

ON THE WILD SIDE

BY JOE SAGE

Subaru has long offered wide appeal to the outdoor adventure set—one of the most likely brands you'll see with a couple of mountain bikes or kayaks on the roof, headed somewhere exhilarating and, well, wild.

With the entire lineup all-wheel-drive (with the current exception of the BRZ sports coupe shared with Toyota 86), any Subaru will get you through rain and snow. The most popular for tackling off-road conditions are Outback and Crosstrek, with advantages in ground clearance and tougher build, rounded out by degrees of rugged styling.

While both have had the same 8.7-inch ground clearance, Crosstrek has held advantages in departure and breakover angles (though surprisingly not approach) due to its slightly shorter wheelbase (by 3.2 inches) and notably shorter body length (by 14.8 inches)—while Outback holds the advantage in cargo capacity (by about 20 cu.ft., or over a third

again more volume behind the front seats).

Outback has more powerful powertrains—two offerings for either, with Crosstrek's bigger engine equaling Outback's smaller one—but weighs generally 5-600 pounds more than Crosstrek. The advantage remains Outback's, strong enough to tow 2700-3500 pounds; Crosstrek is not tow-rated.

Enter a new model to close these gaps: the new 2022 Subaru Outback Wilderness. Virtually every advantage of this new build is achieved through one simple trick and all that comes with it—its ride height is increased by almost an inch (ground clearance grows from 8.7 inches to 9.5).

If that doesn't sound like a lot, it is. It's enough to give Outback approach, departure and break-over angles all in the 20s (or exactly 20.0 for approach)—along with ground clearance now all beating the Crosstrek except for departure. The departure difference is of course because Outback



still hauls more gear inside, hence there are still interesting points to consider between the two.

Along with the boost in height, Outback Wilderness has upgraded suspension (not only raised but retuned) and bears Yokohama Geolandar A/T tires, with a full-size matching spare. The wheels are 17-inchers for increased sidewall in tough conditions. This model includes an additional X-Mode that switches from crawl speeds to speeds over 25 mph seamlessly. It also has the bigger engine with higher 3500-lb tow capacity. As on all Outbacks,



the Wilderness has a CVT with 8-speed manual mode and paddle shifters.

Outback Wilderness is recognizable by mustard-toned (they call it copper) nameplates, rocker panel badging, stylized markers on front, rear and rack, and name tags stitched into the upholstery.

Our love affair with this vehicle had started as soon as we sat down, setting up via a generally standout smaller vertical screen interface. It continued as we experienced the subtle but significant feel of its increased height—migrating it noticeably farther than even a standard Outback



on the continuum from station wagon to SUV.

Wilderness, of course, has no roads. But virtually anyone headed to the wilderness will get there by roads—roads that are increasingly wild, the farther along the path they progress. We took the new Outback Wilderness for a three-or-four-hour trek through upper Maricopa County and on into lower Yavapai, on many miles of such a route.

While noting a few bad habits in town—we were hammered by speedbumps, at even the slowest speeds, and long uphill climbs brought mild power surges that begged for use of the manual feature—we overall fell for this one.

As capable, reliable and well equipped—and as great a value—as any Subaru is, most are generally more likely to register on our “solid provider” scale than to ignite the enthusiast fire within us. This one, though, is a gotta-have-it model for anyone tackling tougher conditions, or just wanting to be ready for them. We had a blast. ■



SPECIFICATIONS

SEATING	.....5-passenger
ENGINE	.....2.5L boxer (hznly opposed) 4-cyl, alum/alum DOHC, DFI and ETC, twin-scroll turbo, chain-driven cams, dual active valve control
HP/TORQUE	.....260 hp / 277 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....10.6:1
DRIVETRAIN	.....Symmetrical AWD, electronically managed variable hydraulic transfer clutch, continuously variable front-rear torque split (based on accel, steering and yaw, responding to wheel slip).
	• EXCLUSIVE TO WILDERNESS: advanced X-mode optimized engine output and CVT ratio, increased active AWD, enhanced control logic for vehicle dynamics to reduce wheel slip and increase ability on slippery surfaces and inclines, Snow/Dirt and Deep Snow/Mud modes (below 25 mph), Deep Snow Mode (above 25 mph), Low Speed/Low Ratio Gradient Control.
TRANSMISSION	.....high-torque Lineartronic CVT w 8-spd manual mode, paddles, revised lower ratios Wilderness exclusive
SUSPENSION	.....four-wheel independent, raised 0.8 in for Wilderness:
	F: MacPherson-type struts, internal rebound springs, alum lower L-arms, coils, stblzr bar, liquid-filled engine mounts;
	R: dbl wishbone, coils, stblzr bar
STEERING	.....elec pwr assist rack & pinion, variable gear ratio rack
BRAKES	.....power-assist 4-whl disc w EBD, 4-channel 4-sensor ABS, brake assist, brake override, auto vehicle hold;
	F: 12.4 vented dual-piston;
	R: 11.8 vented single piston
WHEELS	.....17x7 alloy, matte black finish
TIRES	.....Yokohama Geolandar A/T 225/65R17 102T all-season, RWL
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....191.3 / 108.1 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....9.5 in
OVERHANG (F/R)	.....39.6 / 43.7 in
APPRCH / DEPART / BRKOV	.....20.0 / 23.6 / 21.2°
TURNING CIRCLE	.....36.1 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....w moonroof 37.7 / 39.1 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....42.8 / 39.5 in
REAR GATE OPEN / LIFTOVER	.....29.5 / 29.2 cu.ft
CARGO CAPACITY	.....32.5 / 75.7 cu.ft
WEIGHT / DISTRIB	.....3896 lb
TOW CAPACITY	.....3500 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....reg 87 oct unl / 18.5 gal
MPG	.....22/26/24 (city/hwy/comb)

2022 SUBARU OUTBACK LINEUP

(base)	.....\$26,945
Premium	.....29,145
Limited	.....33,595
Touring	.....37,495
Onyx Edition XT	.....35,145
Wilderness ▼	.....36,995
Limited XT	.....37,995
Touring XT	.....39,945

BASE PRICE (Touring)	.....\$36,995
MOONROOF + NAV + REV AUTO BRAKE	.....1845
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1125
TOTAL	.....\$39,965

