

Spunky SUV Goes Electric

IONIQ 5 XRT Adds Dirt-Road Confidence and Personality

By Derek Price
CARGAZING.COM

Why shouldn't an electric SUV play in the dirt?

After a week in the 2026 Hyundai IONIQ 5 XRT, I can't think of a good reason. I'm not a serious off-road driver, and I don't think many people will buy this one to crawl over boulders. But the XRT feels right at home going to mildly unpaved places.

Hyundai introduced the XRT for 2025, and the 2026 model carries that setup forward. It rides 23 millimeters higher than a standard IONIQ 5, has 7 inches of ground clearance, wears 18-inch wheels with all-terrain tires and adds terrain modes for snow, mud and sand.

It's enough hardware to change how the car feels when pavement ends.

I drove it over loose dirt and gravel near the road. The XRT felt completely at ease. I never came close to testing its limits, but I appreciated the extra confidence.

Back on pavement, the IONIQ 5's driving personality remains my favorite part.

The dual-motor system makes 320 horsepower and 446 pound-feet of torque, and it responds instantly when you press the accelerator. It feels eager without being silly, with the kind of quickness that makes running errands more enter-



The 2026 Hyundai IONIQ 5 combines pixel-inspired lighting, crisp bodywork and unusual proportions in an electric crossover that still looks distinctive among today's EVs.

taining than usual.

Spunky is the word that kept coming to mind.

The suspension is firm, and I like it that way. You notice bumps more than you would in a soft luxury EV, but the ride never struck me as uncomfortable.

If you want a soft, squishy, plush electric crossover, this isn't for you. The firmer setup is part of what gives the XRT its playful feel.

The back seat surprised

me, too. The 118.1-inch wheelbase gives Hyundai a lot of passenger room to work with, and adults can settle into the second row without feeling squeezed. The flat floor adds to the open feeling inside.

I also like the way it looks. The IONIQ 5 has always had a strange mix of hatchback proportions, pixel-themed lighting and futuristic details. XRT trim adds enough black cladding, chunky bumpers and all-ter-

rain tire sidewall to make it look more like the SUV many buyers expect.

My tester came to \$48,115 with carpeted floor mats. For a 320-horsepower AWD EV with this much space and equipment, that feels competitive.

The Tesla Model Y and Kia EV6 remain obvious alternatives, but the XRT brings a mild-trail personality neither quite matches. A Rivian offers much more serious off-road ability for

considerably more money.

Charging was another highlight of my week.

The IONIQ 5 has a native NACS port, so I could plug directly into compatible Tesla Superchargers. My charging stops were fast and flawless, which hasn't always been my experience with public EV charging. Avoiding adapters, broken chargers and app drama made the whole process feel refreshingly normal.

Road trips are still where EV ownership struggles to make sense.

Even at a fast DC charger, stopping for electricity takes a lot longer than filling a gas tank, and public fast charging can be expensive. If I spent much of my life driving long interstate trips, I'd still rather own a hybrid.

For local driving, though, EVs are fantastic. Charge at home, enjoy the quiet operation and instant acceleration, and most of the road-trip complaints disappear from everyday life.

The XRT also has the spunky personality I wish more electric vehicles offered.

It's roomy and practical, but it also feels happy to accelerate, hop onto a gravel road and look a little unusual doing it. That combination gives it a personality beyond the usual EV selling points.

I just wish more EVs were this spunky.

AT A GLANCE

WHAT WAS TESTED?

2026 Hyundai IONIQ 5 XRT AWD (\$46,275). Options: Carpeted floor mats (\$240). Price as tested (including \$1,600 destination charge): \$48,115

BY THE NUMBERS

Wheelbase: 118.1 in.
Length: 183.3 in.
Width: 74.4 in.
Height: 64.0 in.
Power: Dual electric motors (320 horsepower)
Range: 259 miles
MPGe: 94 combined

RATINGS

Style: 9
Performance: 9
Price: 9
Handling: 8
Ride: 7
Comfort: 8
Quality: 8
Overall: 9

WHY BUY IT?

The IONIQ 5 XRT is for buyers who want roomy EV practicality, quick acceleration and extra dirt-road confidence without giving up personality.



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Inside, the IONIQ 5 uses a long wheelbase, flat floor and clean digital layout to create a roomy, open-feeling cabin for five.

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A CLOSER LOOK



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FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

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