



2018 LINCOLN NAVIGATOR

Base Price: \$90,500
Price as Tested: \$102,300
Engine Type: 3.5-litre V6, twin turbo
Power: 450 hp
Torque: 510 lb.-ft.
Fuel Consumption
City: 14.9 L/100 km
Highway: 11.3 L/100 km
What's Best: Quiet; spacious back seats; powerful; interior craftsmanship
What's Worst: Exterior styling boxy and unexciting
What's Interesting: Lincoln one of only two brands (the other is Genesis) to offer free pick-up and drop-off for servicing, within a 30-kilometre range.

Navigator has brains and brawn

Big, brash and as shapely as a brick, the all new Lincoln Navigator appears to be strutting even when it's stationary. Absent are curved lines and aerodynamics. Picture instead a gleaming Lincoln grille on the front and acres of aluminum behind it.

It's so high you need running boards to get in. It's so long, there must be a time zone change between the front and third-row seats. It's so loaded with luxury, the driver's seat adjusts in 30 ways.

Lincoln is laying on the perks and glamour, and people are lapping it up. Sales are lurching upward in Canada and the United States. The big price tag, \$102,300 for the Reserve edition I tested, is no barrier to Lincoln lust.

The Navigator is in some ways an old-school SUV. It has the DNA of a truck, with heavy-duty towing capacity (3,810 kilograms), and an all-aluminum body bolted on the frame like a Ford F-150. Drive it and it feels like a truck. It's not a harsh ride, but certainly has more body



Kathy Renwald

motion than a big SUV in the Range Rover lineup or Mercedes-Benz GLS-550.

That's an observation, not a criticism. If people didn't like the way trucks ride, sales of luxury pickup trucks wouldn't be so torrid in North America.

So in addition to all-wheel-drive capability, towing prowess and a solid 450 horsepower, Lincoln pads the muscle profile with a lux interior and layers of technology.

In the cabin, the first thing to be savoured is the silence. Even prancing around the city over beaten-up pavement, the interior is like a meditation zone. Engine noise is barely detectable as the 10-speed automatic transmission keeps revs low, muffling mechanical noise and saving fuel. Passenger comfort is guaranteed in the spa-like heated, cooled and massage-ready leather

seats. Personal items can be stowed in the many bins and pockets.

The dash design follows the Navigator theme in being straight-laced and efficient. The iPad-sized touch screen hovering over the centre console does not retract into the dash. While some note this as a design flaw, it didn't bother me.

Below the touch screen are push buttons for transmission selection. The absence of a traditional gear shift saves space in the busy centre section, but I found the buttons awkward during the week's testing. This would likely change over a longer test period.

Visibility from the driver's seat is good, although I did fold down all the backseat

headrests in order to have a bigger view via the rearview mirror. A backup camera also helps in reversing the massive Navigator. I would wish that for \$102,000 Lincoln could find a way to keep the camera lens clean. During the rainy time I was test driving, the lens was often obstructed by road spray.

Second-row seats have gobs of space around them, with flowing light from the never-ending panoramic sunroofs and great views in all directions. When tired of the scenery, occupants can fire up the rear-seat entertainment and get lost in a movie. Three more people can fit in the third-row seats where life is pretty good too.

In the Reserve edition of the Navigator, the feature list is deep. Wood trim, leather surfaces, tri-zone heating, programmable interior lighting, foot-activated lift gate, 360-degree camera, lane departure, trailer backup assist . . . the list goes on.

Among the performance features is a mode setting where the driver can choose between sporty, normal, eco and various slippery/snowy settings.

Most people will drive the Navigator in the sporty mode Lincoln calls "Excite," where changes include more steering feel and handling response.

Overall, the Navigator is easy and pleasant to drive, with plenty of power to move its heft. I did appreciate the lane-departure feature with its gentle steering correction as I was getting used to the vehicle's size.

It's a complex, high-tech vehicle, and that's where all vehicles are headed. But sometimes tech and glitch go hand in hand.

Near the end of my test week, the trunk liftgate started to open on its own, multiple times. Then one night the key fob wouldn't unlock the doors, and the Navigator wouldn't start. It had to be towed in for service. Lincoln roadside assistance was excellent. The culprit, Ford tells me, was a loose wiring harness that affected all of the electrical functions of the vehicle.

Glitches happen, especially with new models. It likely won't dampen the warm wave of love washing over the brawny, brainy Navigator.

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