

## 2006 CHEVROLET HHR LT



The styling of the HHR was inspired by the sporty Chevrolet SSR and the 1949 Suburban. Built on a Cobalt platform, the HHR is a multi-segment vehicle whose direct competitor is the Chrysler PT Cruiser. It is longer, wider, and has a longer wheelbase than the Chrysler, while the height is roughly the same. The LS version comes equipped with a four cylinder, 2.2 litre engine, while the LT's engine is 2.4 litres.

### **Interior and trunk**

The front seats are very comfortable despite the absence of an adjustable lumbar support. The driving position is good with generous head and leg room. The passenger side seatback can be folded down all the way to the cushion to increase cargo capacity.

Rear bench comfort is only average because of the seatback, which is tilted a bit too far to the rear. Head and legroom is very good. The seat can be folded down in a 60/40 split and creates a flat floor when folded. The back of the rear seat is made of plastic, as is the case with the right front seat.

The trunk is spacious with the seatback in the upright position and becomes a downright cavernous cargo area when the seat is folded down. The rear cargo shelf can be set at two different levels.

### **Convenience and Safety**

The passenger compartment is well finished with good quality materials. Soundproofing is adequate but not exceptional—you hear a bit of everything. Interior storage spaces are less than abundant, with a total capacity that is

far from impressive. There are no handholds and no anchor points for attaching vertical netting.

The instruments and controls are well positioned, with the exception of the controls for the power window and rear windshield wiper, which are placed too low at the bottom of the central section of the dash. The speedometer digits are small, and the 100 is smaller than the 80 and 120, when it should be the other way around.

At night there are lights for everything except the glove compartment. The air conditioner works very well. When we tested the roof rack, we found that the side rails were easy to twist, and noticed the roof moving at the same time—not a reassuring discovery.

In matters of safety, the HHR sports dual front airbags—curtain airbags are optional—good quality headlamps, and four head restraints. The two at the rear are not adjustable and are too low for passengers of average height. Visibility is poor because the windows are rather squat. What's more, the interior mirror creates a diagonal blind spot on the right and the head restraints combine with the C pillars to create blind spots serious enough to prevent drivers from adjusting their side mirrors outwards—a method called Vision 360<sup>0</sup>. Finally, the rear windshield wiper misses a significant area on the left side.

In U.S. government tests the HHR received five out of five stars for the protection of both front seat occupants in a head-on collision, and for all occupants in a side impact. Its rollover resistance merited four stars.

### **Engine and transmission**

The four-cylinder 2.4 litre Ecotec generates 172 horsepower and 162 pounds of torque, allowing the HHR to accelerate with a measure of zip. All in all, the engine is well matched to the car and powers it with ease. It is somewhat noisy when accelerating and runs on premium gas, a rare if not unique requirement for a naturally aspirated engine in this category.

The four-speed automatic transmission is very smooth in all situations. Gear spacing is good but the HHR won't start in second gear.

### **On the road**

The HHR offers a very smooth ride. Although reactions are a tad firm on uneven surfaces, passenger comfort is never compromised. Suspension noises may be noticeable on the occasional bump. Handling is solid for this

type of vehicle. There is not too much leaning in curves, though the HHR is a bit sensitive to crosswinds.

The electric power steering is well calibrated, stable, precise, and quite rapid, though it provides no feel of the road. The turning radius is short. The strength and fade-resistance of the brakes is good. Unfortunately, as with many GM vehicles, the brakes are expensive, particularly the discs in the case of the HHR.

At a CAA-Quebec Technical Inspection Centre, we found the underbody of the HHR to be quite rugged. On the other hand, the discs lack protective plates. There is a large opening (71 cm by 7.6 cm) under the front bumper through which objects could enter and damage the air conditioner condenser or the radiator. There is no rustproofing, though several joints are sealed. Both available engines use a chain to drive the camshaft.

## **Conclusion**

The HHR has a dual personality. The comfortable front seats, generous cargo capacity, nimble handling, and powertrain performance with the 2.4 litre engine and automatic transmission are pleasing features. Yet the poor visibility, the lack of interior storage space, the need for premium gas in the 2.4 litre version, and the opening under the front bumper are disappointing.

**PROS:** roomy interior, comfortable front seat, easy manoeuvrability, well-calibrated 2.4 litre engine, smooth automatic transmission, nimble handling

**CONS:** poor visibility, meagre storage space, inadequate rear head restraints, premium gas requirement for 2.4 litre engine, large opening under front bumper, cost of brakes

## **CHEVROLET HHR 2006**

**Engine:** 16-valve, 2.2-litre 4-cylinder; 16-valve, 2.4-litre, 4-cylinder

**Horsepower:** 143 hp at 5,600 rpm; 172 hp at 6,200 rpm

**Torque:** 150 lb-ft at 4,000 rpm; 162 lb-pi at 5,000 rpm

**Transmission:** 5-speed manual; 4-speed automatic

**Suspension:** independent/semi-independent

**Brakes:** disc/drum

**Wheelbase:** 269.2 cm

**Length:** 447.5 cm

**Width:** 175.5 cm

**Height:** 160.3 cm

**Weight:** 1,396 to 1,428 kg

**Tires:** P215/55R16

**Maximum towing capacity:** 454 kg

**Airbags:** dual front. Two curtain airbags in option

**Fuel consumption with the 2.4-litre and automatic transmission:**

- Transport Canada rating: City 10.2 L/100 km (28 mpg); highway 6.8 L/100 km (42 mpg)
- Test result: 10.3 L/100 km (27 mpg)
- Test temperature: 15°C to 32°C

**Fuel tank capacity:** 65 litres

**Fuel requirement:** 2.2-litre: regular grade; 2.4-litre: premium grade

**Acceleration**

0–100 km/h: 9.6 seconds

60–100 km/h: 6.4 seconds

**Competition:** Chrysler PT Cruiser, Honda Element, Mazda5, Pontiac Vibe, Toyota Matrix

**Warranty**

- Full basic coverage: 3 years/60,000 km
- Powertrain: 3 years/60,000 km
- Surface corrosion: 3 years/60,000 km
- Perforation damage: 6 years/160,000 km
- Emissions control system: 3 years/60,000 km (full coverage); 8 years/130,000 km (catalytic converter, electronic control module)

**Factory replacement parts**

Rear bumper: \$465

Front brake disc: \$215

Brake pads: \$155

Muffler: \$510

Front fender: \$153

**Average insurance premium** (Quebec City, replacement cost endorsement, claim-free insurance record, male or female driver 30 to 40 years old): \$891 to \$1,343

**Price according to trim level:**

LS: \$18,995

LT: \$21,195

**Main options:**

Automatic transmission: \$1,250

Sunroof: \$1,100

Curtain airbags: \$595

ABS brakes: \$600

1SB package: \$2,200 (LT)

**Price as tested:** \$23,995

**Freight and preparation:** \$1,045

**Dealers:** Quebec: 173      Canada: 697

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