

2009 Mercedes-Benz E320 Bluetec Sedan Review



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MERCEDES-BENZ E320 BLUETEC DIESEL REVIEW

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Imagine the chagrin of this poor, depressed fellow who carefully plans his own demise. He goes out into his garage with the oven, runs a hose from the exhaust pipe of his brand-new, expensive Mercedes through the barely lowered rear window then gets in and back in the luxurious leather driver's seat and waits for the end. He slowly falls asleep.

An hour later his wife comes home, opens the garage door and finds him there with the engine of his Mercedes still running. She startles him awake. He feels refreshed, renewed and . . . surprised.

His is the new E-Class with the ultra-clean Bluetec diesel engine.

While browsing the Society of Automotive Engineers show in Detroit a couple of years ago I happened upon one of the Bluetec cars that the air coming out of the tailpipe of a Bluetec equipped diesel is cleaner than the air entering the engine's intake. In fact, he insisted that one of these in a shop they don't even need to vent the exhaust.

Now, I didn't get down and sniff the tailpipe of our classy black test car this week – it's winter here, after all, with too much cold weather experiment – so I'll not attest to the pleasantness of the car's exhaled breath. I guess I'll take the engineer's word for it. But it is a car otherwise. To that I will attest.

In stark black our no-nonsense, E320 is not an eye catcher but has an understated elegance to the focused eye. The fresh Mercedes is exemplified by the low nose and tail with arched center lines so evident in the big S-Class cars and now even in the small C-Class, the E-Class yet. The rearward sloping nose with oval lights looks a bit last-generation. All the lines and details, though, are clean and simple rear treatment.

Interior details are more striking as we slide into the abovementioned luxurious leather seats. Burlwood trim on the dash fl

doors and decorates the console with just enough chrome trim to dress it all up a bit. Seat controls are conveniently located on the down on the base of the seat where we can barely reach them on most cars. Controls are mostly attractive and intuitive, though computer functions stymied me. For example, the message that comes up about resetting the values listed by pushing the reset "reset" button. This E-Class cockpit imparts a distinctively luxurious feel.

The E-Class is a 5-passenger, mid-size, rear-wheel drive sedan with plenty of room in the rear seat. I had a full contingent of passengers and my rear seat passengers raved about the comfort, ride and style back there. Even the center-rear passenger thought her position was a drive into the city of well over an hour.

Now, back to that clean diesel engine – it exhibits none of the diesel drawbacks that soured us on compression-ignition engines in the past. Only a knowledgeable and attentive ear will know it by its sound – just a well-dampened tickishness at idle. It's not slow. M-B claim a 0-60 time of 6.6 seconds –respectable even for a sports car - accomplished with 3-liters of displacement in the V6 engine that makes a net but an awesome 400 lb-ft of torque. It is torque, of course, not horsepower, that gets us moving so quickly. And, as we described turbocharging, direct injection and the sophisticated Bluetec exhaust cleaning system that features urea injection, a couple of catalytic converters and high-tech filtering systems. In spite of that amazing cleanliness and winning the 2007 World Green Car Award this E320 Bluetec is available in 9 states. (Check your state's requirements.)

The power is managed through a new, smart, 7-speed automatic transmission that has a manual mode, driver adaptive capability and thought it shifted a bit slowly for the first few miles as we left home a couple times with the outside temperature around 15-degrees Fahrenheit. Smooth, efficient and quick. While the EPA estimates fuel mileage to range from 23-to 32-mpg we managed nearly 34-mpg on our trips and consistently high 20s on our around-town jaunts. With over 21 gallons of capacity in the fuel tank we have an impressive range. Diesel fuel at the moment is just about 35% higher than gasoline in price here so the purely cost-per-mile fuel equation is not as good as gasoline-powered C-Class.

Safety features are equal to anything in its class with plenty of airbags, four and five-star government crash ratings and advanced chassis controls. Opportunities presented themselves this week to explore some of the chassis controls due to repeated snow storms and bad roads. I was impressed with the E320's skid avoidance capabilities. I tried to push it into slides around corners but it would only allow a few inches of motion before computer-controlled braking applications and power restrictions brought it under control.

Our test car shows a base price of \$54,200. The [New Car Buyers Guide](#) Web site also shows \$54,200. We have a Premium Pack: and includes a 40G hard-drive with GPS navigation, Sirius Satellite radio, compatibility for iPod and other media, heated front seats and sunshade.

We also have a \$570 wood and leather steering wheel and an \$875 delivery charge to bring the price up to \$58,345.

Full warranty coverage on the M-B lasts 4 years or 50,000 miles.

This is a car that any mid-size luxury buyer would be happy with, I would guess. While there are a multitude of great cars in this class, this diesel.

Just don't try to asphyxiate yourself in it. Get help.

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