



Buick Regal GS

Photos by Michael Cooney

2012 Buick Regal GS and Verano 1SL Strong Value in Highly Competitive Segments

What do you do when you're building stylish, powerful, good handling, fun to drive cars... yet a common perception is that they're more suited for elderly banker types? Well, you just keep building great looking, fun to drive cars, and hope the public notices.

With the Buick Regal GS, many did notice, and the vote was unanimous. All who asked about the GS thought it looked sleek and handsome. Even gorgeous. Stylists did fine work, and the Regal's looks easily matches or exceeds similarly priced cars from Japanese and German manufacturers.

Inside you'll find the attention to detail and comfort features expected in the near-luxury class. Front heated leather seats were comfortable with perfect support. The 1960s style speedo and tach numerals rotate in relation to their position on the gauges—vertical numerals are easier to read. As for showing instant and average MPG, all makers should follow the Regal's lead and show both readings simultaneously so there's no need to toggle back and forth. Loved that, and the keyless entry and engine start.

So... can front wheel drive Buicks really be fun to drive? Absolutely! The "GS" denotes the high output turbo 2.0L 4-cylinder engine with a stout 270 horsepower. Teamed up with this example's 6-speed automatic with manual controls and you have a highly responsive and quick machine. The GS does 0-60 in 6.2 seconds

according to *Motor Trend*. Other engine options offer 182 and 220 horsepower, plus an electric assist version for better economy. Six-speed sticks are available with the two turbo engines.

This GS had optional 20-inch alloy wheels shod with 255-width Pirelli P-Zero tires. They're nice and sticky, giving the GS tenacious grip around sharp curves. It's fun to push the GS hard on winding canyon roads because its cornering limits are quite high thanks to those tires plus a computer controlled suspension with three ride settings. Stabilitrak and traction control add safety to the handling mix on both cars.

Turning to the all new fwd Verano, you'll find another handsome styling job. Half a foot shorter than the Regal, this smallest Buick still manages to please the eye with


its sharply sloping rear roof line and sporty lower body sculpting.

With its 2.4L 180-horsepower engine and 6-speed auto with manual controls, overall performance was good and fuel economy excellent (see below). A turbo-charged engine may be offered. Acceleration was brisk and its cornering ability was quite good considering a suspension tuned for ride comfort. It trades some handling prowess for a smooth ride and the compromise should be just right for most owners.

A nicely styled interior appeared more upscale than its price suggested, and as with the GS, front seats were truly comfortable with perfect support for this driver. Heated leather seats, keyless entry and start, rear park assist, optional navigation... I was in good shape.

The Verano's strong suit is providing drivers with a truly comfortable smaller car that offers a competitive package of standard amenities, sips gas, and delivers a very quiet ride at freeway speeds, partly due to its acoustic laminated glass. Wondering how this new Buick would turn out, I came away pleasantly surprised.

2012 Regals begin at \$27,055 and this top dog GS totaled \$36,745 with destination fees. It is EPA-rated at 19-city and 27-highway mpg, and I averaged 22.9 mpg. Veranos begin at \$22,585 and my nicely equipped example came to \$27,645. It is EPA-rated at 21-city, 32-highway mpg and I averaged a commendable 28.1 mpg. Setting cruise control at 68 makes 33-35 mpg freeway trips easy as pie.

Tasteful styling, quality interiors, excellent comfort and a well-built feel will put these new Buicks on the shopping lists of many new car buyers, and rightly so. 

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Buick Verano