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## **2013 Lincoln MKX Safety, value and economy.**

### **Overview**

The Lincoln MKX brings high-tech safety, solid value, and a unique Lincoln look to a crowded field of luxury compact crossovers.

The Lincoln MKX competes with the BMW X5, Cadillac SRX, Buick Enclave, and Lexus RX 350. The \$39,545 base price of the MKX slips just below the mathematical average for this group, yet MKX offers value with standard leather seats, heated and cooled front seats, remote starting, and a power liftgate. Those features are all extra-cost options on the competition. Not only does it offer horsepower near the top of this group, the Lincoln MKX also delivers class-leading fuel economy from the EPA of 19/26 mpg City/Highway.

New for 2013 is an expanded voice-activated SYNC system. The 2013 Lincoln MKX now comes standard with Curve Control. Launched as a 2007 model, the MKX was thoroughly revised for 2011.

Curve Control helps you keep the wheels on the pavement and the shiny side up should you misjudge a curve and try to round it too quickly. Lincoln says that trying to take a curve too fast contributes to 50,000 crashes in the U.S. annually. And while no electronic widget can change the laws of physics, features such as curve control can help compensate for human error. Curve Control is integrated into Lincoln's AdvanceTrac with Roll Stability Control.

MyLincoln Touch is both an improvement on and companion to the Sync voice-activated communications technology. It uses twin five-way thumb switches mounted on the steering wheel spokes, plus two 4.5-inch LED display screens flanking the speedometer in the instrument cluster, and an 8-inch LED display screen at the top center of the instrument panel with a four-zone color-coding system. The MKX has a unique panel of flat touch buttons and lighted slider switches below the sound system to control volume and temperature functions. The thumb switches, and the touch-screen control climate, sound system, telephone, navigation and an enormous variety of information functions including turn-by-turn directions, sports scores, local fuel prices, movie listings, dining, and even horoscopes. The system uses a list of up to 10,000 voice commands, making it relatively easy and intuitive to use. To start a search for a restaurant, for instance, all you have to do is tell the car you're hungry.

Like most vehicles in this class, the Lincoln MKX comes with a choice of front-wheel drive or all-wheel drive. The AWD version gets one more gallon of fuel capacity in its tank, and a slightly lower axle ratio, 3.39:1 versus 3.16:1, but otherwise the two vehicles are identical in specification. That shorter gear ratio, and the 180 pounds the AWD system adds, reduces highway fuel economy by 3 mpg, dropping from 26 mpg for the front-drive MKX to 23 mpg with all-wheel drive.

We recommend getting the all-wheel drive, because it is a very good computer-controlled part-time system that puts the torque where it needs to be, whether you're cornering fast in dry weather, or dealing with rain, snow, ice or mud. It's worth the bump in price the first time you get into messy conditions and every time thereafter.

## Model Lineup

The 2013 Lincoln MKX FWD (\$39,545) and AWD (\$41,395) come with standard with leather upholstery, climate-controlled front seats, dual-zone automatic air conditioning, voice-activated Sync with MyLincoln touch, and a power liftgate. Standard audio is a 10-speaker AM/FM/CD setup with a digital media jack. Wheels are 18-inch painted aluminum.

Package 101A (\$2,850) consists of 18-inch polished aluminum wheels, adaptive HID headlamps, interior ambient lighting, striped and contrast-piped leather seats, heated second-row seats, a rear-view camera, rain-sensing wipers, heated steering wheel, illuminated scuff plates, power tilt/telescope heated steering wheel with memory, turn-signal repeaters in the side mirror glass, and Blind Spot Information System (BLIS) with cross-traffic alert.

Package 102A (\$5,535) includes all of the above; upgrades to premium leather seats; and adds voice-activated navigation with points-of-interest storage, SD card, Sirius Travel Link (with six-month comp subscription); THX II audio with 14 speakers, HD radio, and CD/MP3 player; and a panoramic Vista Roof comprising a movable glass panel forward and fixed glass at the rear. Dual power sunshades can be used to block out unwanted glare.

Freestanding options include adaptive cruise control (\$1,295), navigation (\$1,790), trailer towing (\$395), the Vista Roof (\$1,895), roof rails (\$195), and heavy-duty floor mats (\$75). Wheels can be up-sized to 20 (\$1,100) or even 22 inches (\$2,500). (All New Car Test Drive prices are Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Prices, which do not include destination charge and may change at any time without notice.)

Standard safety equipment on the MKX includes front, side and roof curtain air bags, ABS disc brakes, AdvanceTrac traction and yaw control with RSC rollover stability control, Curve Control, the SOS post-crash alert system, and tire pressure monitoring. Options include Collision Warning with Brake Support and Blind Spot Intervention System (BLIS). Optional all-wheel drive enhances handling stability in slippery conditions.

## Walkaround

The overall shape of the MKX dates from 2007, but has aged gracefully due to its handsomely functional simplicity.

There are no visual tricks here. The engine hood is as long as it needs to be. The roof is shaped by a functional compromise between interior space and aerodynamic drag, and the shape of the side windows faithfully follows the shape of the roof.

All four wheel openings are large and round because, well, wheels are large and round. The front and rear wheel arches bulge out from the surrounding sheet metal just enough to arc into their adjacent doors, relieving otherwise slab-like sides. A subtle skirt, suggesting a covered running board, connects the wheel openings just above the door sills.

If the original had a visual weak spot it was its overly fussy, back-to-the-1960s Continental grille: a handsome piece by itself, but one that needed a lower, wider car behind it. Lincoln fixed that in 2011 with a substantial cosmetic makeover. Lincoln said it replaced about 60 percent of the MKX's parts and components, but by far the most conspicuous change was to the split wing grille, which has become the current Lincoln hallmark. It suits the MKX much better and remains unchanged on the 2013 model.

In fact, the motif of a split, horizontal grille flaring out and back from a vertical spear of body-color sheet metal first appeared on the Lincoln Zephyr in 1938. It's hard to imagine today what a stir this created then; but remember that up until that time virtually all automobile grilles were vertically proportioned. Lincoln had literally turned convention on its side, improving engine cooling in the process. Within the next five years most of the industry had followed Lincoln's lead.

## **Interior Features**

The MKX is a crossover utility. Utility is seen in features such as the front passenger seat, which folds flat, and each half of the second seat folds flat independently to accommodate cargoes of various sizes and lengths. The 60/40 split rear seat also reclines for passenger comfort. With this layout, the driver can haul objects up to eight feet long on the right side of the cabin, even while carrying belted passengers on the left. The seats themselves appear rich, comfortable, and luxurious.

MyLincoln Touch is an advance on Lincoln's Sync voice-activated communications technology that uses two five-way thumb switches mounted on the steering wheel spokes, two 4.5-inch LED display screens on either side of the big speedometer in the instrument cluster, an 8-inch LED display screen at the top center of the instrument panel with a four-zone color-coding system, and a panel of flat touch buttons below it. With MyLincoln Touch, the thumb switches and the screen combine to control climate, sound system, telephone, navigation and an enormous variety of information functions including turn-by-turn directions, sports scores, fuel prices, movie listings, dining, and even horoscopes, using a list of up to 10,000 voice commands.

The MKX we drove offered an amazing variety of in-car entertainment options from DVD movies (viewable only in Park) to DVD and CD music, USB music, and iPod music. The HD radio and the THX II certified sound system were nothing short of spectacular in their sound power and distortion-free reproduction.

For cargo capacity, the MKX provides 32.2 cubic feet behind the second seat, and 68.6 cubic feet with the second seat folded flat.

## **Driving Impressions**

The Lincoln MKX comes with a 3.7-liter V6, rated at 305 horsepower and 285 foot-pounds of torque. It uses twin independent variable camshaft timing on both intake and exhaust valves to provide low emissions and big torque at low rpm, and good highway fuel economy when the engine is cruising.

The 6-speed automatic transmission comes with a SelectShift manual-control shifter. Electronically controlled part-time all-wheel-drive, which adds torque to the rear tires as needed, is optional.

We drove the all-wheel-drive version of the MKX, a well-equipped, heavily optioned version. The horsepower and torque of the 3.7-liter V6 engine, and the speed of the 6-speed transmission's shifting show up from the first minute. The engine accelerates the MKX very quickly, and the engine sounds strong for a V6.

While highway cruising, the cabin is very, very quiet, and speech intelligibility around the cabin is excellent. Lincoln engineers have used acoustic windshield glass, thick side glass, aerodynamically shaped mirror housings, and lots of other measures to keep the MKX as quiet as possible, and it certainly shows when carrying on a conversation with rear-seat passengers at 80 mph on an Interstate highway.

The steering is relatively sharp and communicative, and the combination of front struts and rear trailing arms in the suspension system impart a nice, smooth ride with good cornering behavior.

Heavy-duty disc brakes all around add up to nearly 140 square inches of swept area, and you can feel every square inch in the confidence the system provides. Deceleration starts early in the pedal's travel and builds in a reassuringly linear manner as you press down harder. Standard equipment includes ABS, brake assist, electronic brake force distribution, traction control, yaw control, rollover mitigation software, and tire-pressure monitoring on top of the optional all-wheel-drive system.

Braking control software even incorporates a Hill-Hold feature that allows the driver to push the foot brake down once and release it to keep from rolling backwards on a hill. Electronic trailer sway control is tied into the traction and yaw control systems, and the MKX is rated for towing up to 3500 pounds when the trailer tow package is ordered.

Curve Control is designed to help drivers maintain control when taking a curve too quickly, an error contributing to some 50,000 crashes in the U.S. annually.

Optional Adaptive Cruise Control includes Collision Warning with Brake Support, which uses long-range radar to scan for potentially dangerous situations as far as 500 feet ahead of the vehicle. Always on, Collision Warning sounds an alarm and flashes LEDs 2.5-3.0 seconds before a potential collision. If the driver doesn't react, Collision Warning automatically slows the vehicle approximately 1.5 seconds prior to the potential impact. If the driver still does release the accelerator, braking begins with a force of 0.3g. The instant the driver's foot does touch the brake pedal, the system immediately delivers full braking power. This greatly increases the odds that the vehicle can stop before impact, or slow down sufficiently so the driver can steer to safety.

The Blind Spot Information System (BLIS) uses wide-angle, short-range radar to detect other vehicles entering the defined blind spot zone (that is, within 45 feet on either side). A light appears on the corresponding side view mirror to indicate that another vehicle is in the defined blind spot.

Included with BLIS, cross-traffic alert can help you safely back up in parking lots where vision to the rear and sides is limited. Select Reverse, and cross-traffic alert will illuminate an amber light in the corresponding mirror and sound a series of tones if sensors detect another vehicle approaching from either side.

Each of these systems can be adjusted using the MyLincoln Touch system.

## **Summary**

The Lincoln MKX is a pleasant vehicle, easy to drive, convenient, possessed of an excellent and comprehensive safety package, and nice to look at, especially inside. The four-zone color-coded MyLincoln Touch system is fun to use and fun to play with. Power and fuel economy are both at or near the top of the class, as is the silence the MKX provides at highway speed. Its wide array of onboard electronics and entertainment systems are clearly among the best in the industry in terms of capability and ease of use.

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