

Derivative as starting point BY JOE SAGE

This was our first session with the Volkswagen Atlas Cross Sport. And we have a solid crush. Introduced in 2017 (for 2018), we drove the original Atlas during Texas Auto Roundup at Circuit of the Americas (see our July-August 2017 issue), but it was the only vehicle assigned only to an off-track service road, which was by its nature limited. Its newer sibling, the Atlas Cross Sport, was introduced in early 2020 and has existed through the past few years of pandemic lockdowns and other industrywide disruptions, which has placed it only loosely on the collective radar, or at least ours. Beyond Texas, our first mention of the Atlas was in the introduction of the new Tiguan, which accompanied the departure not only of the old Tiguan but also of the pricier, bigger Touareg (see March-

April 2018). We finally had the Atlas-Atlas for a week here at the start of 2021 (see March-April 2021), producing a very positive report. The EPA classifies both Atlases as Small SUVs, odd and debatable as both are large SUVs by any objective measure, the largest in VW's Taos-Tiguan-Atlas lineup. Though VW's long record of naming some models after North African (rally) winds and tribes is romantic, Touareg was awkward to spell, a little awkward to say and probably harder to remember. Atlas? Strong and easy. (Atlas Cross Sport is more cumbersome. They might have done better to just go with Atlas Sport, a more common pairing, or Atlas Cross, a more distinctive pairing.) Our temptation is to call the first "the big Atlas," especially as our general perception was that the

Atlas Cross Sport was smaller, before receiving it. But while Atlas is a three-row and Atlas Cross Sport is a two-row, they are otherwise basically the same. The three-row is only about five inches longer and weighs about 300 pounds more. (Note that Tiguan has two or three rows in certain trim levels, but without the name change.) And herein lies a revelation. Both the name and sequence of release suggested Atlas Cross Sport is a derivative version of Atlas, and that's largely true. But the attributes of the Atlas Cross Sport have us thinking it could just as easily be considered the lineup's point of departure, with Atlas the derivative. Refreshed for 2024, the ever more stylish Atlas Cross Sport has a new 269-hp 2.0-liter turbo-four, replacing prior 4- and 6-cylinder engines both, for better torque as well as higher fuel mileage. There is also a clean, modern new interior with a range

of feature upgrades. Our midrange SEL includes 4Motion all-wheel drive (a \$1900 option on lower trims). Or you could call it top-of-range, with two R-Line variants as special builds atop SEL. Either way, our sample sits at a bargain point overall. Performance is strong, from the engine, to its legit 8-speed automatic, to VW's proven 4Motion AWD system, to advanced conventional suspension. The handsome interior includes such details as rear side window screens you'd see on a utility twice its price, or etched detail on the instrument panel that reminds us of a \$10k option in a \$400k superluxe sedan. The screen interface and related controls are well organized and contained a surprise that's guaranteed to delight—a layer of gesture controls, very effective and intuitive. Again, this is all on a spacious SUV priced in the \$40s. Most of all, we fell for Atlas Cross Sport's purpose-derived stance, really well balanced, sporty and aggressive. With a subtly sloping rear roofline, high beltline, large wheels and high rocker panel, it

looks purposeful and ready to pounce. The real payoff is how this plays out inside. Compared to 20-cubic-foot cargo volume behind three rows of seats in the Atlas, the two-row Atlas Cross Sport has over 40 cubic feet of cargo space behind the rear seats, almost 80 with the second row down. Both rows have over 40 inches of legroom in the Atlas Cross Sport, compared with rear legroom in the 30s for the three-row Atlas. You can start to see why we felt this two-row version will be the standard for a great many buyers. Ground clearance is also healthy. Though not a rock-crawling off-roader, its wheel and tire fitment has big enough, strong enough sidewalls for fishing, camping and picnics well beyond the ordinary. If you conclude you really need three rows, the Atlas SEL is just \$1,010 more. But if legroom and cargo space, along with a sexier style that'll make you smile daily, are what suit you best, you may develop your own crush on the Atlas Cross Sport just as solidly as we did. ■

An 18.6-gallon fuel tank and 26-mpg consumption equal almost 500 miles of highway range on a tank—enough for your adventure weekends to be on a Southern California beach, or in Moab, Ruidoso, you name it, without any stops except for food or fun.



SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	.....Chattanooga, Tennessee
ENGINE/TRANS BUILD	.....Mexico / Japan
PARTS CONTENT	.....US/Canada 50%, Mexico 32%
ROWS/SEATS	.....two / five
ENGINE	.....2.0L inline-4 turbo/intercooled, 16v TSI, transverse, cast iron block, forged steel crank w 5 main bearings, alum alloy crossflow head
HP/TORQUE	.....269 hp / 273 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....9.6:1
TRANSMISSION	.....8-spd auto
DRIVETRAIN	.....4MOTION AWD
SUSPENSION	.....F: strut-type w lower control arms, coils, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar; R: multilink w coils, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar
STEERING	.....elec power asst rack & pinion
BRAKES	.....F: 13.2x1.2 vented; R: 12.2x0.9 vented
WHEELS	.....20x8J machined alum-alloy
TIRES	.....255/50 R20, all-season
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....195.5 / 117.3 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....6.3
APPR/DEPART/BRKOVER	.....20.8 / 24.9 / 17.6°
TURNING CIRCLE	.....40.0 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....39.4 / 37.8 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....41.6 / 40.4 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....40.3 / 77.6 cu.ft
TOW CAPACITY	.....(braked) 5000 lb
WEIGHT	.....4359 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....reg unl / 18.6 gal
MPG	.....(AWD) 19/26/22 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	.....\$47,435
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1350
TOTAL	.....\$48,785

2024 VW ATLAS CROSS SPORT

	FWD	AWD
SE	\$36,715	\$38,615
SE w/Tech	40,655	42,555
SEL		47,435
SEL R-Line		48,885
SEL Premium R-Line		51,445

2024 VW ATLAS

	FWD	AWD
SE	\$37,725	\$39,625
SE w/Tech	41,665	43,565
Peak Edition SE w/Tech		46,555
SEL		48,445
SEL R-Line		50,435
SEL Premium R-Line		52,455