

# Steve Says This Crosstrek Is The Best Subaru You Can Buy



For my money, this is the best Subaru you can buy. And I've held that opinion since it was first called the XV Crosstrek back in 2013. You can think of it as a bite-sized Outback. And now you can have one in Sport trim with a more powerful engine.



With a starting MSRP of \$23,295 including destination, the Crosstrek is one of Subaru's most affordable cars. It's got nearly 9" of ground clearance, standard all-wheel drive, of course, and returns about 30mpg while delivering a nearly 500 mile driving range.



And it's the only small sport utility with 4-wheel traction to still offer a manual transmission though it comes with a major mileage penalty. No manual here,

however; this is the new Sport trim, introducing Subaru's largest engine to one of their smallest vehicles.



Subaru offers nothing but 4-cylinder engines and this 2.5-liter Boxer makes its debut on the Sport and Limited grades. It takes horsepower from 152 in the base 2.0-liter engine to 182 here combined with an equally sizable jump in torque to 176 pound-feet.



So this is not the equivalent of Dodge offering a Hellcat option but for Subaru, this is big news. And beyond being known for all-wheel drive, Boxers and dogs, Subaru is also a CVT brand. They call theirs Lineartronic and indeed it's pretty darn linear leaving little to complain about and this one even has paddle shifters which work surprisingly well to mimic an 8-speed dual-clutch. It's quick to react and fun to play with.



Now, you might think all of this talk is nonsense in what amounts to a jacked-up wagon but the Crosstrek's best kept secret is how fun it is to drive. If it didn't have these Geolander tires it would really carve up a backroad. But this Sport model is for the weekend warrior; bikes, dogs, kayaks and as such needs to be able to get to out of the way places.



As we've come to learn, the name Sport rarely means

what you think it does. And that holds true here. Yes, the newly available 2.5-liter engine adds some power – a want of almost every Subaru I’ve ever driven – but this is more about the look; the dark gray wheels, unique grille, yellow accents, faux carbon fiber.



And there are also 2 settings here for X-MODE to be used during low-speed off-road maneuvers in snow and mud. The ride quality is exceptional, torque vectoring makes the car very agile and the powertrain is as smooth as butter. And when it’s time to hit the trail you’ve got the ground clearance and the best all-wheel drive system to get you through.



It can’t be overstated how Subaru’s all-wheel drive setup is just better – that whole symmetry thing they like to promote thanks to the engine’s horizontal piston layout – is the real deal and works here with the ability to lock all 4 wheels in 2 stages of off-road difficulty – like a 4-lo setting in a 4X4.



The raised suspension with Subaru’s soft Stablex dampers combined with great steering feel, comfortable driver’s seat and excellent visibility make the Crosstrek more of a driver’s car than you would ever imagine. The engine is spunky with its sport mode and the 2.5 actually gets better highway fuel economy than the 2.0 rated here at 34mpg.



My biggest knocks against the Crosstrek are the really noisy cabin - you've got to blast this sound system to rise above the road noise and the patina of aged design and cost-cutting that plagues all Subarus. At over \$29,000 you've got to be kidding me with the halogen lighting. Instead, Subaru likes to talk up this "high-power" LED rear gate light.



StarLink is a solid touchscreen system and this new recycled seat fabric called StarTex is a green addition that plays nicely into Subaru's ethos. But the cubby for your smartphone is too small, there's no height adjustment for the passenger seat, the enhanced EyeSight system includes Adaptive Cruise with Lane Centering but no real Stop and Go functionality for rush hour traffic, and the rear seats feel like an afterthought with no centralized air vents, no USB connection, only one seatback pocket and not even an armrest. There's decent space in here, for sure, but if there's one thing that brings the Crosstrek down a notch or 2 it's penny pinching stuff like this.

Still in all, for \$29,145 as-tested, this is the Subaru that best represents the brand. It's my favorite because it's Subaru to the core.

**By TestDriveNow Auto Critic Steve Hammes for SouthFloridaReporter.com, Nov. 16, 2020**

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