

Road handling utility BY JOE SAGE

The Subaru Forester was originally built on the platform of the Impreza, their popular and wideranging lineup that includes the sporty WRX and high-performance WRX STi. Forester is now built on the Subaru Global Platform—but then again, so is Impreza. The formula thus remains the same: a vehicle with the interior volume of a generous compact crossover, with road handling prowess related to a performance-gened sedan.

Forester's numbers tell the tale: 111.9 cu.ft of interior volume, 31.3 cu.ft. of cargo volume behind the rear seats, and 76.1 cu.ft with the rear seats folded down (or all a little less with a moonroof, as on ours). Its numbers in fact edge out the Outback, with the exception of cargo volume behind rear seats. Inside, Forester has more front legroom than Outback and just 0.1" less rear legroom. The difference is due to overall length: Outback is 9.2 inches longer. Ground clearance is the same for both, but Forester's shorter length gives it notably greater approach and departure angles for those outdoor weekends (with break-over also a little bit more). Forester is also a couple of inches taller than Outback, adding to a characteristic look that is also enhanced by its shorter length. (One note: we had the Forester in August, and it has a lot of glass.)

All Forester trims have the same engine,

driver-selectable X-Mode features and all-wheel-drive system. All have the same CVT, while the three top trims have a 7-speed-mimicking manual mode.

Outback does offer a more powerful turbo engine on many trims, and its suspension and drive modes are more advanced for off-road and other tougher duty. Both are fully independent, and Forester surpassed most everything we drive for comfort on speedbumps.

We thought about the CVT very little during our week of freeway and surface street driving with a few parking lots and warehouse districts thrown in, exactly the kind of use most people are going to give it most of the time. Times we did think about it were typical CVT observations: though this is a fine example, if paying attention, we still find ourselves waiting for it to shift, but it never will. Unless in manual mode. Available via paddles or shift lever, we used this mode really just for kicks on freeway overpass sweepers and such, where you can actually be quite aggressive.

We had no volume of gear during our week with the Forester, but can attest to its other key attribute: the peppy performance and precise handling of a lower-profile vehicle.

With the muscle memory of a sedan in a spacious crossover body, Subaru Forester's formula has given it a happy buyer base. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

SEATING	.....5-passenger
ENGINE	.....2.5L boxer (horizontally opposed) 4-cyl, alum/alum DOHC, dual active valve control
HP/TORQUE	.....182 hp / 176 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....12.0:1
DRIVETRAIN	.....Symmetrical AWD, vehicle dynamics control w all-wheel all-speed traction control, rollover sensor
TRANSMISSION	.....CVT, 7-spd manual mode
TRANSFER	.....electronic contin variable hydraulic
SUSPENSION	.....four-wheel independent: F: MacPherson-type struts, lower L-arms, coils, stblzr bar, hydraulic engine mounts; R: dbl wishbone, coils, stblzr bar
STEERING	.....elec pwr assist rack & pinion
BRAKES	.....F: 12.4 vented; R: 11.2 vented
WHEELS	.....18x7 alum alloy, machine finish
TIRES	.....225/55R18 98H all-season
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....182.1 / 105.1 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....8.7 in
APPRCH / DEPART / BRKOV	.....22.9 / 24.6 / 19.6°
TURNING CIRCLE	.....35.4 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....w moonroof 40.2 / 37.7 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....43.3 / 39.4 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....w moonroof 28.9 / 70.9 cu.ft
WEIGHT / DISTRIB	.....3589 lb
FUEL CAPACITY	.....16.6 gal
MPG	.....26/33/29 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE (Touring)	\$34,895
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1050
TOTAL	\$35,945

2021 SUBARU FORESTER LINEUP

(base)	.....\$24,795
Premium	.....27,795
Sport	.....29,395
Limited	.....31,395
Touring ▼	.....34,895

