

# Road Beat: Acura TLX V-6 AWD A-Spec purrs



The Acura TLX V-6 AWD A-Spec is near perfect. Photos/Larry Weitzman

**By Larry Weitzman**

Not very often does a car come along that performs so well in all aspects of what a car is supposed to do that you want one for yourself. The new Acura TLX V-6 AWD A-Spec is that car. It does everything so well, that it astounds the mind; how can they (Acura/Honda) do this?

Do what you might ask? Well here's what: 0-60 mph in 5.43 seconds; 36.8 mpg at 70 mph on a level highway (two-way run); overall fuel economy of 27.1 mpg in aggressive driving for 400 miles; corner like a cat or water in a hose; ride with sublime quiet (something new from Acura/Honda) and smoothness; roar

like a real muscle car when you get your foot into it (best sounding V-6 ever); coddle you with superb comfort and purposeful luxury; all in a perfect mid-size package priced at a very reasonable \$45,000.

I could stop right here and tell you that you would be a fool not to check out this perfect ride if you are on the market for a mid-size near luxu ride, or even an upscaled mid-size sedan. You would be.

But first there has to be that physical attraction, and Acura design needs to be loved, and I am not sure that it will be everyone's Mona Lisa. Honda has been on a design roll lately, especially with the new Civic, new Accord, CR-V, Pilot and Ridgeline, all superb designs or much improved. Acura style over the 2017 has been tweaked especially in the front end with the new mesh grille, displacing the eagle beak. Much improved, as is the rest of the more aggressive front end. I like it. It could lose the huge Acura badge on the front grille.

Two character lines highlight the sleekness of its shape and give it some muscle as well. But the window line ends a little pointy, but beggars can't be choosers, and I am begging for this ride. Overall, I would call it and 8+ on a 10 scale. It's good looking enough for me and because of its other attributes, it's a car I want in my garage.



**Specifications**

Price \$31,900 to about \$45,000

### **Engines**

2.4L DOHC, 16 valve, VTEC inline four 206 hp @ 6,800 rpm

182 lb.-ft. of torque @ 4,500 rpm

3.5L DOHC, 24 valve VTEC V-6 290 hp @ 6,200 rpm

267 lb.-ft. of torque @ 4,500 rpm

### **Transmissions**

Eight-speed DCT (I-4)

Nine-speed torque converter automatic (V-6)

### **Configuration**

Transverse mounted front engine/FWD/AWD (V-6 only)

### **Dimensions**

Wheelbase 109.3 inches

Length 191.5 inches

Width 73.0 inches

Height 57.0 inches

Track (f/r) 62.8/63.1 inches

Weight 3,838 pounds

Weight Distribution (% f/r) 60/40

Fuel capacity 17.2 gallons

Passenger volume 93.3 cubic feet

Trunk capacity 14.3 cubic feet

Turning circle 39.5 feet

Wheels 19X8 inch alloys

Tires 245/40X19 inches (high performance, all season)

## **Performance**

0-60 mph 5.43 seconds

50-70 mph 3.00 seconds

50-70 mph uphill 4.09  
seconds

Top speed Way beyond sanity

Fuel economy EPA rated  
20/29/23 mpg

city/highway/combined.

Expect 27-28 mpg in rural  
county driving with some  
stop and go, 36.8 mpg on the  
highway at legal speeds.

My prior TLX, which also received rave reviews from me, had a 2.4L DOHC, 16 valve four banger of 206 hp at 6,800 rpm and 182 pounds of twist at 4,500 rpm. The outstanding 3.5L V-6, 24 valve, SOHC motor turns out 290 hp at 6,200 rpm and 267 pounds of twist at 4,500 rpm. Quite the injection of steroids. It certainly pumped up this Acura, helped by a nine-speed auto cog-swapper found in other Acuras and the upscale Pilot. Zero-60 mph happened in just 5.43 seconds while a 50-70 mph level pass was three seconds flat and the same run up a steep grade only stretched that time by a second to 4.09 seconds. All world class numbers. And this is not a light car tipping the scales at 3,838 pounds. The standard four banger TLX had times of 6.88, 3.65. and 5.53 seconds, excellent times in their own right and enough to satisfy 98 percent of drivers, but the V-6 is a road burner.

And when you get into even half throttle this Acura makes music that I never heard from a V-6 before, a solid, classic hard rock sound that would make a muscle car blush. I still don't know how they did that.

It gets even better. Yeah, sure, the EPA rates the Acura at 20/29/23 mpg city/highway/combined, but as with the four-

banger review and test, expect the V-6 to do much better, in about the exact same increments as the four-banger. Overall the Acura averaged 27.1 mpg in 400 miles of aggressive driving with little time on the highway. On a level highway, it posted a two-way average at 70 mph of 36.8 mpg and in my 210-mile round trip to Carson City the TLX V-6 averaged 30.2 mpg. That's 4-8 mpg better than the EPA numbers and I expect with less dipping into that delicious throttle, my numbers would improve by 1-2 mpg. With 17.2 gallons onboard, range will be well over a bladder busting 500 miles at my numbers, possibly 600 miles. Awesome.

Next is the Acura's exemplary handling, like the proverbial water in a hose. All the credentials are present, especially with the A-Spec which tightens up the already state of the art suspension and steering, adds wider, taller 19X8 inch alloys shod with wide 245/40 series rubber. The result is what appears to be unlimited grip, a flat attitude and the point and shoot demeanor of a real sports car. It is well balanced and inspires perhaps too much confidence. While turn in is very crisp and dead nuts on, steering, in tighter corners attention must be paid to help unwind the steering wheel. I love the way it handles. About the only negative is the 39.5 foot turning circle, it could be tighter, but when you have wide wheels and AWD, sometimes it suffers by a foot or two in all super high-performance automobiles.

Ride quality is also perfect at least for this backside. Absolutely a magic carpet on smooth roads, the supple suspenders absorb the bumps in a solid fashion with the body feeling like its carved out of an ingot of steel. And then there is the quiet, something Acura is not known for. But you can fuhgeddaboutit. Wind, road and tire noise is gone. Zero, zip, nada. And one of the reasons fuel economy is so good is that in 9th gear at 70 mph, the engine is literally just off idle at 1,550 rpm, one of the lowest engines speeds ever recorded by the Road Beat in about 1,000 road tests. That's

about where a late generation Corvette runs.

Safety is there in spades with all the acronyms present including lane keep assist, collision mitigation braking and forward collision warning. LED headlights are amazing and the four-wheel discs are huge at over a foot in diameter.

Now to the best part, the interior, a solid 10. Seating not only looks spectacular, they sit even better. Done in leather with Alcantara inserts, they are heated and ventilated. The instrument panel binnacle has all the right gauges, big speedo and tach plus an excellent trip computer. Easy to use. The center stack is improving and becoming more user friendly and was much easier to use. No issues there anymore. Of course, the overall quality is top of the line.

Rear seating is excellent for two and three if necessary. Trunk is a reasonable 14 plus cubes.

Pricing starts and ends for Acura TLX AWD A-Spec at \$45,750 including \$950 for the train ride from Marysville, Ohio assembly plant. It is 2/3 American in parts content as well. And the warranty is a six year/70,000 mile on the powertrain and four years/50,000 miles over the whole car. It's like a stick of Doublemint gum, for \$45K you get double the pleasure.

*Larry Weitzman has been into cars since he was 5 years old. At 8 he could recite from memory the hp of every car made in the U.S. He has put in thousands of laps on racetracks all over the Western United States.*