

Subaru Ascending BY JOE SAGE

Many people's first response to the Subaru Ascent SUV is: a big, three-row two-and-a-quarter-ton Subaru? Aren't they known for small cars? Don't Crosstrek, Forester and Outback cover this? All Subaru vehicles are all-wheel-drive (except the BRZ rear-drive sports car shared with Toyota). But while existing models are sporty and useful vehicles, they haven't quite been SUVs.

In simplified terms of both engineering and market positioning, Crosstrek is basically a tough-and-sport-styled Impreza; Forester basically a tall-bodied Impreza; and Outback basically a Legacy wagon. All are great in snow and rain or on a dirt road weekend. But the Ascent enters new terrain.

The Subaru Ascent (see chart below) goes well beyond the people and cargo specs of Crosstrek and Forester. Dimensionally, it's much like an Outback with a third row (and most other human factors upped a bit, as well). Yet it is nowhere near, say, a Chevy Suburban. There are many three-row SUVs and crossovers it is closer to, but the Suburban example shows there is no reason for small-Subaru purists to panic. The lineup is enhanced by

the Ascent—and their eye is still on the ball.

The Ascent is in a sweet spot, not too big, but with decent interior size, 5000-pound tow capacity, even moderately useful off-roading specs.

Our notes were far more extensive than average, but distill down to two things. A few details we would change would include moving device connectivity away from the shifter and into the sizable console storage bin, and creating more gap-free flat cargo space. Its 260-hp boxer engine outperformed many a seemingly impressive vehicle in traffic. We did not have a chance to go offroad nor to tow, but specs confirm those capabilities.

Subaru has the most loyal repeat buyers in the business, so with crossovers of all sorts such hot sellers right now, no dealer would want to see a customer unable to find what they currently need. Keep a growing family with the brand now, and when the kids are grown, they'll still be around.

Ascent can easily nudge its way into a crowded segment, starting with Subaru's existing customers losing any urge to stray, while enhancing the brand's overall utility image, as well. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

SEATING CAPACITY	eight
ENGINE	2.4L alum 4-cyl twin-scroll turbo boxer
DRIVETRAIN	Symmetrical AWD
HP/TORQUE	260 hp / 277 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	high-torque Lineartronic CVT
SUSPENSION	4-wheel independent: F: MacPherson-type struts, lower L-arms coils, stblzr bar; liquid-filled rubber engine mounts R: double wishbone, coils, stblzr bar
STEERING	elec power-assist rack & pinion
BRAKES	power-assist 4-wheel disc w EBD, 4-channel/4-sensor ABS w Brake Assist & Brake Override safety systems; Active Torque Vectoring F: 13.1 vented disc; R: 13.0 vented disc
WHEELS/TIRES	18x7.5 (20 avail) / 245/60R18 A/S
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	196.8 / 113.8 in
TURNING CIRCLE	38.0 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	8.7 in
APPROACH/BRKOV/DEPART	17.6 / 18.2 / 21.8 deg
HEADROOM (F/2/3)	(w/o moonrf) 41.3 / 40.0 / 36.3 in
LEGROOM (F/2/3)	42.2 / 38.6 / 31.7 in
CARGO CAPACITY	17.8 / 47.5 / 86.5 cu.ft
FLOOR LENGTH	19.9 / 47.6 / 82.5 in
WEIGHT	4477 lb
TOW CAPACITY	5000 lb
FUEL / FUEL CAPACITY87 oct reg / 19.3 gal
MPG	(18" wheels) 21/27/23 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE (Premium 8-passenger)	\$34,195
OPTION PACKAGE (CODE 12): keyless entry/start, auto-dim rearview mirror w Homelink, reverse auto brake, power rear gate w auto close and height memory.....	1460
DESTINATION CHARGE	975

TOTAL..... **\$36,630**

AVAILABLE TRIMS:

Base (8-passenger)	\$31,995
Premium (7- or 8-passenger)	\$34,195-38,455
Limited (7- or 8-passenger)	\$38,995
Touring (7-passenger)	\$44,695

(rounded off).....	Subaru Crosstrek	Forester	Outback	Ascent	Chevy Suburban
SEATS	5	5	5	7 or 8	7-8-9
LENGTH/WB	165/105	182/105	190/108	197/114	224/130 IN
TURNING CIRCLE	35	35	36	38	43 FT
HEADROOM F/R/(3)	40/38	41/40	41/39	41/40/31	43/39/38 IN
LEGROOM F/R/(3)	43/36	43/39	43/38	42/39/32	45/40/34 IN
SHOULDERS F/R/(3)	57/56	58/57	58/57	61/60/58	65/65/63 IN
CARGO CAPACITY	21/55	35/76	35/73	18/47/86	39/77/122 CF
FLOOR LENGTH	36/73	42/78	20/48/82	32/64/100 IN	
WEIGHT	3113-3239	3449-3588	3644-3902	4430-4603	±5586 LB
TOWING	1500	2700	5000	8000-8300	LB
STARTING PRICE	\$21,895	\$24,295	\$26,345	\$31,995	\$51,895

