

Ride in a Telluride

In case you hadn't noticed, the variety of full-size utility vehicles with three rows of seats has been steadily increasing. We can confirm **Kia** is joining the party with the new **Telluride** (named for the Colorado ski town). The wagon, which was displayed in concept form back in 2016, is reportedly based on a stretched version of the Sorento utility vehicle, which also offers three rows of seats. Although powertrain info is scarce, a turbocharged four-cylinder base engine plus an available V-6 assisted by an electric motor is rumored. For the record, this is Kia's second shot at marketing a full-size utility vehicle; a decade ago, the Borrego made a brief appearance before disappearing after two years. The Telluride arrives in mid-2019 as a 2020 model.



The upcoming Kia Telluride tall wagon will reportedly sit on the Sorento platform.



Hyundai will reportedly build a production version of the **Essentia** concept vehicle.

The Genesis of a new halo car

The response to the **Essentia** concept featured at the 2018 New York International Auto Show was apparently so positive that **Genesis** — the stand-alone premium brand started by **Hyundai** — is building a limited-production model based on the ultra-sleek design. If the final product remains true to the show car, we can expect a carbon fiber monocoque chassis and body, scissors-style door openings, autonomous driving capabilities and perhaps even retain the transparent hood. The Essentia will feature an all-electric drivetrain, with motors in the front and rear wheels powering it from 0 to 60 in 3.0 seconds. The model was penned by Genesis design head Luc Donckerwolke, who was responsible for the Lamborghini Murcielago and Gallardo. The final price is expected to top \$150,000 when it debuts, possibly in 2021.



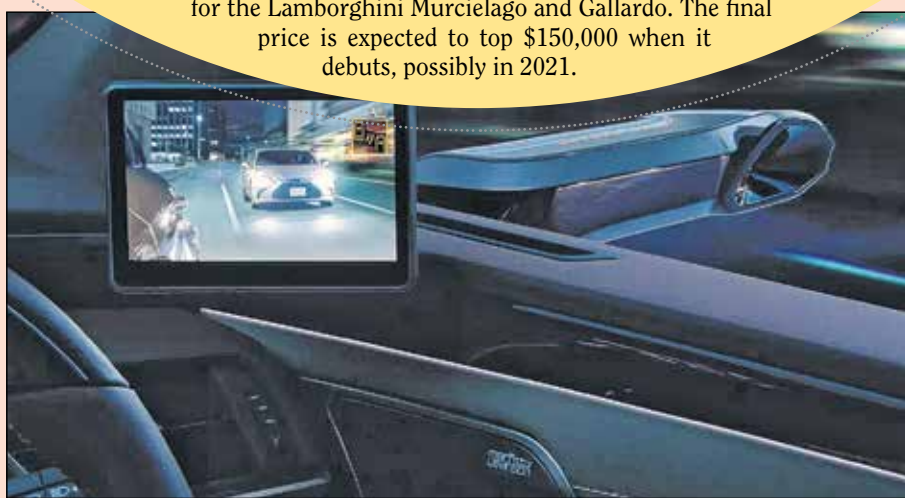
The Bison is a more radical off-road version of the Chevrolet Colorado ZR2.

The tough-truck trend picks up

Fans of off-road-capable pickups should rejoice the growing list of terrain-challenging models to choose from these days, including the **Ford F-150 Raptor**, **Chevrolet Colorado ZR2**, **RAM 1500 Rebel** and **Toyota Tundra TRD Pro**.

The most recent is the **Chevrolet Colorado Bison ZR2** that will be available in early 2019. As if the regular ZR2 isn't tough enough, the Bison's content list includes five hardened Boron-steel skid plates to protect various exposed components from boulders, tree stumps, etc.

Available is an intake snorkel that keeps water out of the engine when fording deep rivers. As with the regular ZR2, the Bison can be had in extended and crew-cab form, either with the 308-horsepower 3.6-liter V-6 or the extra-cost 2.8-liter four-cylinder turbo-diesel engine.



The 2019 Lexus ES will be the first vehicle to come with a digital outer mirror system.

Lexus swaps out side mirrors for cameras

Toyota Motors will become the first major automaker to replace the conventional side view mirror on a mass-produced vehicle with a digital camera-based system.

The "digital outer mirror" system uses small cameras on the vehicle's exterior to display the view outside on monitors mounted on both sides of the dashboard. According to Toyota, the cameras take up less space and thus offer better forward visibility for the driver, offer expanded views when backing up or turning and reduce wind noise.

Toyota will begin introducing the digital outer mirror system later this month on its premium **2019 Lexus ES** sedan.

TEST DRIVE

2018 Honda Clarity

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only seven gallons in its gas tank, but the 1.5L four-cylinder, Atkinson cycle engine is fuel frugal. EPA says should return 42 miles per gallon, so the maximum combined range with a full charge and a tank full of gas is about 340 miles.

Clarity has a composed, big car ride. It absorbs road bumps and ruts nicely, making this a very comfortable trip taker. Handling is competent; steering is well boosted, but offers little feedback. If not

Clarity has a composed, big car ride. It absorbs road bumps and ruts nicely.

in drivability, there is some sport to be had in braking. Those appendages on the steering wheel that look like paddle shifters are deceleration selectors.

You can use them to progressively add/subtract braking, without resorting to the pedal. Paddle shifters have become ubiquitous in recent times though they're mostly ornamental. Unless yours is one of the few cars with a dual clutch automatic transmission (Clarity isn't), the lack of instant gear change in response to shift request grows old in a New York minute, and the paddles are left "unpaddled." Deceleration paddles are a different matter — if only for their rarity.

The last time I saw this feature was in the Chevy Bolt, and here as there, it's interesting to play with occasionally, feeding the battery packs, as you ease your way through corners or time your braking as you approach a turn or exit.

The front cabin has a clean, conservative look about it. The faux suede panels and faux wood trim on dash and door panels of my Touring tester mingle with conventional plastics and pebbled vinyl. Several onboard system controls are accessed through the center touchscreen, which is in easy reach.

The infotainment system integrates Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, allowing access to your smartphone apps. The digital volume switch on the touchscreen doesn't work well, and drivers quickly learn to use to the secondary controls on the steering wheel as a workaround. The shift selector is a straight line, multi-level push button arrangement, located at the base of the center stack. It's an example of a design answer to a question that nobody asked.

Clarity seats 4-5 adults comfortably. Rear seat leg room is roomy (36.6 inches), and significantly more than Volt (34.7 inches), yet substantially less than Accord hybrid (40.4 inches). The trunk is wide at the opening, but it narrows quickly and the load floor slopes upward. Rear seatbacks fold to a mostly flat position to accommodate longer items. Cargo capacity (14.8 cubic-feet) is more than Volt (10.6) or Accord hybrid (13.5) but, widening the hybrid comparison net, all



TEST DRIVE this vehicle at these preferred dealerships:

LIA HONDA 1258 Central Ave., Albany, NY 12205
518-438-4555 www.liahondaofalbany.com

MOHAWK HONDA 1780 Freemans Bridge Rd., Scotia, NY 12302
518-370-4911 www.mohawkhonda.com

are less than Prius Prime's 19.8 cu.-ft. — owing to its four door hatchback (rather than sedan) design.

Standard on all models is a suite of safety-related technologies known as Honda Sensing. The package includes Collision Mitigation Braking System, Forward Collision Warning, Adaptive Cruise Control, Road Departure Mitigation and Lane Keeping Assist.

I find some of these (lane keeping, road departure) useful for night driving when you're tired, but they're otherwise intrusive. The forward collision warning can be overly cautious, flashing warnings before they're necessary.

LaneWatch (also standard) displays a camera-generated view of what's behind you, when you switch on the right hand turn signal, or press the button on the end of the stalk. The view — which is displayed on the center screen — is of the right side rear only. An alternate take on blind spot monitoring, LaneWatch is handy, but since people make left hand lane changes as well as right, it's half as effective as it could/should be.

When gas prices are relatively low and stable as they have been in recent years, hybrids are a harder sell than when fuel

prices spike. In these market conditions, it's interesting to see how Honda and Toyota have responded, with respect to their hybrid product lines. Toyota seems to be decentralizing their hybrid technology; spreading it out as a powertrain option on different models, rather than concentrating solely on Prius (this year, Toyota dropped one of its Prius models (the Prius V wagon)).

At the same time, Honda is doubling down on their existing hybrid brands, launching a new version of the Insight (aiming — as in the previous two generations — directly at Prius) and simultaneously expanding their Clarity lineup to three models (EV, FCV, PHEV).

The only traditional Honda brand to offer an option for hybrid power is the Accord Hybrid (which is arguably the Clarity PHEV's biggest competitor). Two hybrid heavyweights, facing the same headwinds, tacking in different directions, towards the same goal.

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.



The Honda Clarity seats 4-5 adults comfortably, and the front cabin (above) has a clean, conservative look about it.