Chevy Equinox and Land Rover Freelander

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The sport utility market continues to expand despite higher than normal gas prices. The reason? Because, these do-almost-everything-vehicles provide just what consumers want. Sure, sales are down right now, but they will recover as more economical vehicles enter the mix. SUVs carry people, haul stuff, pull stuff, can go off-roading [okay, maybe not the Equinox], provide superior handling than many cars, etc. Fortunately, not all are gas guzzlers either. Chevroletâ€™s Equinox and the Land Rover Freelander are two that come to mind. Letâ€™s take a look at these two compact SUVs.

Chevrolet Equinox â€“ I like the looks of the Equinox, Chevyâ€™s car-based SUV that is only slightly smaller than the mid-size TrailBlazer. By car-based I mean a vehicle that handles and drives more like a car and is actually built on a car platform [like the Ford Escape and Toyota RAV4, for example]. This means that the Equinox is built chiefly for the road, so if you want an off road experience you would need to opt for the TrailBlazer or get the Freelander. Okay, I digress.

The Equinox is available as either a front wheel drive or all wheel drive vehicle. Seating five passengers, the Equinox comes equipped with a 3.4L V6 that produces 185hp. The engine is paired with a five-speed automatic transmission; no manual transmission is available. A traction control system is standard with the front wheel drive Equinox while all models come equipped with ABS and electric steering. Standard equipment for the Equinox includes power windows, power mirrors, and power locks with Remote Keyless Entry; AM/FM stereo and CD player with six speakers; and air conditioning. The Equinox has received a 5 star rating from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration for frontal crash and side-impact crash tests. Starting prices for the Equinox are very competitive with comparable models in its class. Base MSRP for the FWD is just over 22K; 24K for the AWD.

Land Rover Freelander â€“ The smallest of all Land Rovers is the Freelander, a compact full time all wheel drive vehicle available as either a 3 or 5 door SUV. Unlike the Equinox, the Freelander has full off road capabilities as do every Land Rover model. The Freelander comes equipped with a Four-wheel Electronic Traction Control system; ABS; a 2.5L Quad Cam V6 engine paired with a 5 speed automatic transmission; an AM/FM stereo/CD system with RDS radio; air conditioning; fog lamps; a perimeter security system; and much more. The Freelander, a five passenger vehicle, sells for a price starting at just over 27K.

The Freelander is produced in England while the Equinox is built in Canada, In all, both the Equinox and Freelander represent well built compact SUVs with two different purposes: the Equinox is built primarily for the highway and around town and has the stronger engine, while the Freelander is built for both highway and trail.

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