



Mercedes-Benz E-Class (2009 - 2016)

Fresh air

First impression | Sometimes an article almost writes itself. Take, for example, the test drive with a new Mercedes-Benz E-Class in Germany. All of a sudden a huge, wooden building shows up on the horizon. When getting closer, it turns out this strange construction is in fact a vast air freshener. That is a very appropriate photo spot for the new, extra frugal E-Class!

The test drive with the new E-Class takes place around the German city of Kaiserslautern. In the past children with a lung disease were cured by letting them breathe the air of salt water. Since there was no sea anywhere in the vicinity, the "Gradierbau Bad Dürkheim" was erected. In the 333-metre long building spring water was mixed with salt to make the healing air.



These days there are other ways to purify the air and that's the topic of this review: the new Mercedes E-Class. All versions are cleaner and emit less harmful exhaust gases than before.

Diesel

The first part of the test drive was done with the "E250 CDI". It now features a seven-speed automatic

gearbox. In all circumstances it offers a more suitable gear-ratio, making the car quicker and more fuel efficient. However, the difference is mainly theoretical. The old five-speed automatic already did its work unnoticeably and the engine was already extremely quiet.



Although the "E250 CDI" has only four cylinders, the power train never has to work hard to perform. Even on the German "Autobahn" 200 km/h feels like merely walking pace. Despite travelling at very high speeds and idling during a lengthy photo session, the average fuel consumption was 6.7 litres per 100 km (42.2 mpg). For a car of this size and with this performance, that is very modest.

Besides being frugal, this diesel is also very relaxing to drive. The E-Class measures 4.9 metres, allowing for more than ample space in the front and the rear. The interior is typical Mercedes-Benz: classic design combined with modern technology. The relaxed atmosphere in the cabin is also thanks to the reassuring feeling that a computer guarantees the safety of the occupants (refer to a previous test of the E-Class for details).



Petrol

Just as comfortable to drive, yet much more exciting is the "E500". Until recently this badge meant a 5.5 litre eight-cylinder engine with 388 PS and 530 Nm was under the bonnet. Its replacement also has eight cylinders, but has a displacement of "only" 4.7 litre. Thanks to the assistance of two turbos the new "E500" is 20% more fuel efficient while developing more power (408 PS / 600 Nm).

However, don't think this is a sports car. The "E500" looks just as unassuming as the diesel from the first part of this review. There's just two exhausts at the rear, no spoilers and certainly no go-faster stripes. The interior doesn't have any extra dials, logos or party pieces either.

As soon as the engine is started, a deep ominous rumble sounds like an approaching thunderstorm that can unleash its rage at any moment. When driving calmly, the thunder stays at a safe distance. The "E500" is as easy to drive as the other E-Classes and nothing reveals its huge potential.



The big engine operates at extremely low revs. When simply going along with traffic, the needle of the rev counter hardly ever tops 1,000 rpm. Some cars have higher engine speeds when idling! It should be clear by now: this certainly isn't an aggressive car.



But ... push the pedal to the metal and the thundercloud bursts with anger. A roar so mighty sounds from the dual exhausts that it even makes some American muscle cars seem like child's play (for the experts: the sound cannot be compared to the AMG models). The occupants are pressed in their seats with brute force and the once so peaceful interior is now in turmoil.

The sprint from 0 to 62 mph in 5.2 seconds is just the start of the eruption. It is especially so at speeds above 62 mph where the "E500" accelerates fiercely. By

pressing a button the suspension is firmer as well, which suits the character of the car very well.

Gas

The "E200 NGT" is an all-new version of the E-Class. It is the only vehicle in its class to be equipped to run on naturally compressed gas (also known as "NCG") as standard. The integration of the systems is perfect: the boot still measures 540 litres, just like the other models. The petrol tank still holds 60 litres, while adding space for 19 kg of gas.



The remaining amount of gas can be read on a display between the speedometer and rev counter. Changing from one fuel to the other can be done via the computer.

The difference between running on gas or petrol is hardly noticeable. Regrettably in both cases performance is rather poor. Under the bonnet is a very modest 1.8 litre engine with a "supercharger". It develops 163 PS / 240 Nm and that simply doesn't cut it.

The promised top speed of 244 km/h is, to say the least, rather optimistic. Only after a long run, the test car reached 180 km/h. In the city the "E200 NGT" has to work relatively hard to trot along with traffic as well. From the engine bay an unusual high-pitched noise can be heard, which also doesn't add to the grand feeling an E-Class should give.

Although the grandeur is lost with the NGT, comfort levels are still the same. On top of that the exhaust fumes of an NGT vehicle are the least harmful of any fuel in use today; this makes the E-Class a true contributor to fresh air.



the other versions, but for daily traffic it suffices. Gas isn't only the least harmful fuel to date, it is also one of the cheapest. This also makes the E-Class also more affordable than ever before. ■

Conclusion

Mercedes-Benz explicitly doesn't use the word "facelift". Except for minor details in the cabin, the looks of the E-Class remain the same. All improvements can be found under the bonnet. The versions that didn't get a new engine, at least got a seven-speed automatic and a stop/start system.

The top model, the "E500", received a brand new engine. It has a smaller displacement than before, yet it is significantly more powerful and much more economic. Despite its huge potential, the "E500" is as easy and relaxing to drive as any other E-Class. When given the chance, the "E500" outperforms many sports cars in a straight line.

The cleanest new version of the one running on gas. Regrettably the "E200 NGT" doesn't perform as well

