

ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

VOLUME 22 NUMBER 4
JULY-AUGUST 2023

**ROADSTERS & COUPES
MULTIPLE NEW EVS
AUCTIONS & EVENTS
JOSHUA TREE OVERLAND
ADOT, BORDER & TEEN NEWS
AND MUCH MORE!**

Ford Bronco Sport
Heritage Limited 4x4



VEHICLES • EQUIPMENT • TECHNOLOGY • PEOPLE • EVENTS • DESTINATIONS • ATTRACTIONS



AS YOU MAY RECALL... BY JOE SAGE

There have been many branches in the Ford Bronco tree, though it distills down pretty simply. It roots are most deeply embedded in the original small Bronco (generation one, 1966-1977), a general purpose off-road and farm duty utility on its own dedicated platform, then in a sequence of full-size Broncos based on F-150 frames and cabs (generations two to five, 1978-1996).

For a stretch of time, there was also a Bronco II (1984-1990), built off the Ford Ranger, supplanted by the Ford Explorer, as the SUV craze sprang its own roots and grew in a new separate direction.

One thing for certain: despite ever more SUVs

and crossovers on the market since the Bronco retired, as well as ever more variants of its most direct competitors, people clamored for its return. Funny thing is, that meant different things to different people. To many, it meant the big F-Series-based Bronco, while others craved the smaller gen-one Bronco, or some even the Bronco II.

The new gen-six Bronco (2021 forward) was introduced with big (Ranger-based) 2-Door and 4-Door models, along with a smaller (Escape-based) Bronco Sport, which in fact came out first and gave the overall nameplate a spot in the red hot compact crossover market. For anyone more into big,

tough trucks and utilities, it was easy to dismiss the Bronco Sport as a less serious entry. But it turns out there has always been more to it, and here we have the proof, and the image to support that, fully fleshed out in a special new version.

New to both the big Broncos and small Bronco Sport for 2023, Ford introduces Heritage Edition and Heritage Limited versions of all three. Design cues—including roof, grille and wheels in Oxford White (except for dark wheels on the big Bronco Heritage Limited), along with special paints—harken back to the original small Bronco from 1966.

Ford will build just 1,966 units of each Heritage

Limited Edition model to commemorate the year the original Bronco debuted. It's a great treatment on any of them, but it is arguably the Bronco Sport versions that really bring the spirit of that numerically honored smaller gen-one Bronco back to life.

The 2023 Bronco Sport Heritage Edition is built on the Big Bend version (second up from a base trim currently not even available), with a 181-hp 1.5-liter EcoBoost three-cylinder. Heritage Limited upgrades to a 250-hp 2.0-liter four-cylinder.

The Bronco Sport Heritage models are admittedly kind of cute, especially in such colors as Robin's Egg Blue or our Yellowstone Metallic, along with their white elements. Their presence in the broad compact crossover market segment and that cuteness factor aside, though, they are dead serious.

All feature G.O.A.T. (Goes Over Any Type of Terrain) modes and a H.O.S.S. (High-Performance Off-Road Stability Suspension) system with increased ride height and attention to off-road comfort—from specially tuned front struts with hydraulic re-

bound stops, to 46-mm monotube rear shocks, anti-roll bars and specially tuned springs.

Interior touches on the Bronco Sport Heritage and Heritage Limited models include plaid cloth seats in heathered Navy Pier—a color inspired by the cloth seats in 1980s Broncos—with plaid inserts and Race Red and Robin's Egg Blue accent stitching; a Navy Pier microsuede center console and armrests with Race Red stitching; Oxford White accents on a Navy Pier instrument panel as well as the doors; and a Bronco Sport MOLLE strap storage system on front-row seatbacks with Navy Pier straps and Race Red zipper grips.

Bronco Sport Heritage series wheels are period stylish, but also modern off-road oriented—17-inchers bearing 29-inch all-terrain off-road rubber with deep, aggressive tread continuing onto the sidewalls for extra protection in the rock and brush.

Put it all together, and you have two cute, classic off-roaders, one near base price and one now

Bronco Sport Heritage models bear the bold red BRONCO name on the grille—as with Mustang, Bronco generally prioritizes its own treasured brand over corporate badging. (As fate would have it, though, while most big Bronco trims also bear the BRONCO name on their grille, big Bronco Heritage models carry the FORD name front and center, as does the big Bronco Raptor. Purist advantage: Bronco Sport?)

A jog in the roofline just aft of the sunroof evokes some of the toughest off-roaders the world has known.



SPECIFICATIONS

| | |
|--|---|
| ASSEMBLY |Hermosillo, Mexico |
| ENGINE |2.0L EcoBoost 4-cylinder, DOHC, TI-VCT, alum block/head/pistons, powder forged rods |
| HP/TORQUE |(prem fuel) 250 hp / 277 lb-ft |
| COMPRESSION RATIO |10.0:1 |
| TRANSMISSION |8-spd SelectShift auto w oil cooler, paddle shifters |
| DRIVETRAIN |4x4, liquid-cooled PTU, 4x4 disconnect w 4x4 lock, dual clutch RDU w differential lock |
| CRAWL RATIO |18:1 |
| G.O.A.T. MODES |normal, eco, sport, slippery, mud/ruts, sand, rock crawl |
| SUSPENSION |F: indep MacPherson strut-type w unique coil spring, stblzr bar, twin-tube hydraulic gas shocks w hydraulic rebound stops, steel subframe w aluminum lower control arm, cast knuckle; R: indep double lateral link semi-trailing arms w unique coil spring, stblzr bar, monotube hydraulic gas shocks, isolated steel subframe w unique cast knuckle |
| STEERING |elec power-assist w tuning unique to drive modes |
| BRAKES |F: 308mm x 27mm vented, single-piston calipers; R: 302mm x 11mm, single-piston |
| WHEELS |17-in Oxford White alum heritage |
| TIRES |235/65R17 Falken WildPeak AT AT3W Off-Road |
| LENGTH / WHEELBASE |172.7 / 105.1 in |
| GROUND CLEARANCE |8.6-8.8 in |
| WATER FORDING |23.6 in |
| TRACK (F/R) |63.4 / 62.8 in |
| APPR / DEPART / BRKVR |30.4 / 33.1 / 20.4° |
| TURNING CIRCLE |37.4 ft |
| HEADROOM (F/R) |41.5-42.4 / 41.7 in |
| LEGROOM (F/R) |40.8 / 36.9 in |
| CARGO CAPACITY |29.4 / 60.6 cu.ft |
| WEIGHT |3713 lb |
| TOW CAPACITY |2200 lb |
| FUEL / CAPACITY |prem rec / 16 gal |
| MPG |21/26/23 (city/hwy/comb) |
| BASE PRICE |\$44,655 |
| EQUIPMENT GROUP 410A: dual zone climate, HD radio, B&O 10-sprk audio, remote start, universal garage door opener, power moonroof, 14-in Oxford White wheels, rear parking sensors, wireless charging pad,incl | |
| FORD CO-PILOT360 ASSIST+incl | |
| CARGO MANAGEMENT SYSTEM150 | |
| DESTINATION CHARGE1595 | |
| TOTAL |\$46,400 |

2023 BRONCO SPORT LINEUP

| | |
|------------------|---------------|
| (base model) |\$29,215 |
| Big Bend |31,230 |
| Heritage Edition |33,400 |
| Outer Banks |35,615 |
| Badlands |38,090 |
| Heritage Limited |▼ 44,655 |

(BIG BRONCO HERITAGE MODELS: 2- / 4-DOOR)
 Heritage Edition\$44,305 / 46,295
 Heritage Limited.....66,895 / 69,184

the top model (see pricing in sidebar), confirming that this build is more than just a styling novelty.

Having studied the specs before its arrival, and now gazing out over this Bronco Sport's purposeful dual power bulge hood, it took only a couple of blocks to conclude that Ford is on to something here. Perhaps they themselves decided the Escape-based Bronco family member may have been at risk of not being taken as seriously as the big ones. Mission accomplished. While knowing full well how much we'd like to have a big Bronco all our own, we started falling for this one, as well.

Our first run was up the Beeline Highway, continuing onto two-lane Bush Highway out past Saguaro Lake, then doubling back to west of the Beeline for some relatively light dirt time. Our driving overall was comprehensive—surface streets, freeways (and their all-important ramps), suburban boulevards, and a full sampling of parking and speedbumps along the way. It's a given that U-turns and parking lots in the Bronco Sport can be dreamily easier in this small off-roader.

Regular daily driving can get quite aggressive in these parts, and the 250 horses in this well-under-two-ton vehicle, as well as the road manners of its otherwise so trail-ready suspension, conquered all challenges. From merging multi-lane frontage road turns at speed, to accelerating up climbing and further-merging freeway ramps—where we could easily grab the top spot—to competitive freeways themselves, the fuel-efficient EcoBoost four easily dominated as much as it ever needed to.

We hadn't used the G.O.A.T. modes on our first quick off-roading, and after a few days realized we hadn't used drive modes around town, either, a positive sign that basic performance is never lacking. So we popped it into sport. You can tell the difference if you're paying attention, but you're not reliant upon it, which to us is a plus, as we feel standard mode should always give good performance, if good performance is built in. Ford also seems to have perfected auto start-stop, which we often actively override in anything, but which was smooth and transparent in this, barely noticeable.

On our last full day, we took it to another off-

highway vehicle park to the northwest—via freeway, Interstate and rural two-lane highway—for several hours of more challenging off-roading. We knew what the big Bronco could do here. It turns out this little guy is awesomely capable, as well.

Ground clearance is 8.6 to 8.8 inches. Suspension is beefed up, though not articulated in the extreme. Falken All-Terrains on 17-inch wheels are a solid foundation. There is a great mix of surfaces and conditions at this location, though, as with most such systems, we have decisions to make if we want to apply specialized modes. The very first access trail is fairly rudimentary, really just the drive to the drive, but BAM! we promptly hit the undercarriage, nothing damaging, basically acoustic, but we were surprised (and glad the skid plates are substantial). Nonetheless, our fantasies were perhaps tamed for the moment, though this was not all bad, sort of a "hey, don't overdo it, remember this is the smaller one" indicator.

We played with the G.O.A.T. Modes from a spot parked at quite an angle atop a very steep piece of road, wheels up and to left over a very steep edge,

pointed in a skyward launch position. We figured we didn't necessarily need modes here, but it'd be a great place to try them. G.O.A.T. Modes offer settings for mud and ruts (we had ruts but not mud, although there was some light rain kicking in); slippery (there's inherent slip in dirt, but this surely means snow and ice); sand (not really, though this is more that type of slip); rock crawl (less likely in this, at least when it's not our own vehicle). Sand seemed like the best contender here. And it could not have been easier. We no doubt would have had some slippage, grabbing for grip, in Normal. In Sand mode, you would not think we'd been in the position we were in at all, just driving right on out of it, piece of cake. It was enough to contemplate whether we needed modes at all, but it equally seems proof that we did. Or at least benefited from them. Nice. This is ready for anything.

Aside from our G.O.A.T. session, all we used up there was 4WD lock—not the differential lock, didn't turn off traction control, and didn't use hill descent. It's so capable, we never needed to.

Vehicle size here can work either way—some-

times a big honking beast is what conquers conditions, and sometimes smaller is definitely better, for sneaking between rocks, trees and brush.

We switched out of 4WD lock as we departed our off-roading, back on pavement, to head back toward civilization. We popped it back into sport just because we thought of it, did get a quick little kick from that, and we were on our way, cruising down the two-lane desert highway at speed and concluding that this thing is great, all around.

We gained high respect for the Bronco Sport as an available alternative to the big Bronco. As for the Heritage Editions, once you tune in to the roof, wheels and colors, and lock into the concept overall, you can't think of anything that would be vitally better. The Bronco family are all great, but this one has nailed its targeted persona—equal parts tough truck and show truck, of course in no way mutually exclusive, anyway, this being a case in point. This build goes way beyond skin deep.

If you want the bigger Bronco, of course go get it. If you're interested in a smaller one or open to them all, this Bronco Sport scores an A-plus. ■



Big things come in small packages. The Bronco Sport Heritage models include features found in Ford's top off-roaders—a full range of G.O.A.T. (Goes Over Any Type of Terrain) modes—normal, eco, sport, slippery, mud/ruts, sand, rock crawl. A H.O.S.S. (High-Performance Off-Road Stability Suspension) 2.0 system with long-travel Bilstein position-sensitive dampers with end-stop control valves and increased ride height standard, along with 35-inch Goodyear mud-terrain tires and Dana front and rear electronic locking axles with 4.7:1 final drive ratio. And an advanced 4x4 system with a twin-clutch rear-drive unit with a differential lock can divert virtually all rear axle torque to either wheel.

Something else that can often be found in small packages is fuel mileage. The big Broncos range from 17-20 mpg combined (17-18 for most), or just 15 for the Bronco Raptor. Bronco Sport combined ratings range from 23-26, which is 30 to 35 percent higher than the big Bronco, as much as 45 percent higher if you throw out the couple of 20s and use 18, or almost 55 percent higher if you include the big Bronco Raptor. The numbers proved meaningful, too, as our combined readout stayed in the 22s and 23s the entire week, no matter what we threw at it.

BIG BRONCO HERITAGE EDITIONS

Big Bronco (two-door and four-door) Heritage and Heritage Limited Editions have a two-tone paint job similar to Bronco Sport Heritage models, with Oxford White modular hardtop roof and accents. On the big Bronco, the Oxford White grille has Race Red FORD lettering, rather than BRONCO as on Bronco Sport. Similar to Bronco Sport, the big Bronco Heritage has 17-inch Oxford White wheels, while Heritage Limited departs from this with gloss black wheels, though with an Oxford White lip.

Built off Big Bend, same as the Bronco Sport, the big Bronco has squared fenders evoking the original gen-one Bronco, with a wider track beneath Sasquatch-width flares. The interior is similar to Sport.

Heritage Edition on the big Bronco has a 300-hp (premium fuel, 275 on regular) 2.3L EcoBoost four and 7-speed manual or 10-speed SelectShift automatic. Included is the Sasquatch Package with High-Performance Off-Road Stability Suspension (H.O.S.S.) 2.0 with long-travel Bilstein position-sensitive dampers with end-stop control valves and increased ride height atop 35-inch Goodyear M/T tires and Dana front and rear electronic locking 4.7:1 axles.

The big Bronco Heritage Limited upgrades its build from Big Bend to Badlands features and is powered by the 330-hp (on premium fuel) 2.7L EcoBoost V6, with 10-speed automatic only.



2023 BIG BRONCO LINEUP

| | 2-DOOR | 4-DOOR |
|------------------|----------|----------|
| Base | \$32,295 | \$36,445 |
| Big Bend | 36,285 | 38,275 |
| Black Diamond | 38,950 | 40,940 |
| Outer Banks | 41,855 | 44,445 |
| HERITAGE EDITION | 44,305 | 46,295 |
| Badlands | 45,095 | 47,385 |
| Everglades | --- | 53,895 |
| Wildtrak | 52,780 | 54,320 |
| HERITAGE LIMITED | 66,895 | 69,185 |
| Raptor | --- | 73,780 |