

2000 OLDSMOBILE INTRIGUE

The Oldsmobile Intrigue's mission is to attract buyers whose interests normally run to Asian- or European-built cars. To this end, the Intrigue gets a modern 3.5-litre multi-valve V-6 engine, a four-speed automatic transmission and the many extras normally expected in a upscale, sports-oriented vehicle.

Interior and trunk

Drivers are very comfortably seated and enjoy an excellent driving position. Leg room is generous but the sunroof limits head room for tall individuals. The seats are firm enough to ensure proper support for long-distance driving. The seat cushion is power adjusted but not the back rest, an unusual and risky compromise in a vehicle in this price range.

The rear bench accommodates two adults comfortably (no one should be expected to ride in the middle-seat position for any length of time). Leg room is very acceptable but head room is tight for six-footers.

The trunk is roomy and easy to access but has a narrow opening. The 1/3-2/3 split seat back folds to make more room.

Comfort and safety

The Intrigue is available in GX, GL and GLS versions. All three can be equipped with the Sterling Group which includes skid control, chrome-finish wheels, metallic paint and more. Starting with the base GL, basic equipment is reasonably generous: air conditioning, power windows and mirrors, cruise control, four-wheel ABS brakes and more.

The cabin is quiet except for the hum of rough pavement. Interior finish is much better than in previously tested models.

Passengers have a multitude of practical storage spaces to choose from, but a number of details still need attention. The ashtray, for example, unduly complicates access to the storage space in which it is housed. The lighter is hidden behind a lid and out of view even with the lid open.

The automatic dual-zone climate control system works very efficiently and the air vents are well located. The headlights have an excellent safety feature that automatically switches on all the lights but the dome lamp when daylight fades.

Other safety features include dual air bags, ABS and traction control. The head restraints can be raised but not locked. The height of the package shelf makes it hard to judge distances when backing up, but visibility is otherwise very good. Brighter headlights would improve nighttime driving safety.

Engine and transmission

The 24-valve, 3.5-litre V-6, derived from Cadillac's 4.6-litre Northstar engine, is well-adapted to the Intrigue. It provides very good standing acceleration and relatively strong passing acceleration. Generous torque ensures flexibility and progressive power. The smooth engine performance contributes to the nimble handling.

The engine is mated to GM's excellent automatic transmission. Other than the odd sharp downshift after a quick stop, the transmission is so discrete you almost forget it's there.

On the road

The ride is excellent on good pavement. It firms up perceptibly on rough sections but the suspension is calibrated to avoid disturbing passenger comfort. The Intrigue has a firm, stable grip in turns, where the more agile handling, made possible by the lighter engine, is most noticeable.

Steering is quick, precise and stable. Tire-to-road feedback is poor, and the turning circle is a bit long. Braking is good, with average fade resistance.

At the CAA-Quebec inspection centre, the engine compartment and underpinings proved generally well designed but with a number of exceptions: electric wiring sheathing too short, no backing plates for the front discs, bare metal gas lines, unsealed joints, unsealed holes in fenders.

Conclusion

Roomy interior, smooth, lively engine, impeccable transmission, interesting handling, constantly improving fit and finish, generous equipment: the Intrigue has a lot to offer. The Intrigue is definitely on the right track but GM still has some details to take care of to attract customers accustomed to the refinement and reliability of a number of import sedans.

FOR

Smooth, powerful engine
Excellent transmission
Comfort
Roadholding
Big trunk
Design

AGAINST

Cost of brake parts
Rear visibility
Narrow trunk opening
Perfectible finish of certain elements
Non-locking head restraints
Weak headlights

2000 OLDSMOBILE INTRIGUE

Engine: 24-valve, 3.5-litre V-6

Torque: 230 lb.-ft. @ 4,400 rpm

Suspension: 4-wheel independent

Length: 497.5 cm

Height: 143.8 cm

Horsepower: 215 h.p. @ 5,500 rpm

Transmission: 4-speed automatic

Brakes: 4-wheel disc

Width: 186.9 cm

Wheelbase: 276.9 cm

Weight: 1,555 to 1,560 kg

Tires: P225/60R16

Towing capacity: 454 kg

Air bags: dual front

Fuel consumption:

- Transport Canada rating: city: 13.1 L/100 km (22 mpg); highway: 8.0 L/100 km (35 mpg)
- Test result: 12 L/100 (24 mpg)

Fuel tank capacity: 68 litres

Acceleration: 0-100 km/h : 8.2 seconds 60-100 km/h : 5.9 seconds

Competition: Buick Regal, Chrysler Intrepid, Ford Taurus, Honda Accord V-6, Hyundai XG300, Nissan Maxima, Pontiac Grand Prix, Toyota Camry V-6, Volkswagen Passat V-6

Maintenance (amount may vary from dealer to dealer):

Frequency: 3 months/5,000 km; total cost to 100,000 km: \$1,207

Warranty:

- Full basic coverage: 3 years/60,000 km
- Powertrain: 3 years/60,000 km
- Surface corrosion: 3 years/60,000 km
- Perforation damage: 6 years/160,000 km
- Emissions control system: 3 years/60,000 km (full coverage); 8 years/130,000 km (catalytic converter, electronic control module)

Factory replacement parts:

Rear bumper: \$875

Front brake disk: \$250

Brake pads: \$107

Muffler: \$487

Front fender: \$370

Average insurance premium (Quebec City, replacement cost endorsement, claim-free insurance record, female driver or male driver 30 to 40 years old): \$686 to \$1,119

Price according to trim line:

GX: \$28,365

GL: \$29,945

GLS: \$32,595

Main options:

Sterling Group: \$1,920

Leather upholstery: \$1,295 (GL)

Audio system upgrades: \$295 to \$695

Sun roof: \$930

Price as tested: \$35,395

Freight and preparation: \$865

Dealers: Quebec: 173; Canada: 647