

All-New 2018 Subaru Crosstrek Brings Rugged Looks and Refinement

Familiar formula feels much more substantial and mature



By Jeff S. Bartlett
July 17, 2017

Subaru has again sprinkled its Outback dust on an Impreza, creating a raised hatchback primed for frugal weekday commutes and spirited weekend adventures.

The formula remains strikingly similar to the first-generation Crosstrek, with familiar size, shape, and proportions. Where this all-new pseudo-SUV is distinguished from its trailblazing cousin is in refinement. Though the new Crosstrek is not yet on sale, we got our hands on one by renting it from Subaru, and these are our first impressions.

This Crosstrek benefits from using the same new platform rolled out for its fraternal twin, the Impreza. (That platform will also underpin the next Forester.) The new structure brings significant benefits with a much more comfortable ride and a significantly quieter cabin.

One would need a tape measure to figure out the incremental gains to the wheelbase, length, and slight drop in height. The

Crosstrek remains instantly recognizable, which is no surprise given the cult following the car has amassed.

Improvements that were made to the Impreza carry over to the Crosstrek. We were impressed by the cushy and steady ride that's head and shoulders better than its competitors. Its handling is responsive but less so than the Impreza, because of its additional height, and it's certainly less frisky than the Mazda CX-3 or Toyota CH-R.

The 2.0-liter, four-cylinder engine has been revised, gaining 4 hp to 152 hp—enough to provide decent pace, but it won't set anyone's heart on fire. Our Impreza returned 30 mpg overall, so the Crosstrek won't be far off. The EPA's estimate is 29 mpg combined.

The continuously variable transmission (CVT) mimics a traditional automatic transmission's programmed steps designed to mask the sudden revving and sewing-machine buzz sensation that often comes with these transmissions. A manual is still available.

If you're inclined to venture off-road, the X-Mode button can

optimize engine power, transmission logic, all-wheel-drive power split, and the stability control system to enhance off-road traction. The Crosstrek won't have any trouble tackling the occasional muddy trail or sand patch, but despite its 8.7 inches of ground clearance, it is not designed to scale boulders.

Cabin access is easy, with generously sized doors, an easy step-over height, and an elevated stance. The front seats are comfortable, but lower-back support is compromised due to the lack of lumbar adjustment. The contrasting stitching on our Limited model adds flair.

The controls are refreshingly simple to use, and the gauges are super-clear. The upper screen in the center of the dash provides a range of information, including fuel economy stats, but the busy display provides almost too much information to interpret while driving. Heated seats are readily available, even without opting for the Limited.

At center stage on our Crosstrek is its latest infotainment system. It's easy to use, with large buttons, simple menu structure, and quick response. Base models are fitted with a 6.5-inch system that's compatible with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay.

Rear access requires some ducking due to the curved roof, but it is easier to climb in than the Impreza, thanks to its raised height. Relative to the class, the Crosstrek has a rather livable backseat.



Even taller adults will find adequate head-, knee-, and footroom. We also found that children were able to get in and buckle boosters seats with ease.

The cargo space is relatively generous, providing good space for shopping bags and road trip gear as long as your needs don't dictate a traditional small SUV.

The latest version of the EyeSight advanced safety suite includes automatic emergency braking, adaptive cruise control, lane-departure warning, and lane-keep assist. Also available are blind-spot warning, rear cross-traffic alert, reverse automatic braking, and dynamic headlights that turn with steering wheel input.

We remain fans of EyeSight, though this camera-based system has its limitations when visibility is an issue, such as during a heavy rain—often when you need help the most.

We wish that forward-collision warning and automatic emergency braking were standard across the line, but EyeSight is not even available on the base model. It is optional on the Premium and Limited trims.

Subaru owners are likely to embrace the new much more refined yet familiar Crosstrek. It's even a viable alternative to those who don't need the Forester's roominess. We look forward to spending more time with it when we purchase one to test.

