

Acura TL 2005: The Weekly Driver Review

Article by: James Raia

Drivers have more stress during the holidays, alcohol consumption increases and patience in busy traffic can quickly wane.

A 200-mile roundtrip, therefore, is a less-than-ideal way to spent part of Thanksgiving. It's potentially more problematic knowing the crowded, late-night return trip could include a stretch of interstate infamous for its thick, late-night fog.

But visiting family outweighs the inconveniences of potential driving hassles. And if the journey is made in a vehicle with a commanding and secure road presence, such concerns are sufficiently eased.

So it was during my weekly test drive of the 2005 Acura TL. The vehicle was successful for several years, but Acura redesigned it and added more features in 2004 to offer BMW and Audi drivers another choice for a luxury sports sedan that combines performance with value.

There's little change in the TL from last year. The vehicle is based on the Honda Accord platform but has different styling, a different powertrain and more upscale features.

Performance to ride quality to instrumentation, there's a lot to like about the TL, which is why it's a recommended best buy in the premium midsize category by Consumer Guide, among other publications.

The car's performance begins with a 270-horsepower, 3.2-liter, 24-valve V6 engine with a five-speed automatic or six-speed manual transmission. My vehicle had an automatic transmission. It shifts smoothly into all positions and was tested at 0-60 mph in 7.0 seconds. The manual transmission was tested at 6.2 seconds.

Among the many standard features are 17-inch wheels and antilock four-wheel disc brakes and an anti-skid system. They all further add to an impressive driving experience. The car handles and steers admirably, and it maneuvers confidentially through traffic with a strong feel on the road, particularly with its 17-inch wheels.

While the vehicle's driving qualities provide plenty to recommend it, the additional exterior and interior standard features only further distinguish the TL.

The leather upholstery is comfortable, attractive and complemented nicely by stylishly contoured aluminum trim. Bright electroluminescent gauges and blue backlighting throughout the cabin provide a sultry night-driving atmosphere.

Individually heated front seats, sunroof, XM satellite radio, in-dash CD changer with an eight-speaker sound system, voice-recognition navigation system, heated power door mirrors and Xenon HID headlights are all standard.

And, of course, cruise control, multiple driver and front passenger seat positions, air conditioning and individual, front-seat climate controls are also standard.

For front-seat passengers there's ample leg room and plenty of overall comfort. Back-seat passengers aren't as comfortable, with head and leg room slightly pinched. Cargo space is also tight, but styled well. The rear seatback doesn't fold, but there's a small pass-through port for skis.

Just like it has been for the past several years, the 2005 Acura TL is a nicely combined sport and luxury car with great attention to refinement and workmanship.

It's a perfect car to drive to a late-night jazz club or at least to fantasize a similar journey. And it's a perfect vehicle for managing holiday traffic in any kind of weather.

2005 Acura TL

Safety features -- Driver and front passenger and side curtain airbags; Antilock brakes; Traction control system.

Fuel Mileage (estimates) -- 20 mpg (city), 29 mpg (highway).

Warranty -- Bumper to bumper, 4 years/50,00 miles; Corrosion, 5 years/unlimited miles; 24-hour roadside assistance: 4 years/50,000 miles.

Base price range -- \$32,650-\$34,850 James Raia is a syndicated journalist in Sacramento, California, who writes about sports, fitness, travel and lifestyle topics as well as the car review column, The Weekly Driver.

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