

# ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

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**AUCTION AND  
CONCOURS NEWS**  
DRIVES FROM EV TO OFF-ROAD  
ADOT AND DARK SKIES  
MOAB EASTER SAFARI WEEK  
LYN ST JAMES AND MSHFA  
AND MUCH MORE!

Subaru  
Outback  
Wilderness

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

# EVOLUTION ATOP EVOLUTION

BY JOE SAGE



For public lands, distinct from National Parks and Monuments and such, a Wilderness designation means no roads. For Subaru, Wilderness means any and all roads, with a special emphasis on off-pavement, while some of the cleverest engineering in the lineup means a Wilderness is also a standout in paved performance.

We recently drove the new-for-2026 gen-seven Outback (in our previous issue), a significant evolution, while at the same time familiar, a “lane change” sure to remain beloved with the brand’s devoted base. The whole lineup has become more rugged, capable and aggressive, which had made us curious to see the new Wilderness, the version that has always been more rugged, capable and aggressive. And as you might guess, it is moreso than ever. It also has the bigger engine, a 260-hp turbo, which we’d been wanting to try (our other was a base 180-hp), while MPG remains pretty close between the two.

We took it straight out for a spirited run on dirt roads, tough trails, rocks, ruts and

swales. Atop more ground clearance (9.5 inches) than the standard Outback (8.7 inches), with bigger approach, departure and breakover angles and an inch wider track (and of course 17-inch beefy-sidewalled all-terrain tires), Wilderness has X-MODE options for a variety of more challenging surfaces, from dirt to ice and snow. A big piece of the magic, though, is a new electronically controlled real-time suspension damper system that also upgrades on-road performance. Acceleration triggers what Subaru describes as a “skyhook” feel, minimizing sway and maximizing stability not only in the dirt, but on the open highway and in town. This mitigates the fact that the Wilderness floats higher, revealing none of this in its cornering and handling. It really is a pretty amazing job.

We spent the balance of our week in town and on the freeways, where this Outback variant is powerful and accurate, handling its high-rise distinction superbly. Being over the top is pretty much the whole point of the Wilderness build. And it will no doubt broaden the model’s appeal.

## 2026 SUBARU OUTBACK LINEUP

Premium	180-hp	25/31/na	\$34,995
Limited			41,715
Touring			45,395
Limited XT	260-hp turbo	21/29/na	44,365
Wilderness		21/27/23	44,995
Touring XT		21/29/na	47,995

## OUR BUILD

BASE PRICE	\$44,995
OPTION PKG 23: 12.1-in multimedia/nav, pwr moonroof, surround view monitor syst, black Nappa leather w copper stitch, vented front seats, 12-way pwr driver seat w 4-way lumbar & leg ext, 8-way pwr front passenger seat, black pwr-fold heated mirrors	4090
DESTINATION CHARGE	1450
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$50,535</b>

You have likely noticed that Subaru, with already one of the most loyal buyer-owner groups in the industry, has been expanding its presence rapidly. While still delivering everything that “makes a Subaru a Subaru,” general restyling is so strong now through the whole lineup, and engineering so carefully considered, they are all worth a look. And being even tougher than the rest, the Wilderness is certainly worth a special look. ■

## SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	OTA, Gunma, Japan
ENGINE/TRANS BUILD	Japan/Japan
PARTS CONTENT	Japan 85% / US/Canada 0%
ENGINE	2.5L 4-cyl Boxer 16v, twin-scroll turbo/intercooler, DOHC, chain-driven cams, DFI, electronic throttle control, dual active valve control syst intake/exh, alum/alum
HP/TORQUE	260 hp / 277 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	10.6:1
TRANSMISSION	CVT w 8-spd man mode, paddles
DRIVETRAIN	Symmetrical AWD
MODES	Wilderness-exclusive X-MODE features snow/dirt (under 25 mph), deep snow/mud (under 25 mph); low speed/low ratio gradient automatic on steep gradients shifts to CVT low ratio w lower transfer ratio & lower first ratio
SUSPENSION	4-wheel independent, raised; Wilderness addtl raised from 8.7 to 9.5-in ground clearance, electronically controlled dampers front & rear. F: MacPherson-type struts; lower L-arms, coils, dampers, stblzr bar, hydraulic eng mounts; R: dbl wishbone, coils, dampers, stblzr bar;
STEERING	elec pwr asst rack & pinion (dual pinion); (Wilderness 13.0:1 instead of 13.5:1)
BRAKES	F: 12.4 vented; R: 11.8 vented
WHEELS	(Wilderness) 17x7 matte black alum alloy
TIRES	225/65R17 102T A/T, raised white letters
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	191.7 / 108.1 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	(Wilderness) 9.5 in
APPR / DEP / BRKVR	(Wilderness) 20.0 / 23.6 / 21.2°
TURNING CIRCLE	36.49 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	40.2 / 40.5 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	43.0 / 39.5 in
CARGO CAPACITY	34.6 / 80.5 cu.ft
WEIGHT	(Wilderness) 3973 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	reg unl / 18.0 gal
MPG	21/27/23 (city/hwy/comb)