

2004 Mercury Monterey Premier

by Gary Dickinson

INTRODUCTION

What's New: The Monterey is one of four new Mercury's being introduced in three years. Safety features include side curtain air bags to protect all three rows of passengers, plus rollover sensors. The Monterey offers innovative features like front and rear parking sensors, front heated and cooled seats, power sliding doors and tri-zone temperature control. A power lift gate will be available later in the year. The third row seat folds into the floor to accommodate easy transition to a flat bed surface, but the second row seats do not have the same feature which is available on the Dodge Caravan.

Overview: I was impressed by the Monterey's quality of craftsmanship and sound performance. Seating comfort was not adequate in any seat so long drives may be very uncomfortable. Otherwise, the Monterey is a sound performer and features are competitive with other manufacturers with the exception of being able to stow 2nd row seats under floor.



TESTED VEHICLE

Vehicle: Mercury Monterey Premier

Engine: The 4.2 liter EFI V-6 yields 201 HP and 263 lb.-ft. torque.

Transmission: 4-speed automatic overdrive.

Brakes: Power-assisted disc with standard ABS and EBD.

Base Price: \$34,840.

Tested Vehicle MSRP with options: \$35,795 (which includes a destination charge of \$685).



TEST DRIVE

Acceleration: Zero-60 MPH tested at 9.9 seconds, 55-65 MPH passing performance tested at 2.9 seconds.

Handling: Handles very well with limited body roll in turns.

Braking: Sure and very responsive.

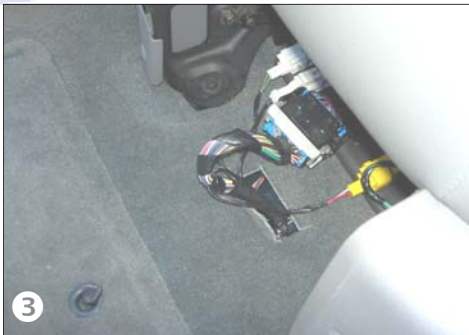
Ride: Smooth and well controlled.

Transmission: Accurate and smooth shifting.

Forward and Reverse Sensing System: Warns driver of obstacles within a certain range of front and rear bumper. A great proximity awareness safety feature!

Interior Noise: Noticeable engine noise.

Test drive mileage: 21.4 MPG (mostly highway driving); EPA estimates 22H/16C.



EXTERIOR

Engine Service Points: All fluid service points are located around perimeter of engine compartment for easy access.

Power Sliding Doors: Great feature to aid access to 2nd and 3rd row seats.

Keyless Entry System: Great feature especially if keys are locked inside vehicle.

Fit and Finish: No exterior fit or finish problems found. Quality craftsmanship was very evident.

Lift gate: Taller folk's head's may hit open lift gate when accessing rear compartment. (see photo 4 below)



INTERIOR

Room: Roomy cabin with plenty of headroom, shoulder room, and leg room for the 1st and 2nd rows.

1st Row Seats: Seats lack adequate thigh and back support and seating area for larger people. Sensors monitor seat position and passenger weight to manage air bag deployment. Under seat wiring is exposed and looped out in front where it could get kicked. (see photo 3)

2nd Row Seats: Limited seating area and support all around. Taller passenger legs probably will not touch the seat bottom due to the low seat height.

3rd Row Seats: Very limited seating area. Most passenger legs probably will not touch the seat due to the low seat height. In the tailgate position, which is a unique feature, the seat back flips over and turns into the seat bottom. But the headrest gets in the way of your dangling legs (photo 5).

Ventilation: Electronic automated tri-zone climate control worked very well.

Storage: The front and rear console units are large, roomy and very functional. Seven cup holders are included.

Fit and Finish: No fit or finish problems found.



VEHICLE CAPACITIES

Seating: 7

Cargo Volume: Behind 1st row 134.3 cu. ft; behind 2nd row 69.6 cu. ft; behind 3rd row 25.9 cu. ft.

Base Curb Weight: 4,340 lb.

Maximum Towing: 3,500 lbs. (properly equipped)

Fuel Tank: 26 gallons.

Test Drive is conducted and written by the Nutz & Boltz staff, who contribute their own unbiased and unfettered comments in order to meet our mission: "To help save consumers time and money, and to help save motorists lives."