

## Cars for Dogs: 2009 Toyota Venza

**Editor of Auto Restorer magazine gives the scoop on the best new cars for dog owners.**

*By Ted Kade*

The 2009 Toyota Venza offers canine-friendly options in its new five-passenger crossover, which was designed and engineered in the U.S. exclusively for the North American market.

The Venza is available with roughly a dozen pet features, including a rear hatch pet ramp for easier loading and unloading, a leash tether for securing pets in the vehicle, a pet booster seat with harness, a cargo area pet barrier, pet seat-belt buckles, and waterproof, removable hammock-style seat covers. All of these aftermarket options are available through dealers.

“Venza is a vehicle designed to meet the needs of people with a fun and on-the-go lifestyle, especially active boomers,” says Bob Zeinstra, Venza national marketing manager. “Many of these buyers look to their pets to fill the gap left by their kids. We wanted to make sure the Venza can accommodate this important family member and traveling companion.”

Here are some things you’ll want to know about this new vehicle, which Toyota says combines the reliability of a Camry, the comfort and refinement of an Avalon, and the utility of a Highlander.

**Cargo capacity:** 70.1 cubic feet behind the first row seats, and 34.4 cubic feet behind the second row. The top of the rear hatch is canted forward, which adds to the vehicle’s “aggressive” stance, but also robs you of some storage space. Rear load-in height is 27.7 inches. Maximum towing weight with the optional tow package is 2,500 pounds with the four-cylinder engine and 3,500 pounds with the V-6.

**Safety:** It’s the first passenger car to offer Toyota’s Star Safety System standard. It has Vehicle Stability Control and Traction Control systems, along with anti-lock brakes and seven air bags to keep you and Maggie safe.

**The basics:** Venza is powered by a 2.7-liter 4-cylinder engine or 3.5-liter V-6. Power moves through a six-speed automatic transmission, and the vehicle stops via power-assisted ventilated front/solid rear disc brakes. EPA-estimated mileage ranges from 21/29 for a front-wheel drive four-cylinder model to 18/25 for an all-wheel drive V-6.

**Extra touches:** Two 12-volt auxiliary power outlets in front and one in the cargo area. Ten front and rear beverage holders to store plenty of water for people and dogs. Upgrades: leather seats, front seat heaters, an anti-theft system, and a backup camera.

Prices start at \$25,975.

Ted Kade is the editor of Auto Restorer magazine.