



## Little to regret in 50-grand Yukon

As a responsible member of the motoring media, I'm having some guilt for liking the new, large sport utility vehicles from General Motors.

I've just finished a week in a GMC Yukon and if you need one of these things, the 2007 model is a desirable improvement over the 2006.

A variant of the Chevy Tahoe, which is also the backbone for the Cadillac Escalade, this SUV is more evolved technologically. These trucks are so smooth now that they are the offspring of the great American sedan that was lost when cars were downsized to upsize fuel economy.

It used to be that trying to dress up a GM truck was an oxymoron. Not now. The quality of materials and how they are put together make a fine cruising machine, even when costing more than \$50,000 "popularly equipped."

The Yukon tester cost \$51,785, dressed in more than \$12,000 in options, four-wheel drive and the 325-horsepower, 5.3-liter V-8. A \$1,000 incentive through Jan. 3 can be combined with regional incentives and others, such as the Plumbing, Heating and Cooling Association or the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association, for which card-carrying members get a \$500 discount (check [www.edmunds.com](http://www.edmunds.com) for these and upcoming incentives).

Climb into the bucket seats and it's the La-Z-Boy command center. The leather is attractive, the seats full-bodied and all switches and controls are within comfortable reach and viewing.

You may not need a navigation system, but this one is packaged with a DVD and a back-up camera. Trust me, once you've experienced a back-up camera, you'll wonder how you got along without one

before. Same with the power tailgate (\$350). And, maybe, same with the 20-inch tires and polished aluminum wheels. The tires and wheels are a \$1,795 extra and they won't be cheap to replace, but they do enhance the styling.

I also would have no regrets paying extra for the adjustable pedals, trizone automatic air conditioning, head curtain air bags, Bose audio, rear parking assist (tones signal that objects are close) and satellite radio - all those and more are in the SLT2 package that costs \$4,495.

A Flex-Fuel E85 version of the 5.3-liter - capable of running on E85 ethanol fuel or a mixture of E85 and gasoline - is standard on four-wheel-drive models and optional on 2WD models.

At 5,674 pounds at the curb, these trucks are substantially heavier than the 2006 models, but they also get substantially better fuel mileage and still run on 87 octane. The active fuel management system shuts down a bank of cylinders when they aren't needed and it's not likely the driver will notice.

And here's the caveat: In a year or so - GM won't say when - these trucks will get six-speed automatic transmissions that will give better fuel economy. The current four-speed automatics are fairly fuel efficient and bulletproof.

Big trucks are self-limiting. When gas was cheap, they were trendy jewelry, but paying \$80 and more to fill up is a great teaching tool. Most people learn quickly that if they don't need to blow that kind of money, they'll get something else as soon as possible. Those who do need a truck will appreciate the power, comfort and utility of the Yukon/Tahoe.

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