

## Wagon With Attitude

### Subaru Outback Combines Car-Like Handling With SUV Versatility

By Derek Price

CARGAZING.COM

I often wonder why more people don't buy wagons.

After a week with the 2025 Subaru Outback Touring, I'm convinced the entire SUV-crazed market is missing out on something wonderful: the joy of driving a vehicle that doesn't compromise handling for the sake of a high seating position.

The Outback is technically classified as an SUV, but it's really a station wagon with hiking boots.

That's not a criticism. It's high praise.

Sitting lower to the ground than most crossovers, the Outback handles more like a car while still offering 8.7 inches of ground clearance. This dual personality makes it uniquely enjoyable to drive on both winding roads and muddy trails.

My test vehicle, the top-trim Touring model powered by the optional 2.4-liter turbocharged boxer engine, delivered a surprisingly premium driving experience.

With 260 horsepower and 277 lb-ft of torque, this flat-four delivers smooth, robust acceleration that makes highway merging and passing effortless. It's genuinely quick when pushed.

Subaru's continuously variable transmission does an admirable job mimicking a traditional automatic, with



The 2025 Subaru Outback combines rugged styling with practical wagon proportions, sitting lower than typical crossovers for improved handling while maintaining 8.7 inches of ground clearance.

eight simulated gear ratios accessible via paddle shifters. I rarely felt the “rubber-band” sensation that plagues many CVTs.

Inside, the Touring model impresses with Nappa leather upholstery and an open, airy cabin. The front seats are both heated and ventilated, with the heated steering wheel proving its worth on chilly mornings.

Rear passengers enjoy heated outboard seats and generous legroom.

Subaru's EyeSight driver assistance suite comes standard, enhanced in the Touring model with a 180-degree front camera and DriverFocus system that uses facial recognition to

detect driver distraction or drowsiness. The technology works well even if the attention system feels overly intrusive at times.

Cargo capacity stands at 32.5 cubic feet behind the rear seats, expanding to 75.6 cubic feet with the seats folded, figures that shame some larger SUVs.

The Outback's 8.7-inch ground clearance strikes an ideal balance between off-road capability and on-road dynamics.

Road noise is well controlled at highway speeds, though the boxer engine does emit a distinctive growl under hard acceleration. The suspension tuning skillfully balances comfort and

handling, absorbing bumps without feeling floaty or disconnected.

Fuel economy in the turbocharged model is reasonable at 22 mpg city and 29 mpg highway. Those seeking better efficiency can opt for the standard 2.5-liter non-turbo engine, though its 182 horsepower feels inadequate for a vehicle of this size.

While the Outback's styling won't turn heads, its purposeful, rugged appearance has an honest appeal. The plastic body cladding — once controversial — now feels appropriate for its adventure-ready character.

At \$44,331 as tested, including floor mats and

destination charge, the Outback Touring represents a compelling value compared to luxury-branded crossovers with similar features. Those willing to forego the turbo engine and some premium touches can get into a base Outback for under \$30,000.

For families seeking practicality without sacrificing driving pleasure, or outdoor enthusiasts who need all-weather capability without compromising fuel economy, the 2025 Subaru Outback hits a sweet spot that few competitors can match.

It's the thinking person's alternative to the cookie-cutter crossover.

#### AT A GLANCE

##### WHAT WAS TESTED?

2025 Subaru Outback Touring (\$42,795). Options: All-weather floor liners (\$141). Price as tested (including \$1,395 destination charge): \$44,331

##### BY THE NUMBERS

Wheelbase: 108.1 in.  
Length: 191.1 in.  
Width: 82 in.  
Height: 66.1 in.  
Engine: Turbocharged 2.4-liter boxer four cylinder (260 hp, 277 lbs. ft.)  
Transmission: Continuously variable  
Fuel Economy: 22 city, 29 highway

##### RATINGS

Style: 7  
Performance: 7  
Price: 8  
Handling: 8  
Ride: 7  
Comfort: 7  
Quality: 8  
Overall: 8

##### WHY BUY IT?

The Outback delivers wagon-like handling with SUV capability, creating a versatile all-weather vehicle that's equally comfortable on daily commutes and weekend adventures.





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Nappa leather upholstery, heated and ventilated front seats and an 11.6-inch touch-screen infotainment system give the Outback Touring a premium feel that belies its practical nature.

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### A CLOSER LOOK



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FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

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