



Buick LaCrosse

Photos by General Motors

2011 Buick LaCrosse CXL and Regal CXL Exhibit A: The New General Motors

Buick's artful designs for the LaCrosse last year and all new Regal this year (along with Cadillac's CTS Coupe—see last issue) made it clear that the old GM was gone. Now GM charts a new course, creates stylish automobiles with beautiful interiors, blesses them with excellent handling for their categories, has boosted the warranties, and makes 'em fun to drive. Here then are two fwd Buick sedans built to impress. And impress they do.

Simply stated, the LaCrosse is a beautiful car inside and out. Elegant, gracefully flowing lines speak of the good life, American style. Inside, creatively penned designs fulfilled in rich looking and feeling materials let you feel you're sitting in a car costing much more.

Front 8-way power seats are comfortable for the long haul and are heated. Options adding more comfort included ventilated front seats, heated wood and leather steering wheel, power rear sunshade, navigation with backup camera, and rear seat DVD entertainment system. There's loads of rear legroom, too, and rear seats fold down to extend the capacity of the large trunk. And don't forget that 120-volt house-type plug!

This LaCrosse had GM's 2.4L 4-cylinder engine with 182 horsepower. A 280-horsepower V6 is available on all models; standard on the CXS. Both get 6-speed automatics. Driving the LaCrosse was entirely enjoyable. It's ride is comfortable yet well planted without being "floaty" over uneven surfaces, and it's very quiet. Handling dynam-

ics are right there, with quick turn-in and little body roll. A stouter handling package including continuously adjusting shock absorbers and stickier tires is available on the CXS.

The LaCrosse presents a conundrum to many foreign brands. You not only get a lot for the money, you enjoy a serene and luxurious driving environment which surpasses most others at this price.

Sleek and sporty in a self-assured way, the Regal carries a stance that hints at those well-known Euro-sedans' "ready for business" attitude. Depending on options and pricing, it can compete with Camry, Accord and Malibu, or with Audi A4 and Lexus ES.

Inside, the leather seats were very comfortable. I wanted deeper side bolsters, though—when cornering hard you can slide around a lot. (Cornering hard in a Buick? Just keep reading!) Seat heaters felt great on chilly mornings. Overall interior design is highly attrac-


tive, warm, inviting. With fold-down rear seats and a large trunk, Regals can carry a lot of stuff.

Two 4-cylinder engines are available. This one had the standard 2.4L EcoTec with 182 horsepower. Optional is a 2.0L turbocharged unit with 220 horsepower. Mine had the standard 6-speed automatic with a sport shift feature. With the turbo you can choose 6-speed auto or stick.

In normal driving all is pleasant and proper. Take 'er out in the canyons, though, and all that changes. Meaning... this thing handles! When pushed hard through tight curves, the suspension takes a set, the tires stick well, and you can entertain yourself all afternoon exploring its limits. Which I did. And came away impressed. The engineers did some serious homework—and got the right answers.

Wind noise was barely audible at 70 mph in these cars—they're quiet. Both were equipped with the same base 4-cylinder engine. It's great for all around use, and helps these models get good fuel economy. Their only disadvantage, as expected, was in passing power. When passing on two lane roads headed uphill, 182 horsepower only goes so far in cars this size. Especially for the heavier LaCrosse. As noted, though, more powerful engines are available in both models.

Equipped with the same engine, both Buicks are EPA-rated at 19-city, 30-highway mpg. I averaged 22.0 mpg in the LaCrosse and 23.4 in the Regal. The LaCrosse starts at well under \$30,000. This nicely optioned example totaled \$37,410. Buick's Regal begins at \$26,245 and this one came to \$29,785. Both prices include destination.

A page has turned for GM, and these Buicks easily compete on the world stage. The first car I reviewed for this magazine was a 2002 Buick Regal. How times have changed! Visit buick.com for more. 

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Buick Regal