

Quality tyres at better prices

Interstate ECO Tour Plus is a sound choice for executive cars.
Text by Faisal Shah. Photography by Keegan Dorai.

If you're looking around for new tyres for your executive car, there's a good chance that you will come across Interstate Tyres. There is an even better chance that you will not have heard of the brand before. That's not surprising as they're very new in the Malaysian market but don't discount them from your shortlist because this is a tyre brand that offers great value for money.

Interstate Tyres's most technologically advanced tyres are the ECO Tour Plus, which are ECO-friendly tyres that improve fuel efficiency while reducing CO2 output. This is due to lower rolling resistance which the ECO Tour Plus was designed to take best advantage of. The aim of the tyre technical team was to have

both reduced rolling resistance for better fuel efficiency and lower CO2 emissions while still maintaining top-class wet safety.

Through their I-ECON programme, Interstate Tyres was able to accomplish this breakthrough via the development of materials and a new non-directional tread pattern. The new tread design features a connected block and thin rib, which enhances contact pressure and wet braking performance. The ECO Tour Plus has a 13.4% improved rolling resistance, which makes it 2.8% more fuel-efficient and achieves a 2.9% reduction in CO2 output.

I had a chance to test out Interstate ECO Tour Plus tyres on a Honda Accord over a number of days. Cars like the Accord and its rivals like the



OPINION

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Toyota Camry and Nissan Teana are the main target market for the ECO Tour Plus as their owners put a premium on comfort and refinement but also require a tyre with good road holding abilities and low rolling resistance while offering good value for money. That's quite a tall order for any tyre to achieve.

The ECO Tour Plus however passed all the tests with flying colours. I was very impressed by their performance as they displayed sound road holding abilities as I drove around Klang Valley's highways, urban roads and

unpaved back lanes in both wet and dry conditions. The tyres gripped the various surfaces securely and handled uneven road surfaces like cobblestones and poorly patched streets with assurance even after a heavy downpour which left behind potentially treacherous pools of water along stretches of the highway. The non-directional thread pattern of the ECO Tour Plus swept the water aside effectively, significantly reducing the chance of aquaplaning.

Turn-in is noticeably improved over the OEM tyres Honda used on

the Accord and once they had been scrubbed-in, the ECO Tour Plus displayed excellent cornering grip even when the car was pushed to limits. Several sharp turns at speed did not pose any problems, which remained in full control with no loss of traction even when the road surface was strewn with gravel as there was a construction site located beside the test route.

This performance was even more impressive when you take into account the excellent low rolling resistance characteristics of the tyres. One



REFINEMENT

Refined ride as ECO Tour Plus tyres were quieter than the OEM ones, resulting in cabin noise being significantly reduced at 110km/h.



HANDLING

Able to handle heavy braking. At higher speeds, there was no discernible loss in stability or steering weighting. Very neutral tyre.

QUICK REFERENCE



ROLLING RESISTANCE

Silica in the tyre compound gives the ECO Tour Plus low rolling resistance. Saving fuel as well as being less taxing during traffic jams.



APPEARANCE

A non-directional thread tyre, the ECO Tour Plus looks good and has presence while offering solid functionality.



Most users will never subject their cars or its tyres to such extremes so the fact they could handle the punishment we meted out was impressive indeed.

test I performed was to lift off the accelerator at 60km/h whereby the Honda continued to coast along for at least 500 metres before it even began to slow down significantly.

The distance covered was completely unexpected as I had anticipated around 150 metres before the car would begin to lose momentum but we kept on moving

...200 ...300 metres. By 400 metres I was a convinced of the quality of the technology in the ECO Tour Plus and their superior low rolling resistance qualities.

During the exercise, all I needed to do was steer the car as it moved effortlessly along. If, like me, your driving is mostly done in the city and in typical rush hour stop-start traffic, low rolling resistance is a real bonus making these tyres highly recommended, as you need less energy to flow in traffic at low speeds. They also make traffic jams less of a strain on the legs.

In the long term, low roll resistant tyres contribute significantly to your fuel economy and add up to savings in your pocket.

As mentioned earlier, any tyre for a car like the Honda Accord needs to have low road noise and high levels of refinement. The Interstate ECO Tour Plus has those qualities in spades and it was particularly clear on our test car. Despite a lack of sound absorbing

materials in the wheel wells, the new rubber lowered cabin noise noticeably even when cruising at 110km/h on the highway.

The main noise to be heard at that speed came from wind resistance around the wing mirrors, which is true for almost any car. Conversations could be conducted comfortably without having to raise my voice, which you tend to take for granted and not notice but really come to appreciate on a day-to-day basis.

At higher speeds, there was no discernible loss in stability or steering weighting, which is the mark of a very neutral tyre. Braking performance was another standout feature and once the tyre tread had been scrubbed in the tyres helped to bring the test car to a stop safely despite repeated heavy braking from three-figure speeds.

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In summary then, the Interstate ECO Tour Plus gave me confidence in their abilities to cope with almost anything. Interstate Tyres estimates that the tyres fitted to our test car (215/60 R 16 93V) will be priced at about RM400 per piece - the final RRP pricing will be announced soon. At that price level, they really do offer great value for money as the price you pay is very reasonable for the

E-marked, ISO certified, ETRTO, TuV, GSO, INEN, LATU and DOT approved and are backed by a four-year warranty.

In Malaysia, four types of Interstate tyres are available, the Interstate Touring IST - 1, the Interstate Sport IXT - 1, the Interstate Sport SUV GT and of course, the Interstate ECO Tour Plus. Each tyre has individual characteristics to suit different needs.

One test was to lift off the accelerator at 60km/h... the Honda continued to coast along for 500 metres which convinced me of the ECO Tour Plus's superior low rolling resistance qualities.



performance they offer. Don't be put off by the unfamiliar brand name though. Interstate Tyres is still building its Malaysian market presence but the brand has a solid history of almost forty years during which its international market share has grown steadily. Made primarily for the European market, they offer European technology but at reasonable prices because the production is based in Asia with revolutionary computer analysis to ensure stringent world-class quality standards. They are also thoroughly tested in the field as well as laboratory tests for endurance as well as noise, resistance to force and moments, which all add up to a very comprehensive testing regime. The results speak for themselves as Interstate tyres are

The Touring is a general tyre for passenger cars. The tyre treads are designed to reduce the amount of tyre noise generated. The Sport is an Ultra High performance tyre for enthusiastic drivers who like pushing their machines to their limits. Made with a special performance compound and tread pattern, the tyre offers superior road holding, especially in the wet. The Sport SUV GT tyres are SUV tyres, which are also suited to road use. Double steel belted construction ensures that they are long lasting. They also have a built-in rim protector to provide extra protection for large rims.

So, the next time you're out shopping for new tyres don't forget to take a look at the Interstate Tyres product because all great brands and products have to start somewhere and in this case, they just might start with you.

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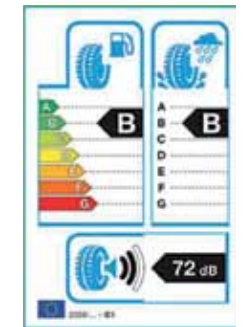
INTERSTATE ECO TOUR PLUS

- Road Noise ★★★★★
- Cornering Grip ★★★★★
- Roll Resistance ★★★★★
- Braking ★★★★★
- Value ★★★★★
- Overall ★★★★★

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EU LABELLING

Since November 2012, it has been mandatory for all tyres sold in the EU to display a standardised label providing information about rolling resistance, wet grip and exterior rolling noise - three key tyre performance attributes. The

purpose of this information is to help consumers make more informed choices to balance cost vs performance needs to the benefit of the environment when buying new tyres.

Interstate Tyres are produced for the European market and so carry the EU tyre label which will be retained on the tyres sold in the Malaysian market because Interstate believes that the information is important for all consumers regardless of market requirements. Here we look at what the information means - for both the tyres and the consumer.

FUEL ECONOMY - LIGHTER ROLLING

Rolling resistance affects the energy efficiency, operating costs, and carbon dioxide emissions of the tyre. Rolling resistance amounts to approx. 20 per cent of the vehicle's fuel consumption. Lower rolling resistance amounts to better fuel economy.

The difference in consumption between the best and weakest tyre (A-G) is significant, at around 0.6 l/100km. The lightly rolling tyres also reduce CO2 emissions by 14 g/Km. During the entire operating life of the tyre, the amount of fuel equals five full tanks (240 litres).

WET GRIP - MORE SAFETY

For summer tyres, wet grip is especially important in terms of safety. Tyres with excellent wet grip have a shorter braking distance, more stable handling and better driveability. The label indicates the tyre's braking distance on wet asphalt, from a speed of 80 km/h. For example, the difference between class A and class F in terms of stopping distance can be over 18 metres, or four car lengths.

EXTERNAL ROLLING NOISE - QUIETER

The value for external rolling noise signifies the external noise pollution caused by the tyre on the environment. The interior noise that the driver experiences is not taken into account. In addition to the noise value reported in decibels (dB), the label has 1 to 3 black sound waves signifying the EU type approval class of the tyre.

