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Why Presidents' Day is the best time for car shopping

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TEST DRIVE

Sedan for All Seasons

2019 Cadillac XTS

DAN LYONS | text and photos
Special to the Times Union

Cadillac's 10-model lineup includes one hybrid, two coupes, three crossovers/SUVs and four sedans. That spread is sedan heavy, by modern standards, but true to the company's roots. And while many SUVs and Crossovers have spun off premium versions (including Cadillacs), the luxury class has traditionally been populated by cars, (frequently four-doors), and this segment is still served by Cadillac.



The largest member of the company's sedan lineup is the XTS. The combined successor to the STS* and DTS* series, XTS* launched in the 2013 model year. (*Column Aside: All these letters make me long for the days when model names were really names. Cadillac had some great ones — Eldorado, Fleetwood, Coupe Deville...).

V-Series is Cadillac's designation for their high-performance variants. In the ATS and CTS lines, the "V"

2019 Cadillac XTS
MSRP: \$46,895 - \$72,995

cars are considered separate models. In XTS, V-Sport Platinum is simply the top trim level, below which are Platinum, Premium Luxury, Luxury and Standard.

Last year's face/tail lift brought Cadillac's largest car in sync, stylistically, with the rest of the lineup, all of which now sport the company's distinctive, LED head and taillight treatments.

Like the other V-Series offerings, XTS V-Sport Platinum packs a twin-turbo, 3.6L V-6 under the hood, with 410 horsepower and 369 lb.-ft. of torque in XTS trim. All other models (including my test driver) employ a direct injection, 3.6-liter V-6 that's rated at 304 h.p. @ 6,800 r.p.m. and 264 lb.-ft. of torque. Part of the luxury experience is having more than you need.

Viewed through that prism, the non-turbo version of the Cadillac V-6 has less excess power than some of its competitors. Though obviously less potent than the V-Sport motor, the 3.6L is nonetheless a good match for the XTS. Paired with a six-speed automatic transmission, it has no problems with passing, merging or cruising. Fuel economy isn't typically a high priority item for luxury car buyers. Ditto and more so, when gas prices are relatively low (as they are now). I recorded 16 miles per gallon during my test, but the EPA estimates the fuel economy of the 3.6L at 19/28/22 (FWD), 17/26/20 (AWD). Yes, AWD. Front-wheel-drive is standard on XTS, Luxury, Premium Luxury and Platinum trim levels. A Haldex all-wheel-drive system is a \$2,000 option on all but the base XTS (and is standard on V-Sport Platinum).

All-wheel-drive is considerably less common in cars than it is in crossovers, but it makes sense for the same reasons. And AWD in a vehicle with a lower center of gravity (as have cars, relative to crossovers) gives you added traction in a better balanced package.

My thinking is this. If you live where we do, and you're rewarding yourself with a luxury vehicle, allow yourself the added luxury of not worrying about getting caught out in a snowstorm.

The luxury class has traditionally been populated by cars, and this segment is still served by Cadillac.



TRUE TO ITS ROOTS, Cadillac's lineup is still sedan heavy, and the 2019 XTS is the largest model in the maker's stable of luxury four-doors. The XTS is, however, available with all-wheel-drive, as well as a high-performance V variant.

Snow aside, XTS drives as you'd expect a luxury car to drive. Magnetic Ride Suspension (unavailable on XTS and Luxury, standard on Premium Luxury and above trims) makes virtually real time adjustments to shock absorbers in response to changing road conditions. It's packaged with larger wheels/tires (20-inch) and only stiffens ride quality slightly.

Buyers seeking maximum performance in a large, luxury car should look at the V-Sport Platinum. However, the standard suspension setup delivers the goods most luxury buyers look for, for less.

Ride quality is very smooth, cushioning bumps nicely without feeling floaty. Expansion joints are noted rather than felt. It's a very trip worthy vehicle.

The interior has a suitably upscale look and feel, with real wood trim accenting the leather upholstery. Interior fit and finish is impressive. The onboard infotainment system is compatible with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, for those wishing to access their smartphone apps. And, if all that accessing taps out your phone's battery, the standard equipment charging pad for wireless devices gets a power boost for 2019. CUE — Cadillac User Experience — is the interface to access many features (navigation, audio, phone) via 8-inch touchscreen.

A secondary set of virtual switchgear for HVAC and sound system lie just below. The reaction time for the touch sensitive controls varies. The sliding controls for sound system volume and HVAC fan speed are frustratingly slow to react and inexact to operate. And they won't take input from a winter gloved hand. Auxiliary controls on the steering wheel are a better option for adjusting volume and channels, but there's no second-

ary switchgear for fan speed. CUE remains the weak link in an otherwise nicely appointed cabin.

XTS seats adults comfortably in both rows. The trunk is long and large; the 18 cubic feet of capacity will hold a lot of luggage. XTS has the normal, ¾ rear blind spots found on all sedans. Blind spot monitoring is useful for alerting you to what you can't see. It's standard on the top three trim levels, optional on Luxury trim (via the Driver Awareness Package) and surprisingly, not available at all on the base XTS.

To me, the best bet for XTS is a Luxury trim model with AWD. This combination yields a winter friendly car, with the traditional luxury cars bases covered (room, comfort), and a handful of popular options (navigation system, heated steering wheel and front/rear seats, memory seat settings, front parking sensors).

Add the aforementioned Driver Awareness Package (\$1,700), and you'll also have a usable package of Driver Assist Technology (blind spot monitoring, rear cross-traffic alert, bird's-eye view camera system, lane departure warning, safety alert driver's seat and forward collision alert with low speed emergency braking).

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.



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