

# FOUNDATIONAL BY JOE SAGE

Surprisingly, this is only our second Impreza in over 20 years of publishing, though we have had plenty of WRX, WRX STI, Crosstrek and Forester, which are all Impreza-based. Among all those variants, and with the core Impreza itself, there have been a mix of body types and transmissions over the years. For 2024, this simplifies, as Impreza no longer offers a sedan or manual transmission—the new model is hatchback and CVT-only. There are two four-cylinder boxer engines, our RS bearing the larger one, a 182-hp 2.5L about 20 percent more powerful than the 152-hp 2.0L in lower trims. All are of course all-wheel-drive.

We did our usual daily rounds in the Impreza and also took it for a long drive up into the high country, with the mission of paying special atten-

tion to its CVT, on behalf of a friend and colleague who is interested in a new purchase from the lineup, but has always been a devoted manual shifter.

The drive up I-17 offers a lot of everything—a climb of thousands of feet, challenging twisty two-lane sections, all with semi-trucks, RVs, trailers and traffic in general always jockeying for prime position, at speed. To add to the mix, I-17 is under considerable construction now, up to Sunset Point, a multiplier of all of the above, as well as provider of uncharacteristically rough pavement in spots.

For good measure, we popped it into Sport.

All was easy going, with decent power for our own purposes, though relinquishing our spot a few times to aggressive larger vehicles having their way across multiple lanes (typical on that stretch).

Through here, we also encountered our first unexpected patch of notably rough pavement, the kind revealing foundational layers—which would normally be promptly patched or resurfaced, but not when the whole road is in the process of a rebuild. Yet the ride here was notably smooth, solid and comfortable, and the car tracked true, with engaging road feel—all the factors any enthusiast appreciates, exemplary suspension all around.

Despite our intent to be especially discerning, we also realized we hadn't been paying attention to the CVT, as it had been proving totally transparent, with none of the hunting, surging and dropping we get from most automatics on that first quick 3,000-foot climb. A number of our colleagues commonly "love to hate" CVTs, but we're generally inclined to think a great many owners will never know or care that they even have one. In principle,

the CVT provides what its name promises—it's continuously variable, like a person running or swimming, to provide a smooth sweep through varying speeds. However, when operating a machine, we may all be more used to a pattern of shifting. But fuel efficiency goals have increased the number of gears in recent years, industrywide, moving well past five or six speeds. And whereas these may bump up MPG a bit, their wealth of gearing possibilities does often introduce that hunting and dropping, especially on such a complex stretch of road. A CVT basically brings the gear-number-equivalent to infinity, in principle maximizing efficiency while eliminating those effects. And you have manumatic-mimicking paddles if desired.

Our notes around town were in line with the rest—its 182 horses are not a tremendous amount of power, but at just over 3,000 pounds in top trim, the car is nimble and, in Sport mode as we generally chose, suitably responsive. Speed bumps, everybody's least favorite thing, also demonstrated

the car's well above average suspension.

We do not hypermile, but we do glance at fuel mileage readouts. The default, as set up upon its arrival, was an instantaneous reading, seldom of much practical use (99+ one second, 17 the next, 45 the next, and so on). We set up a new profile in the trip computer, and here we averaged 22.3 MPG through an active and diverse week—short of its ratings, but not bad, and more is surely achievable via operational or behavioral discipline.

In basic Impreza form (as opposed to STI, Crosstrek or the others) it's not much of a head-turner, but it certainly gets the job done—a sleeper, you could say, which (if you've ever felt a little too visible in a showy muscle car) can be a good thing.

The various special purpose Impreza-based Subarus—WRX and STI rally vehicles or Crosstrek outdoor adventure vehicles—hold plenty of appeal, whether you have specific need for them or not. If not, or according to your budget, this clean and simple version does the trick. ■

## SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Gunma, Japan
SIZE / BUILD	compact hatchback, unitized body, full inner frame safety structure
ROWS / SEATS	two / five
ENGINE	2.5L boxer 4-cyl, DOHC, dir inj
HP/TORQUE	182 hp / 178 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	12.0:1
TRANSMISSION	Lineartronic® CVT w 8-spd manual shift mode
DRIVETRAIN	ACT-4 active torque split Symmetrical AWD w electr controlled variable hydraulic transfer clutch
SUSPENSION	4-wheel indep: F: MacPherson type struts, lower L-arms, coils, dampers, stblzr bar, hydraulic engine mounts; R: dbl wishbone, coils, dampers, stblzr bar
STEERING	dual pinion elec power
BRAKES	(RS) F: 12.4 vented, two-piston; R: 11.2 vented, single-piston
WHEELS	(RS) 18x7 alum alloy
TIRES	225/40R18 98V all-season
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	176.2 / 105.1 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	5.1 in
TURNING CIRCLE	34.78 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	39.8 / 38.0 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	42.9 / 36.5 in
CARGO CAPACITY	19.9 / 54.7 cu.ft
WEIGHT	3275 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	reg unl / 16.6 gal
MPG	26/33/29 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	<b>\$27,885</b>
DESTINATION CHARGE	1090
TOTAL	<b>\$28,975</b>

## 2023 SUBARU IMPREZA LINEUP

2.0L : 152 HP	(base)	\$22,995
	Sport	24,995
2.5L : 182 HP	RS	27,885

We always have a few nitpicks with anything, but without the opportunity to test multiple copies in depth, we generally consider them just worth a passing mention. On our long drive, we noted the AC had not been very effective, in the 80s up top or 90s in the Valley at the time. It was not the temperature, so much as a lack of airflow, so we upped the fan speed, noting two downsides—one, this required a screen dive that we could not achieve while driving; and two, we couldn't revert to automatic by punching the convenient Auto button once it had cooled down, but rather had to dive back into the screen. And we had two notably odd incidents with the brakes, both when others had injected stupid human tricks into freeway traffic—we stopped effectively (and very promptly) in both cases, but heard or felt unnerving squealing or loss of adhesion, despite of course ABS.

