

A dark blue Mercedes-Benz GL 350 Blue Tec SUV is driving on a paved road that curves through a lush green landscape. The car is in motion, with a slight blur to the background and the road surface. The license plate reads 'ZRC-132'. The car's headlights and fog lights are on. The driver is visible through the windshield, wearing sunglasses. The background features a wooden fence, trees, and a grassy field under a slightly overcast sky.

OZ ROAMER

**MERCEDES BENZ GL 350 BLUE TEC
WINNER OF THE OZROAMER
2013 PRESTIGE SUV OVER \$100,000 AWARD**

OZROAMER 2013 AWARDS

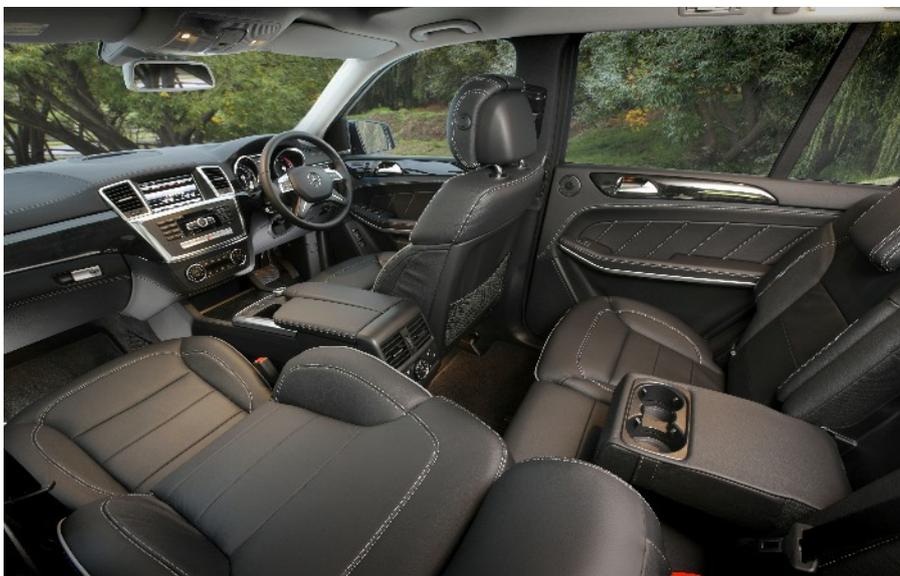
by Rob Fraser



The Mercedes Benz GL 350 Blue TEC is somewhat of a dark horse in the luxury 4WD SUV market. It is unbelievably capable but rarely sees more dirt than the dusty driveway at the country property.

When you first walk up to the GL350 you are struck by how well the designer have made what is a very large vehicle look much smaller. With a wheelbase of 3075mm, an overall length of 5120mm and width of 1934mm they don't come much bigger in a normal AWD SUV. However it looks imposing, which I guess is what you want when you pay upwards of \$140,000 for a car.

Externally its subtle shape belies it's internal behemoth proportions. The inside is positively cavernous. The driver's seat is supremely comfortable. Multi adjustments combined with the electrically adjustable leather steering wheel means that you can find the perfect driver's position. The seat has more than enough travel for my 190cm frame and still leaves ample room behind.



The thick leather steering wheel, with multi controls, frames the twin dial instrument panel. The centre area houses the multi function display. The transmission lever on the steering column takes a little getting used to. The benefit is that there is more tangible centre console space.

The centre stack houses the COMAND APS with 17.8cm TFT colour display, HDD navigation with RDS-TMC, 10GB music register, single-disc CD/DVD player with MP3/WMA/AAC compatibility, AM/FM tuner, LINGUATRONIC voice control operation, Bluetooth connectivity, telephone keypad for phone operation and internet connectivity

by Rob Fraser

The second row of seats is very comfortable with plenty of head, shoulder and legroom. More suited to two with semi individually sculptured seats there is however, ample room for three in comfort.

The third row of seats with easy entry, is comfortable enough for me to sit in with ample head and shoulder room. The third row of seats are comfortable for most passengers. I have sat in there for an extended drive and at 190cm that is nothing short of amazing. They are without doubt the best third row seats in the SUV market.

To compliment the comfort the THERMATIC automatic climate control system provides consistent temperature for all seven seats. The rear individual seats can be stowed electrically at the push of a button. With the second row also folded flat the load area is long enough for me to lie flat with room at each end. Access is easy with the electronic tailgate. Folded down there is a massive 2300L of cargo space.

The GL 350 Blue TEC is absolutely packed full of goodies and safety and pedestrian protection. There are way too many features to list here but it has everything you could imagine plus more.

The 3.07L V6 engine in the GL 350 Blue TEC model has a power output of 190Kw @ 3,600rpm and a maximum torque of 620Nm @ 1,600rpm. The seven-speed 7G-TRONIC automatic works seamlessly with the powerful V6 motor. 4MATIC – the permanent all-wheel-drive system works together with the powerful engine and 7G-TRONIC seven-speed automatic transmission to provide outstanding handling whatever the conditions.

Driven with a heavy right foot to make use of the available power around town the fuel consumption will suffer a little but the powerful and lazy V6 will sip fuel frugally at highway speeds, well down below 7.5L/100K. It is a delight to drive either way with heaps of torque and power available right through the range.

The multi-talented AIRMATIC air suspension provides outstanding on-road comfort with substantially enhanced directional stability Adaptive Damping System (ADS) with level control and automatic suspension lowering at higher speeds and additional clearance off road.

The optional On and Off road package Includes rotary switch to select any of six pre-programmed modes : AUTO, Off -road 1, Off -road 2, Sport, Snow or Trailer mode. Selected driving mode and animations shown in the COMAND display. Includes low-range ratio, manual mode for 7G-TRONIC PLUS automatic transmission, 100% centre differential lock, sump guard (481) and reinforced underbody panelling



MERCEDES BENZ GL 350 BLUE TEC

\$139,896 RDAP

by Rob Fraser

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| Model | GL350 Blue TEC |
| Model Price | \$139,896 RDAP |
| Engine | 3.0L V6 Diesel |
| Drivetrain | 4WD 7GTRONIC Plus |
| Power | 190 Kw @ 3,600 rpm |
| Torque | 620 Nm @ 1,600 rpm |
| Safety | N/A |
| CO2 Emissions | 199 g/km |
| GVR | 3 Star |
| Economy | 7.7L/100km (ADR comb) |
| Tow Capacity | Max 3500 kg |
| Tow Ball Rating | 350 kg |
| Servicing | TBC |
| Warranty | 3 yr/ Unlimited km with full roadside assist |



Off road the GL 350 Blue TEC will surprise most with its abilities thanks to electronics and good design. It effectively has front and rear diff locks. The places where you can go are generally limited by its size, tyre choice and your bravery. Given its size all round visibility is a positive feature. On fire trails and corrugations the suspension soaks up the bumps, on sand you feel like Lawrence of Arabia as you waft over the sand hills. In the heavy off road sections the capability is there, but there is a natural hesitance to push it too far, not because it won't handle but because you are afraid of damaging it.

Safety features include 4MATIC All-wheel drive, Acceleration skid control (ASR), Active Blind Spot Assist, Active Lane Keep Assist, Active Bonnet, Adaptive brake lights, ADAPTIVE BRAKE with HOLD function, Hill Start Assist and brake drying in the wet, Airbags (9) - front airbags for driver and front passenger, sidebags in front and rear, full length windowbags and driver's kneebag, Anti-lock braking system (ABS), ATTENTION ASSIST, Brake Assist (BAS PLUS), Central locking with interior switch, automatic locking (deactivatable) and crash sensor with emergency opening function, DISTRONIC PLUS Driving Assistance Package, Downhill Speed Regulation (DSR), Electronic Stability Program (ESP®), Electronic Traction System 4ETS, PRE-SAFE® Brake accident anticipatory occupant protection system

Two of the things that make the GL so popular with the horse and boat groups are that it will tow 3500kg with ease (braked) and has a 93L fuel tank. Handling, when pulling a trailer is no less impressive thanks to ESP® Trailer Stabilisation and AIRMATIC suspension. Having towed a number of trailers in the past with the GL I can vouch for just how effective it is and how easy it makes towing large loads.

Is the Mercedes Benz GL 350 Blue TEC the best 7 seat 4WD SUV in Australia? Some of its compatriots may be better in some areas but I don't believe any have a better overall balance. It is for this reason that it is the winner of OzRoamer 2013 Prestige SUV Award.



What's Good:

- Comfortable 7 seats
- Off road ability
- Lots of standard features

What's Not:

- large to park in car parks
- Expensive to buy and service
- Finding off road tyres

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 95/100

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| Behind the Wheel | 10 | Practicality | 10 |
| Comfort | 10 | Fit for Purpose | 10 |
| Equipment | 9 | Towing Ability | 10 |
| Performance | 10 | Off Road Ability | 8 |
| Ride & Handling | 9 | Value for Money | 9 |