

# Go Anywhere **FAMILY** SUVs

Sporty new models for multitasking Katyites

*Written by Don Armstrong*



2012 Cadillac SRX



2012 Jeep Wrangler  
Rubicon Unlimited



2012 Honda Pilot





**T**here are so many SUVs in the market today, how do you decide which one is right for your Katy family? Whether you need to get to and from school and work, take the occasional off-road camping trip, or conquer the world's toughest terrain, here are a few choices that combine the best of what Katy families are looking for.

### Piloting a New Course

Honda, as well as most of the other Japanese automakers, has had a rough go of it this past year. An earthquake, a tsunami, and numerous recalls have stunned not only longtime die-hard fans, but also those contemplating a first-time purchase. With that said, Honda still builds some sweet rides, one of them being the Pilot SUV.

The eight-passenger Pilot, first introduced in 2003, carries forward in its second iteration, with a minor freshening for the 2012 model year. The Pilot gets a slightly revised front fascia, a few tweaks to the interior, and a little goose in the mileage department. One nice feature that Katy families will like is the second- and third-row seats that fold flat with the rear cargo area, creating a cavernous, minivan-like hauler for things as big as refrigerators.

Honda's 3.4-liter, 250-horsepower V-6 powers the front wheels through a five-speed automatic transmission and gets 18 miles per gallon city and 25 miles per gallon highway. With no less than four trim levels, there's bound to be one that fits what you're looking for. Pricing begins at \$28,470 for the Pilot LX.

### Rough and Tumble

It takes a lot to impress this seasoned auto reviewer, but the new 2012 Jeep Wrangler Rubicon Unlimited has done just that. Yes, I was skeptical at first, having owned a 1980 CJ 5 model. This model is not like its predecessor, though. New for 2012 is Wrangler's power plant, a 3.6-liter V-6 that delivers 285 horsepower through a new five-speed automatic or six-speed manual transmission, the former getting 16 miles per gallon city and 20 miles per gallon highway.

The redesigned dash was all-new last year and a welcome carryover in 2012. Now before you run to your Jeep dealer to snap up one of these vehicles, keep in mind that even though the Wrangler may engender an active lifestyle, it is a serious off-roader with solid axles front and rear, so the ride quality is much different than what you may be used to.

Pricing for the top dog Wrangler Unlimited Rubicon 4X4 starts at \$33,570. That includes sway bar disconnect and electronic safety features, such as stability control, roll mitigation, and hill start assist, plus all of Jeep's four-wheel-drive goodies. Options include leather, a connectivity package, automatic transmission, hard top, and GPS, just to name a few.

### A Little Luxury

For those that like a little luxury in their SUV, Cadillac may have just the answer in the SRX. This compact do-all made its debut two years ago and although good, the 2012 model gets the fixes that bring it up to an outstanding rating.



2012 Lincoln MKX





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The most notable upgrade comes in the form of a new power plant. The 3.6-liter V-6 produces a stout 308 horsepower through a six-speed automatic transmission that delivers its oomph to the front wheels – all-wheel drive is optional. Expect to get about 16 miles per gallon city and 23 miles per gallon highway. Popular features returning for 2012 include a moveable cargo fence with under-floor storage space in the rear, a liftgate that can be programmed to stop at different heights, and the UltraView sunroof that covers 70% of the vehicle roof.

We still love the large touchscreen that rises out of the dash when you buy the optional GPS system. The Cadillac SRX starts at \$35,185 for the Base model, not bad for a Cadillac by any name. Luxury, Performance, and Premium models increase the price exponentially. **KM**

*DON ARMSTRONG'S knowledge and lifelong love affair with motorsports has earned him the reputation of being one of the area's most respected automotive journalists. He's a member of the Texas Auto Writer's Association.*

2012 Nissan Murano



## More Picks for Katy Families on the Go

### Nissan Murano

After a significant update last year, the 2012 Nissan Murano goes a step further with the addition of a new Platinum Edition option package for LE models. Starting at \$29,290, the Murano ranks high on our list of quality SUVs in this price range.

### Dodge Durango

All-new last year, the completely redesigned 2012 Dodge Durango hits the mark in the muscular SUV category. Sharing underpinnings with the Jeep Grand Cherokee, the Durango embodies Dodge's street prowler image. Pricing begins at \$28,995.

### Lincoln MKX

Although sharing most components with the Ford Edge, the Lincoln MKX sets itself apart with a high-end interior, including a unique dash and plenty of wood accents. Here is America's answer to the Lexus RX, with competitive pricing starting at \$39,525.

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*Sherea Vitelli*  
Attorney and Mediator

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12010 Fullers Grant Court, Cypress, Texas  
281-898-0941 • sherea@vitellilawfirm.com  
vitellilawfirm.com • www.bridgelandlawyer.com