The 2019 Lincoln Nautilus—how does American luxury stack up?

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- I’m a fan of the fan-blade-like wheels.
  Eric Bangeman
- I like how the badge looks here
  Eric Bangeman
- From the rear, the Nautilus doesn’t look too different from its predecessor.
  Eric Bangeman
- The double-grille of the MKX has been replaced with a larger, rectangular grille.
  Eric Bangeman
- The Black Label Nautilus starts at $57,00 and goes up from there.
  Eric Bangeman

The Nautilus is new to Lincoln’s lineup for the 2019 model year—sort of. Another way of looking at it is that Lincoln gave the MKX a significant makeover and renamed it the Nautilus. Both the MKX and Nautilus sit on the same Ford CD4 platform, which we previously encountered in the Ford Edge. The Nautilus is about 2 inches (50mm) longer than the Edge and sports Lincoln’s new large, rectangular grille, with the badge

centered inside instead of on the body between two smaller grilles. Other cosmetic tweaks include body-color trim instead of black, some really sharp-looking wheels, and more aerodynamic appearance. Perhaps the biggest exterior tweak is the location of the "Nautilus" badge—it's embossed into a metal plate overlapping the forward edge of the front doors and the quarter panels. It gives the Nautilus a more distinctive look.

Turbocharged engines are standard in the Nautilus. Gone is the 3.7-liter V6 of the MKX, replaced with either a direct-injected 2.7-liter turbocharged V6 or a 2.0-liter turbocharged four-banger. The V6 offers up 335hp (250kW) and 380lb-ft (512Nm) of torque, while the standard 2.0L model deals out 250hp (186kW) and 280lb-ft (380Nm). No matter which power plant you opt for, it will be paired with an all-new eight-speed automatic transmission—a clear upgrade from last year's six-speed transmission. Both front-wheel drive and all-wheel drive are available and are paired with an adaptive suspension aimed at offering a posh ride.

Lincoln offers the Nautilus in four trim levels: Standard ($41,335 base MSRP), Select ($45,540), Reserve ($49,870), and Black Label ($57,890). Lincoln makes a suite of driver-assist technology—newly bundled together as Lincoln Co-Pilot360—standard. Unfortunately, Co-Pilot360 *doesn't* include adaptive cruise control, lane-centering, evasive steering assist, and adaptive steering. Those are add-ons available via the Driver Assistance Package. The car we tested was the Black Label edition, with a sticker price of $67,630.

Lincoln luxury

- The cockpit.
  Eric Bangeman
- The minimalist, all-digital instrument cluster could be so much more than beveled gold characters on a black

background.

- The front row of the Nautilus. Those seats are really, really adjustable.
  Eric Bangeman
- Maybe make one large opening so you could put a handbag here?
  Eric Bangeman
- Plenty of room in the back seat.
  Eric Bangeman
- Ventilated leather seats with heating and cooling are very comfortable
  Eric Bangeman
- The Black Label Nautilus has 22-way adjustable power seats.
  Eric Bangeman
- The Nautilus will ~~goose~~ massage you while you drive.
  Eric Bangeman
- The wheelbase on the Nautilus is a couple inches longer than the Ford Edge it's based on, and it feels very roomy inside.
  Eric Bangeman

Black Label is Lincoln's highest level of luxury trim. As the company puts it, Black Label "offers premium materials in specially curated designer themes, along with a host of membership privileges." Beyond high-end touches such as massage chairs and patterned, ventilated leather seats, Black Label owners get remote delivery, free car washes, annual detailing, and a four-year, 50,000-mile maintenance plan that includes pickup and delivery. There are some other odd trappings, including travel perks and dinner for two at one of several "exquisite" restaurants.

Those are some nice touches, to be sure, but Black Label also takes the price substantially beyond the realm of comparable crossovers from Lexus, Infiniti, and… just about everyone else. If you like that sort of thing and don't mind spending

well north of $60K on a Lincoln, you'll probably enjoy all Black Label has to offer. If not, you're better off starting with Select or Reserve and adding the options you want.

Black Label aside, the Nautilus definitely carries forward a luxury vibe—with a few small exceptions. One of those is the amount of plastic trim around the center console. It's the same stuff I saw on the Ford Edge, and it feels decidedly out of place in $67,000 crossover. Most everything else looks like it belongs, especially the alcantara headliner, LED moodlighting, and the patterned venetian leather seats.

Lincoln may have set a world record for seat adjustability, with 22 ways of getting your driving position *just right*. Some of those controls, such as the three zones on the back, require a trip to the Sync 3 touchscreen to adjust. You can also get a light massage while you drive, and unlike other cars with this feature, the Nautilus will massage your bum, not just your back. It was all well and good until I was driving down the highway and abruptly found myself feeling like Steve Martin in the motel room scene from *Plains, Trains, and Automobiles*. And despite all the adjustability, I couldn't get the seat low enough for my liking.

Both the front and rear seats offer plenty of room. Indeed, the Nautilus feels downright spacious inside. There are 37.2 cubic feet (1,053L) of cargo space, 68.8 cubic feet (1,948L) with the rear seats folded down. Beyond the legroom, back-seat passengers will enjoy heated seats, their own climate controls, panoramic moonroof, and USB charging ports. If you've got small fry you need to keep distracted on long drives, there's an optional rear-seat entertainment system which adds HD displays to the front-row headrests along with two pairs of wireless headphones.

Solid, unspectacular ride

There aren’t any surprises once you head out on the highway in the Nautilus. The cabin is quiet and the adaptive suspension insulates you from rough roads, especially in Comfort mode. For improved handling and feel, switch to Normal or Sport mode. There’s a noticeable difference in acceleration between Sport and the other two modes, and the car feels slightly more locked in on winding roads. But there’s still too much body roll for my taste—the Nautilus is definitely geared more toward a pleasant Sunday drive in the country than anything else.

The combination of Co-Pilot360 and the Driver Assistance Package makes dealing with traffic jams or long Interstate drives much more pleasant. The car stays firmly centered in the lane, and the other safety features operate with a minimum of fuss and driver distraction.

As alluded to above, the infotainment system is the same Sync 3 you’ll find in anything that rolls off a Ford Motor Company assembly line. It’s dressed up with some Black Label graphics, and it supports CarPlay and Android Auto. There’s also a wireless charging pad, but you’ll need a USB cable to use Apple and Google’s car interface.

Lincoln has ditched analog dials in favor of a HD instrument cluster à la Audi and Jaguar-Land Rover. Unfortunately, the Nautilus does very little with it. There’s a solid black background with a gold-beveled speedometer in the center. The right side shows trip or vehicle info, while the left side shows you what’s on the radio. It’s all very minimalist with a black background and ends up looking like wasted space.

The Nautilus is rated at 21mpg, 19mpg in the city, and 26mpg on the highway. We saw 22.2mpg in a week of varied driving.

For the most part, Lincoln has done some good stuff with the

transition from the MKX to the Nautilus. From the outside, it’s a sharp, modern-looking crossover with an obvious attention to detail. The interior is another matter. The metallic-looking plastic trim doesn’t belong, and the shiny gold gradients in the infotainment system and instrument cluster remind me of 3D Word Art I’ve seen in PowerPoint presentations through the years. At $67,000 for the Black Label version, you’re better off going with another luxury crossover unless you’re a die-hard Lincoln fan. Start with the Select package, however, and you’ve got a reasonably priced luxury crossover that holds itself against the likes of Lexus and Infiniti.

Listing image by Eric Bangeman

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