



Room to Spare

The 2011 BMW 740Li has a distinct size advantage

BY ERIC TEGLER

BEFORE I DROVE BMW'S LATEST long-wheel-base 7 series flagship sedan, I opened the back door and slipped into the rear seat. There's a lot of room — 43 inches of legroom, the most in its class. It's comfy too, but you'll probably spend very little time back there. That's because well-heeled buyers of the 740Li and other cars in its class like to *drive* them.

Driving the 740Li is a largely pleasurable experience. After years of sporting a standard V8 engine in the U.S., the 2011 model returns to its six-cylinder roots (the 7 series debuted in 1978). Despite two fewer cylinders, the car's turbocharged 3.0-liter, 315-horsepower in-line engine goes from 0 to 60 mph in 5.9 seconds. During my test drive, the vehicle returned a respectable 19 mpg and handled well enough, but the typically good BMW steering feel was lacking.

Undoubtedly the best looking 7 in years, the 740Li gets its swagger from its sheer size. The car is SUV big — longer than both a Range Rover and a Toyota Sequoia, and an inch shy of a Ford Expedition. It's perfect for hauling the management team to the golf course in speedy comfort. The 740Li's bulk, however, can make city parking a tricky proposition.

The 2011 740Li features a cleaner interior design than past models and an

intuitive multimedia/vehicle control system. On the flip side, the shifter requires too much thought and the rear/side/top view camera system is mostly a novelty. With a \$75,425 base price and about \$14,000 worth of options available, the 740 is highly adaptable for different drivers' needs. It's best to consider that from the back seat, I think.

THE SPECS

2011 BMW 740Li

Price as Tested: \$89,025

Engine: 315 hp,

3.0-liter turbo inline V6

Weight: 4,432 pounds

Fuel Economy: 17 city/
25 highway

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BMW 740Li from multiple
angles in our virtual
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Comparison Shopping

Prestige sedans like the two described here both defy and sustain logic. Their heady prices and advanced technology may seem unwarranted, but they're aspirational vehicles, pioneering technologies that eventually trickle down to the cars we all drive.



2010 MERCEDES S400 HYBRID

A \$100,000 hybrid is arguably silly, and the fact that the S400 averaged just 17.9 mpg during my test drive didn't help its cause. But its fuel economy still beats its conventional S550 and S600 stablemates. The first hybrid sold with superior lithium ion batteries, the S400 is attractive and comfortable, but braking and throttle control are finicky.

Price as Tested: \$102,590

Engine: 295 hp, 3.5-liter V6/mild hybrid

Weight: 4,474 pounds

Fuel Economy: 19 city/26 highway



2010 JAGUAR XJL

In a segment crowded with German and Japanese premium luxury sedans, the Jaguar XJL stands out because it's British made. Jaguar has dragged its flagship into the 21st century with a distinct exterior style, improved handling, and more youthful appeal. The novel rotary gearshift requires some acclimatization, but the interior is lounge chic.

Price as Tested: \$82,898

Engine: 385 hp, 5.0-liter V8

Weight: 4,131 pounds

Fuel Economy: 16 city/23 highway