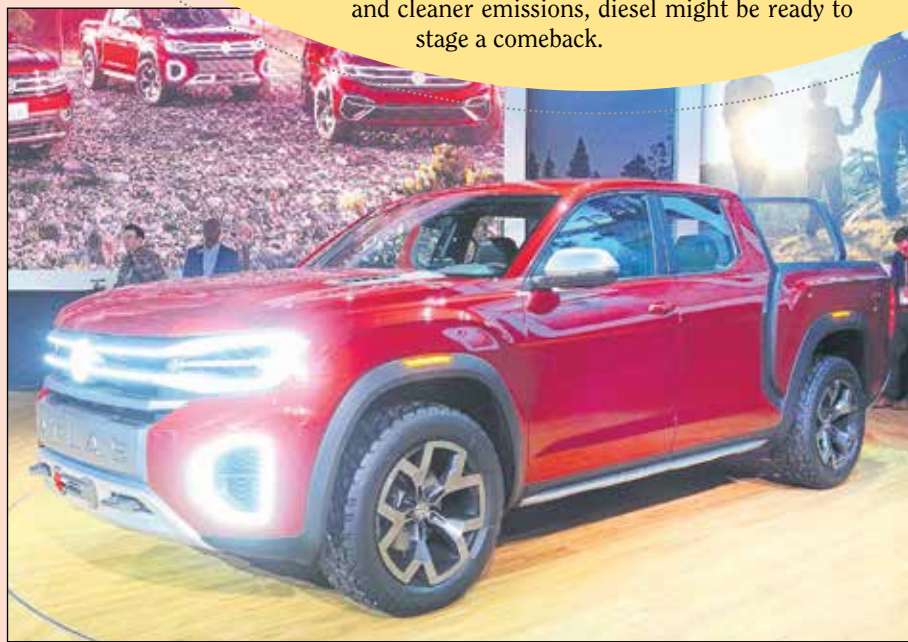
X1, Audi Q3, Lincoln MKC and Lexus NX. Cadillac says that the XT4's starting price will be a shade under \$36,000, which is in line with other compact luxury brands.

Hyundai's new seven-passenger Santa Fe XL will be getting a diesel engine.



Hyundai says: Diesel's back

The 2015 diesel-cheating scandal cost Volkswagen some \$25 billion in the U.S. alone, so it's no wonder it has (along with fellow German automakers Audi and Porsche) scrubbed diesel-powered vehicles from its North American line-up, instead focusing on expanding its electric-powered offerings. In fact, the EPA lists only 11 diesel-powered models for 2018. In light of this, many figured that that diesel's days were numbered. However, just because some are abandoning that particular propulsion system doesn't necessarily mean that all other automakers are following suit. Hyundai's new **2019 Santa Fe XL** will be available with a 2.2-liter four-cylinder turbo-diesel rated at 197 horsepower and 322 pound-feet of torque. The seven-passenger Santa Fe's larger size and squared-off shape also means more passenger and cargo room. The new model is expected to arrive in the third quarter of 2018. Perhaps, along with the promise of better efficiency and cleaner emissions, diesel might be ready to stage a comeback.



Volkswagen's Atlas Tanoak pickup was shown off at last month's New York Auto Show. The Atlas Cross Sport concept on which it's based is a go. How about VW's truck?



Could Premium soon be the only gasoline grade available at the pump?

Is a single-grade of gas in our future?

With both refiners and automakers on board, is it possible that the three most common unleaded fuel grade choices at the pump — 87 octane (Regular), 89 (Plus) and 93 (Premium) — could be whittled down to just one?

As reported in *Automotive News*, U.S. automakers would like that to happen. And they'd like that single fuel grade to be Premium, because that's the most commonly used in Europe.

In testimony before the House Energy and Commerce Committee's environment subcommittee on April 13, General Motors V.P. of Global Propulsion Systems Dan Nicholson said the move to a single fuel grade would standardize engine designs across global markets. Automakers are also keen on using Premium because it's the easiest way to boost an engine's fuel efficiency. Higher octane rates enable higher compression ratios, which not only increase efficiency, but also horsepower and torque. And who doesn't want their job to be easier?

As far as standardization, it goes without saying that the move would also make fuel refiners' operations a lot simpler, too.

What will this mean for product end-users — you know, the people who pump the gas into their cars... and pay for it? Obviously, an increase in price.

But market watchers' estimates are all over the place. In New York state as of press time, Premium was selling for an average of 43 cents a gallon higher than Regular. David Filipe, Ford's V.P. of Power Train Engineering, suggested the choice consolidation would save money, bringing down the increase to less than five cents per gallon. But others warn that the capital costs to refiners during the switchover process could cause much larger spikes in price. All for a 3 percent increase in fuel economy.

Whether this remains an elusive pipe dream of automakers and refiners remains to be seen. But we're sure that the drivers of America are going to want a say in any change at the pump.

Is VW going trucking?

It sure looks that way after the automaker rolled out a fully finished pickup concept at the New York International Auto Show in March.

The four-door **Volkswagen Atlas Tanoak** (based on the Atlas utility-vehicle platform) was shown alongside the stylish five-passenger **Atlas Cross Sport** concept, which is a virtual lock for the 2019 model year. With the apparent resurgence of midsize pickup trucks in North America, the Tanoak makes sense, even if it's just a concept at this point.

Along with the current seven-passenger Atlas, adding the Cross Sport and Tanoak to the lineup would indicate that VW is forming a sub-brand of Atlas nameplates.

TEST DRIVE

2018 Ford EcoSport

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There's sufficient power to manage daily driving duties, though high demand situations like passing or highway lane merges require a lot of advance planning.

EPA fuel economy estimates peg the EcoSport FWD 1.0 at 27 miles per gallon city, 29 highway and 28 combined, and my week behind the wheel netted 23 mpg's in mixed driving. Those numbers aren't very large, for a vehicle this small.

Given that and the tepid acceleration (mid/high 10 second range from 0-60), upgrading to the 2.0L is recommended.

While your mileage won't improve (EPA predicts that the fuel economy with that engine will be 23/29/25), you'll pick up an additional 43 horsepower and 24 lb.-ft. of torque for improved responsiveness. And, that \$1,500 also buys you the added traction of all-wheel drive, for winter driving confidence.



Unlike most vehicles in the subcompact crossover segment (which use a top-hinged liftgate), the Ford EcoSport uses a side-swinging door. The hinge on the left side allows for accessing the cargo bay while parked on the street without blocking the sidewalk.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURER

TEST DRIVE this vehicle at these preferred dealerships:

DEPAULA FORD
799 Central Ave, Albany, NY 12206
(518) 336-0979 www.depaulaford.com

JACK BYRNE FORD
1003 Hudson River Rd., Mechanicville, NY 12118
(518) 664-9841 jackbyrneford.dealerconnection.com

EcoSport's ride is better than you'd surmise, given its small size. It feels nimble and its small footprint functions well in cities and other tight quarters situations, where it will fit in parking spaces that others won't even slow down to consider.

An SE with AWD is the model that makes the most sense, striking the best balance of features and price point. Loaded models in upper level trims are

a harder sell, as you reach a sticker price that overlaps larger, worthy choices.

For example, my Titanium tester stickered for \$24,720. That compares with a current net price of \$23,795 for a Ford Escape.

A regular contributor to the Times Union for more than 25 years, Dan Lyons is the award-winning author of six books, and photographer of 180 calendars.