

Wilderness expansion BY JOE SAGE

Last spring, Subaru introduced the new Outback Wilderness, which we drove far and wide last summer. The build adds ground clearance and thus increased approach, departure and breakover, plus upgraded suspension, rugged Yokohama Geolandar A/T tires on 17-inch wheels, and advanced dual-function X-Mode settings. Wilderness Edition is quickly recognizable by black and copper badging, black rocker panels, copper markers on front, rear and rack, and tags stitched into the seats.

Subaru now introduces a new family member, the Forester Wilderness, expanding the Wilderness build to two models and the Forester model to six trims. Forester is based on Subaru Impreza, while Outback is based on the larger Legacy, giv-

ing Forester special appeal for those who like the feel of its WRX-related footprint in a taller model.

X-Modes include snow/dirt, deep snow/mud (one setting for lower speeds, another for higher), and on Wilderness also hill descent control, as well as a low speed/low ratio gradient control that can detect steep grades and shift the transmission to a lower gear ratio and lower first ratio. As on the Outback Wilderness, that transmission is a CVT, with paddles for an 8-speed manual mode.

People have their own reasons for choosing between Forester and Outback—a bit more headroom and tighter turning circle on Forester, a bit more cargo room and slightly higher tow capacity on Outback, and so on. Outback also runs a thou-

sand or two dollars higher across its lineup, plus offers pricier turbocharged XT models with notably higher horsepower (260 vs 182), of which the Outback Wilderness is one.

The Forester lineup all has the 182-hp non-turbo engine. Comparing Wilderness-to-Wilderness, the Forester Wilderness is 30 percent lower on power, but about four thousand dollars less expensive. Forester Wilderness adds 0.5 inches to ground clearance, while on Outback Wilderness, that's 0.8 inches—which may be for the handling of different wheelbases, or may be because the shorter Forester Wilderness, even with less ground clearance than Outback Wilderness (9.2 inches versus 9.5) still achieves greater approach and breakover angles (with departure about the same on both). All in all, the dimensional differences are negligible, leaving most buying decisions coming down

to power and price, to style preferences, and for some buyers a 500-lb tow capacity difference.

Forester weighs about 250 pounds less than the Outback, which mitigates the power difference a bit. The powertrain launches with a deep and healthy growl, not a lot of power in the pedal, but the kind of experience that reminds you it is here not to tackle boy racers on the local streets, but that it would always be happier traversing the mud or climbing a rocky trail.

And that's what makes a Subaru Wilderness a Subaru Wilderness.

Great as the Wilderness is off-road, its power is more than the numbers may indicate around town. We wrapped up our last evening at rush hour, where traffic was not too heavy but highly motivated, as usual in these parts. As we pulled up to a stoplight going into a double left turn to enter the freeway, in the outside lane, we had an

ordinary older sedan in the inside lane and noticed a 550-hp European performance SUV coming up behind us—and choosing the sedan's lane. Clearly they thought we'd be slower. But when the light turned green, our Forester Wilderness summoned the spirit of its ancestors, the WRX and STi, and with solid acceleration and precise cornering, we emerged as leader of the pack. The high-powered Euro drove very aggressively on the freeway, but we passively ignored it and prevailed through all conditions, thanks to our Forester's nimble size and effective paddle shifters. Nice. The takeaway is that this tall outdoorsman is a surprisingly roadworthy vehicle around town, as well.

As with the basic Subaru lineup itself, choices are always good. And now that the Wilderness Edition treatment makes a family, can a Crosstrek Wilderness be far behind? ■



SPECIFICATIONS

BUILD	unitized body, Subaru Global Platform
ROWS / SEATS	.....two / five
ENGINE	.....2.5L alum/alum DOHC 4-cyl boxer (horizontally opposed) w SI-DRIVE engine performance mgmt system
HP/TORQUE	.....182 hp / 176 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....12.0:1
TRANSMISSION	.....Lineartronic CVT w 8-spd manual shift mode, paddle shift
DRIVETRAIN	.....Symmetrical AWD
MODES	.....advanced dual-function X-MODE
SUSPENSION	.....4-wheel independent (raised +0.5-in for Wilderness; F: MacPherson-type struts, lower L-arms, coils, stblzr bar, hydraulic engine mounts; R: dbl wishbone, coils, stblzr bar
STEERING	.....elec rack & pinion
BRAKES	.....electronic dual-diagonal discs w EBD and 4-channel/4-sensor ABS, active torque vectoring, auto vehicle hold F: 12.4 vented; R: 11.2 vented
WHEELS	.....17x7 alloy, matte black finish
TIRES	.....225/60 R17 Yokohama Geolandar A/T
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....182.7 / 104.9 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....9.2 in
APPR / BRKVR / DEPART	.....23.5 / 25.4 / 21.0°
TURNING CIRCLE	.....35.4 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....w mnroof 40.2 / 37.6 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....43.3 / 39.4 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....26.9 / 69.1 cu.ft
MAX LOAD LENGTH	.....35.7 / 69.9 in
WEIGHT	.....3643 lb
TOW CAPACITY	.....3000 lb
ROOF RAIL LOAD	.....static/dynamic 800 / 220 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....reg 87 octane / 16.6 gal
MPG	.....25/28/26 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	.....\$32,820
OPTION PKG: Code 22: 8-in Multimedia Plus plus Harman Kardon premium speaker system, power rear gate	.....1850
ENGINE UNDER GUARD	.....220
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1125
TOTAL	.....\$36,015

2022 SUBARU FORESTER LINEUP

Forester	.....\$25,195
Forester Premium	.....28,195
Forester Sport	.....29,765
Forester Wilderness	.....▼ 32,820
Forester Limited	.....31,875
Forester Touring	.....35,295

