

BETTER STILL?

BY JOE SAGE

We spent a week with a non-hybrid version of the new Hyundai Santa Fe last winter (see NovDec 2024), the compelling adventure-oriented XRT, an AWD-only trim with higher ground clearance, a tougher tire and wheel set, and the highest tow capacity of any version.

We had compared the vitals of the hybrid alternatives at that time. Now we are driving the 2025 Hyundai Santa Fe Hybrid, in top Calligraphy trim and AWD. And we can confirm what the numbers had suggested—the hybrid presents a compelling decision you’ll want to make right up front.

Overall power is pretty similar (see Vital Variables chart at right)—power and torque from the engine itself are less, but the hybrid system adds back most of the difference. Build basics—suspension, brakes, turning circle—are the same. Dimensions are mostly identical, other than the raised

height of the non-hybrid-only XRT. The weight difference of the hybrid is negligible, less than 100 pounds (in fact, lower-trim hybrids are lighter than upper-trim full-ICE trims).

Even prices are about the same. Our Hybrid Calligraphy AWD is the priciest of 15 trims, but not by much, just \$1800 more than its FWD, just \$1,000 more than a non-hybrid Calligraphy AWD. And the hybrids even start at about \$10,000 less than that.

The horsepower difference, 277 vs 231 (and the torque, 311 lb-ft vs 271) is probably not noticeable to most people, but the dramatic difference in fuel economy (mid-30s for the hybrid vs upper teens to mid-20s for the other) will be noticeable to all.

Acceleration, cornering and handling were solid on our hybrid, even in default Eco mode, and if you do grab Sport, it’s not startlingly different, in some ways also a plus. There is also Snow mode.

The new Santa Fe, in any build, punches well above its weight, with the look and feel of a larger SUV. Fifteen versions gives you plenty of choice, but it’s so well done, they could probably make just one version of it and still please almost everyone.

2025 HYUNDAI SANTA FE LINEUP

2.5L TURBO, 8-SPD DCT	FWD	AWD
SE	\$34,300	\$36,100
SEL	36,800	38,600
XRT	--	40,950
Limited	43,700	45,500
Calligraphy	46,850	48,650

1.6L TURBO HYBRID, 6-SPD AUTO	FWD	AWD
SEL Hybrid	\$37,800	\$39,600
Limited Hybrid	44,700	46,500
Calligraphy Hybrid	47,850	49,650

VITAL VARIABLES: 2.5T Hybrid

Total HP	277 hp	231 hp
Total torque	311 lb-ft	271 lb-ft
Ground clearance	7.0 (XRT 8.3) in	7.0 in
Tow	≤3500 (XRT 4500) lb	≤ 2000 lb
MPG	19/26/22	35/34/34

The FWD-AWD choice is price, with MPG here mostly the same (we would spring for AWD). Towing is the only major tradeoff, a need for which you likely know your situation right up front, and again, if you need the highest, that’s the XRT, which is an ICE-only build, anyway. Those conditions aside, the hybrid seems pretty irresistible. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Montgomery, Alabama
ENGINE/TRANS BUILD	S Korea / S Korea
PARTS CONTENT	S Korea 46% / US/Can 39%
ENGINE	Smartstream 1.6L Turbo GDI DOHC 16v inline-4; hybrid electric vehicle (HEV)
HP/TORQUE (ENGINE)	178 hp / 195 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	10.5:1
ELECTRIC MOTOR	permanent magnet synchronous
BATTERY	Li-ion 270V 1.49 kWh
HP/TORQUE (ELEC)	44.2 kW (est 60 hp) / 195 lb-ft
COMBINED HP/TORQUE	231 hp / 271 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	6-spd auto, paddles, shift-by-wire
DRIVETRAIN	HTRAC active on-demand AWD
SUSPENSION	F: MacPherson strut w coils, gas shocks w advanced valving, stblzr bar; R: multi-link indep, separated spring & shocks, gas shocks w advanced valving, stblzr bar
STEERING	motor driven rack & pinion, column-mtd
BRAKES	F: 12.8 vented; R: 12.0 solid
WHEELS/TIRES	20x8.5J alloys / 255/45 R20 Pirelli
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	190.2 / 110.8 in
HEADROOM (F/2/3)	(snrf) 40.2 / 39.6 / 37.7 in
LEGROOM (F/2/3)	44.4 / 41.5 HEV (vs 42.3) / 30.0 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	7.0 in
APPR / DEP / BRKOVER	(hyb) 17.4 / 20.9 / 15.3°
TURNING CIRCLE	37.9 ft
CARGO CAPACITY	14.6 / 40.5 / 79.6 cu.ft
ROOF RAILS CAPACITY	220 lb
TOW CAPACITY	(w/o brakes) 1650 lb (w brakes, hybrid) 2000 lb
WEIGHT	4575 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	reg unl / 17.7 gal
MPG	35/34/34 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE \$49,050

PAINT: Earthy Brass Matte	1000
CARPETED FLOOR MATS	210
DESTINATION CHARGE	1415

TOTAL \$51,675

Note sticker price varies from current info (see chart).

Ours Santa Fe came in Earthy Brass Matte paint, a sharp look that does take a little special care.

