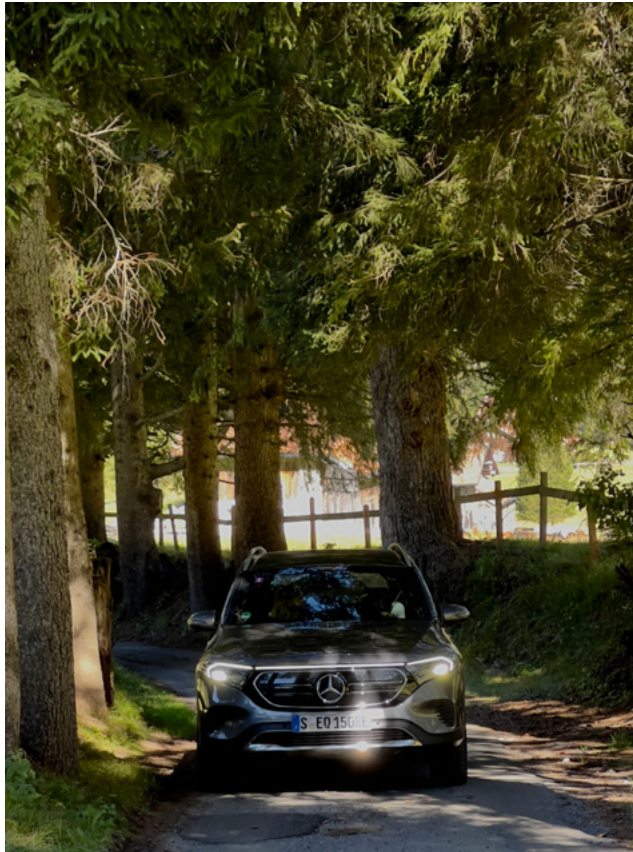


Mountain range

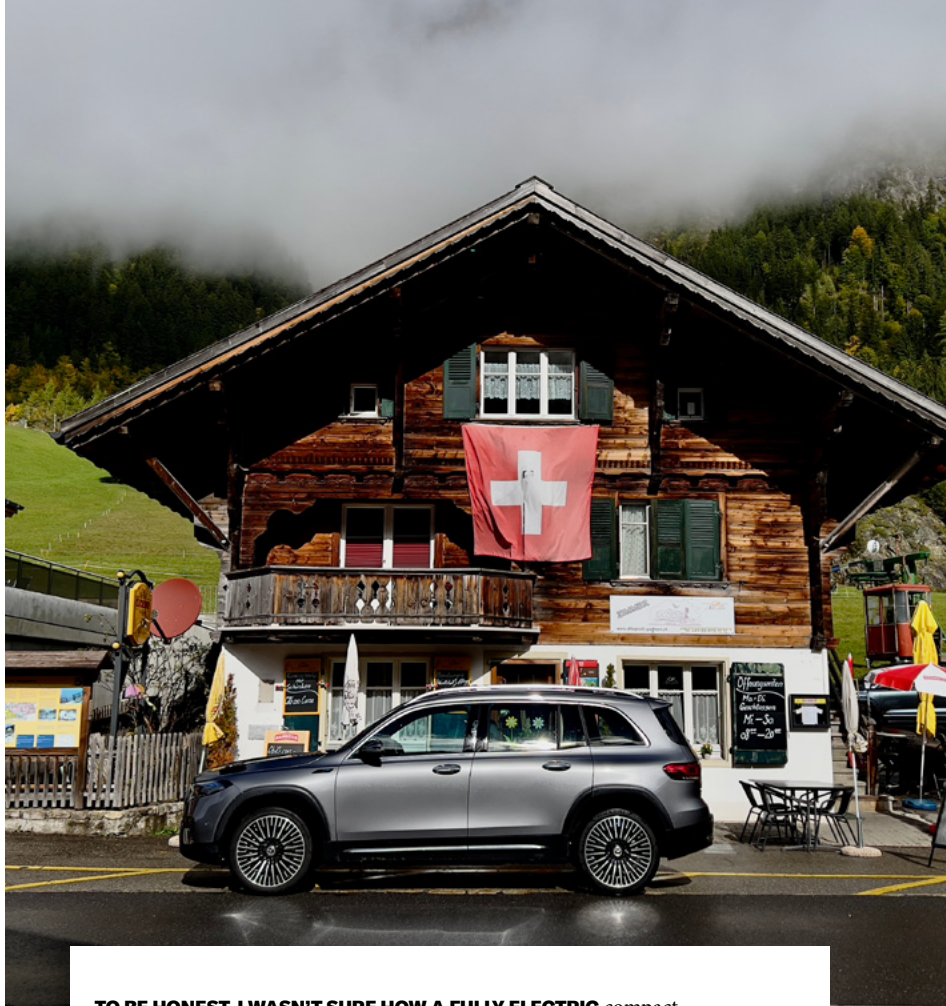
GQ Motoring Editor **Dieter Losskarn** took the fully electric Mercedes-Benz EQB 350 SUV on a mountain pass tour through the Swiss and Italian Alps. How much energy could he recuperate on those picturesque, serpentine roads?





**MERCEDES-BENZ
EQB 350 4MATIC**

- >> **ENGINE** one electric motor in front, one in the rear
- >> **POWER** 215kW and 520Nm
- >> **TOP SPEED** 160km/h
- 0-100km/h in 6.2 seconds
- >> **WEIGHT** 2 580kg
- >> **BATTERY CAPACITY** 66kWh
- >> **RANGE** 423km (claimed)
- >> **PRICE** from R1 374 500
- MERCEDES-BENZ.CO.ZA**



TO BE HONEST, I WASN'T SURE HOW A FULLY ELECTRIC compact SUV would perform on some of the most stunning mountain roads in the world. The last time I embarked on a similar curves trip in a Merc was a couple of years ago. My ride then was the SL 63 AMG.

But, man, did this EQB surprise me? By now, everyone knows electric cars are agile. But on those narrow, windy roads, its low centre of gravity, instant torque and 4Matic made this a proper mountaineer. Some of the sportscar drivers and motorbike riders couldn't believe their eyes when I silently flew past them on those hairpin turns. When you're driving up passes, the battery quickly depletes, but it starts recuperating on the long way down when you're coasting and braking – the latter is only necessary for *very* tight turns.

Like all Mercedes EQs, electric intelligence finds charging points on your route, even in tiny alpine villages. Its high-voltage battery is brought to an optimal charging temperature before a planned charging stop. The EQB's battery is 66kWh and can be charged up to 100kW. So, yes, with a realistic range of about 370km, my anxiety returns after spending time with the long-range EQS. But 30 minutes from 10 back to 80%, or 15 minutes for 150km, isn't that bad, especially as there are charging stations everywhere – and great views and restaurants. While having an excellent lunch on top of the king of mountain passes, Passo de Stelvio, we even loaded up with hydro-generated green electricity at the highest charging point in Europe.

Another highlight is Furka Pass, of 007 fame. Remember that famous car chase involving a silver Aston Martin DB5 and a white Mustang convertible? If not, watch it on YouTube. The road looks pretty much the same as in 1964, including the famous picture-perfect Hotel Belvedere on the hairpin bend, which has, unfortunately, been closed for years now and is apparently haunted. By the way, a sudden cold front, passing through the day before, had resulted in Furka Pass being closed. Our intelligent live navigator also indicated that it was closed, but with 4Motion confidence, we tried anyway. And just as we reached the top of the pass, the snow had melted enough to allow us passage.

On the other side, the sun peaked out again. Parked in this magnificent mountain scenery, the EQB doesn't look as exciting as the EQS. But it features a continuous light strip at the front and rear and the Mercedes EQ black-panel grille with a central star. This car is a true sleeper. You wouldn't expect it to perform as it does simply by looking at it.

In the famous Swiss town, St. Moritz, we decided to sleep on top of a 2 456m-high mountain. We left the Merc at the bottom and took the cog railway up. A cloudless sky rewarded us with endless views during the day but disadvantaged us with below-freezing temperatures at night. When we returned to the car the next morning, it was frozen. Even the star on its bonnet was covered in ice. And its battery? Surprisingly, not a single percentage of its charge was lost, so it must've been well-insulated.

We explored a few famous mountain passes, Albula, Julier, Gotthard and Umbrail, leaving the best for last. So far, I'd only heard of Kunkels Pass and seen enticing pictures of the unlit and unpaved tunnel on top. It might only be 1 357m high, but it's a true adrenaline ride. When the Rhine Valley below was impassable due to flooding, the Romans used this route over the mountain. The one-lane tunnel was added during the First World War. The entry process is digital now. At the bottom of the pass, we scanned a code and paid a toll online. With a virtual permit and after a hearty lunch at a cosy restaurant, we finally entered the tunnel, the highlight of our mountain trip. We encountered mountain bikers inside, as feared, who barely made it past this Merc. It was so cool we vowed to return, perhaps with a noisier V8. 🍷

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY DIETER LOSSKARN

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