

Baby Bronco Makes Its Case

Ford's Compact SUV Balances Urban Living With Trail Capability

By Derek Price

CARGAZING.COM

The Ford Bronco Sport proves that rugged styling and actual capability don't have to be mutually exclusive in a compact crossover.

While it shares its underpinnings with the more urban-focused Escape, this mini-Bronco carves out its own identity with genuine off-road credentials and distinctive design.

Under the squared-off hood, my Big Bend test vehicle houses a 1.5-liter turbocharged three-cylinder engine producing 181 horsepower and 190 pound-feet of torque.

While those numbers seem modest, the powertrain proves adequate for daily driving, delivering power through an eight-speed automatic transmission to all four wheels. The engine can sound gruff under hard acceleration, but it settles into a quiet cruise on the highway.

The Bronco Sport's boxy shape translates to excellent visibility and a commanding driving position. The upright windshield and tall greenhouse create an airy cabin feel, while large side mirrors help manage blind spots. That said, the squared-off design produces noticeable wind noise at highway speeds.

Interior accommodations emphasize utility over luxu-



The Bronco Sport's bold, squared-off design channels the big Bronco's DNA while maintaining compact dimensions.

ry. Durable materials and thoughtfully placed grab handles signal this vehicle's intended purpose, though some hard plastics betray its \$31,230 base price.

The optional convenience package adds welcome upgrades including a power driver's seat and heated steering wheel.

Rear seat space falls short of class leaders, with limited legroom for adult passengers. However, the cargo area proves more useful than its dimensions suggest thanks to clever features like a standard built-in bottle opener and available tie-down points. The split tailgate glass provides quick access for small items.

Where the Bronco Sport distinguishes itself is off-road capability. Standard all-wheel drive includes G.O.A.T. (Goes Over Any Terrain) modes that optimize various vehicle systems for different conditions. While it won't match its bigger Bronco sibling in extreme terrain, the Sport confidently handles moderate trails and adverse weather.

On-road manners prove less inspiring. The steering feels artificially heavy and provides little feedback, while the brake pedal's soft feel requires acclimation.

The ride quality strikes a reasonable balance between compliance and control, though it can't match the

refinement of more road-focused competitors.

Our test vehicle's black appearance package adds visual interest with darkened trim and 17-inch matte black wheels, complementing the angular design.

New-for-2024 paint options including Azure Gray and Desert Sand expand personalization options, though premium colors like our tester's carry a \$995 upcharge.

Ford's latest Sync infotainment system works well through the standard eight-inch touchscreen, offering wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto compatibility.

The optional Ford Co-Pilot 360 package brings useful driver aids including adap-

tive cruise control and lane centering, though some competitors include these features as standard equipment.

At \$38,940 as tested, our Bronco Sport Big Bend occupies the heart of the compact crossover market. While the base price seems attractive, options quickly inflate the bottom line. The value equation depends heavily on how much buyers prioritize off-road capability over on-road refinement.

For urban adventurers who occasionally venture off the beaten path, the Bronco Sport makes a compelling case. It delivers more trail capability than most competitors while remaining civilized enough for daily use.

AT A GLANCE

WHAT WAS TESTED?

2024 Ford Bronco Sport Big Bend 4x4 (\$31,230). Options: Premium paint (\$995), black appearance package (\$1,750), Ford CoPilot 360 (\$895), convenience package (\$1,785), Class II trailer tow package (\$690). Price as tested (including \$1,595 destination charge): \$38,940

BY THE NUMBERS

Wheelbase: 105.1 in.
Length: 172.7 in.
Width: 82.2 in.
Height: 70.2 in.
Engine: 1.5-liter three cylinder (181 hp, 190 lbs. ft.)
Transmission: Eight-speed automatic
Fuel Economy: 25 city, 29 highway

RATINGS

Style: 8
Performance: 5
Price: 6
Handling: 6
Ride: 7
Comfort: 6
Quality: 6
Overall: 7

WHY BUY IT?

The Bronco Sport offers rugged capability and distinctive styling in a right-sized package, perfect for weekend warriors who need weekday practicality.



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The Bronco Sport's boxy shape translates to excellent visibility and a commanding driving position. The upright windshield and tall greenhouse create an airy cabin feel, while large side mirrors help manage blind spots. That said, the squared-off design produces noticeable wind noise at highway speeds.

Interior accommodations emphasize utility over luxury. Durable materials and thoughtfully placed grab handles signal this vehicle's intended purpose, though some hard plastics betray its \$31,230 base price.

The optional convenience package adds welcome upgrades including a power driv-



A functional cabin emphasizes durability over luxury, with clever storage solutions throughout.

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A CLOSER LOOK



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FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

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