

Hyundai Veracruz

Heading into upmarket territory.



Is this the first Korean vehicle to challenge Lexus?

ANNARBOR What do you think of when you hear the name Hyundai? Value for money? Great warranty? Lots of equipment? Lexus-rivalling interior?

Lest you snort cappuccino out your nose in reaction to that last one, let us assure you, it's no joke. From the soft-touch materials to the superb fit and finish, the new Veracruz seven-seat crossover has an interior that feels expensive and luxurious like no other Hyundai cabin ever has. And as for the exterior styling, it may be anonymous, but it's also inoffensive, and that seems to be the benchmark for this unadventurous segment.

The Veracruz is easily a match for the Honda Pilot and the Subaru Tribeca in interior quality and packaging—the third-row seats are particularly easy to get into—and it's competitively priced. But it also deploys that other Hyundai tactic: throw so much content at the thing that upmarket players such as the Lexus RX350 and the Acura MDX begin to look like viable targets. To that end, the Veracruz Limited's standard equipment list includes leather, dual-zone climate control, rear parking sensors, heated seats, and a power tailgate. And the list goes on (and on).

Mechanically, the Veracruz is equally impressive. The 260-hp V-6 is mated to a smooth-shifting six-speed automatic that allows manual shifting. It's a responsive powertrain, although that V-6 is a little too vocal at high revs. There's also too much



torque steer under hard throttle, especially through sharp corners in the front-wheel-drive model (all-wheel drive is optional).

Dynamically, the Veracruz is pretty forgettable, with little in the way of steering feedback and the kind of body control that discourages aggressive direction changes. Ride quality is decent enough, but the suspension clunks loudly over bumps and potholes. Those deficiencies arguably matter less in this class (although Subaru managed to make the Tribeca engaging). The Veracruz hasn't reset the benchmark, but you'd be foolish not to check it out if you're looking at crossovers in this price range—the GLS starts at \$26,995.

It's also further evidence—along with the recent unveiling of the V-8-powered Genesis concept (see page 26), which will be Korea's first luxury sport sedan—that Hyundai is



taking big strides toward the upper reaches now occupied by the likes of Lexus. But convincing American buyers that "Hyundai" is synonymous with "Lexus"? Well, sir, that's going to take a lot longer. **Gavin Conway**

SPECIFICATIONS

On sale: Now **Price:** \$32,305 (Limited)
Engine: 3.8L V-6, 260 hp, 257 lb-ft
Drive: Front- or 4-wheel