



LET THERE BE CARS —

Becoming Genesis—the 2018 G80 Sport

Hyundai's upmarket brand is starting to find its feet.

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Under the hood is a 3.3L twin-turbo V6 with 365hp.

Genesis



There are really two key things you need to know about the Genesis G80 Sport. First, it's a sport-oriented midsize luxury sedan from the new Korean brand, Genesis. Second, while it wears a new nameplate, it remains what it was—a Hyundai.

When Hyundai decided to launch a new premium brand along the lines of Toyota's Lexus and Nissan's Infiniti in 2015, it made a couple crucial decisions. Unlike Lexus and Infiniti, it would launch with existing product. And, it would take the name of Hyundai's existing mid-size sedan, the Genesis, as its own.

As a result, the first pair of Genesis models to market are slightly altered Hyundais. The Hyundai Equus becomes the G90, and the Hyundai Genesis becomes the G80. Ultimately, they're cars that you can think of as "Becoming Genesis" rather than defining Genesis the brand. That'll come in the future.

The G80 comes in three trims—the 3.8, 5.0, and 3.3T. The first two denote a normally aspirated V6 and V8, while the last describes Hyundai's new 3.3L twin-turbo V6. It is the prime distinguishing feature of the G80 Sport (base price: RWD: \$55,250/AWD: \$57,750), which is also the only one of the three variants to get continuous active damping control for its fully independent five-link front and rear suspension.

While Genesis calls this version of the G80 the "Sport," I'd suggest you think of it as a spicier G80 rather than a full-on sports sedan as the name implies. Like its larger G90 sibling and Hyundai cousins, the G80 Sport's strongest suit is luxury. There's competent cornering and acceleration, but the comfortable ride and comfortable seats stand out.

They're traits Genesis can be proud of. Calling this car the G80S might be a more subtle and better description of what buyers can expect.

Under the hood

The engine delivers 365hp (272kW) and 376lb-ft (510Nm). It's matched with an eight-speed automatic transmission, which Genesis says is 18 pounds (8.1kg) lighter than its predecessor. You can have the G80 Sport with either rear-wheel or all-wheel drive. The latter offers active torque control, which can send up to 40 percent of torque to the front axle in low grip situations or up to 90 percent to the rear in sport mode.

There's a readily discernible difference between the G80 Sport's driving character in normal and sport modes. That's likely because of its derivative Hyundai Genesis luxury-based foundation. Select "sport" from the shifter-console-located Drive Mode button and the G80 becomes significantly firmer and more throttle sensitive.

That doesn't mean the car becomes a rabid corner-carver. On twisty roads through Napa and Sonoma counties, I primarily noticed the G80 Sport's weight. At 4,519lbs/4,674lbs in RWD/AWD trim (2,050kg/2,120kg), it's a porker. That's great for highway stability, but on two-lane blacktop, aggressive driving yields early understeer and a rear that wanders under heavy braking. The weight shows up in the combined 20mpg city/highway average as well.

Weight shows on the clock, too, with the old smartphone 0-to-60mph test returning about 6.6 seconds. There's little lag from the twin turbos except on that standing start where it takes a beat for the torque to hit. Genesis says its rack-mounted, variable gear ratio steering lends the G80 Sport a more natural feel. I didn't notice the steering or remark on its feel, which likely means it's as dull as other electric setups.

But if you view the G80 Sport more as a luxury car that one can press occasionally, the dynamic stuff doesn't matter so much.

Genesis has managed to merge infotainment and communication effectively atop the center stack where a 9.2-inch touchscreen/720p display (the first of its kind in the segment) offers integrated Android Auto and Apple CarPlay. You can also access Apple's Siri Eyes Free or Google point-of-interest voice search, all while charging your smartphone wirelessly via a pad forward of the shift lever.

While some might critique the interior as a Hyundai Genesis holdover, with its out-of-vogue physical gauges and buttons, I like it. It works—save for a notable exception. To select "Park" you have to press a button ahead of the shifter, an un-needed extra step that Genesis Senior Group Manager Ricky Lao hints may be related to patent issues for drive-by-wire transmissions—so goes the world of intellectual property.

Genesis brought **noted designer Luc Donkerwolke into the fold**, but his input into the G80 was, of



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necessity, minimal. G80 Sport accents include a dark chrome cross-hatched front grille, copper highlights around the vehicle (notably in the LED headlights), and 19-inch dark alloy wheels, featuring a copper bezel on the "Genesis" wheel center cap.

Small touches like that wheel center cap allude to Genesis establishing its own identity. But the decision to debut with legacy Hyundais—and a legacy name sure to confuse—means the brand has a tough road to traverse on its way to becoming Genesis.

Listing image by Genesis

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