

# Adiós, Veracruz

## Meet the new 7-PASSENGER Santa Fe

BY JOE SAGE



We met the 2013 Hyundai Santa Fe Sport late last summer, in the mountains of Park City, Utah. The Santa Fe Sport was the latest evolution of the familiar five-passenger Santa Fe (despite now taking on a "Sport"-modified name).

A good time was had by all (see our Nov/Dec 2012 issue)—and we had looked forward to later meeting its longer-wheelbase sibling. This year, we traveled to San Diego to drive a new Santa Fe, which—despite bearing just the original, shorter "Santa Fe" name—is a new vehicle replacing the prior Veracruz in the Hyundai lineup.

**Long story short.** We refer to the new Santa Fe as having a "longer" wheelbase rather than being "long-wheelbase" because it's still 2.4 inches shorter than the Ford Explorer, despite matching (up to) its seven-passenger capacity. And it's 4.6 inches shorter than a Jeep Grand Cherokee, despite beating its five-passenger capacity.

The new, larger Santa Fe's wheelbase is only 3.9 inches longer than its Sport brother. Length needed inside for a third row seat is partly traded off against rear cargo volume. When all seats are up (see chart), the new model has considerably less space in the very back, though it wins when comparing the two models with two rows of seats up.

The shorter Santa Fe Sport's wheelbase is 4.2 inches shorter than a five-passenger Audi Q5 and a full 11.9 inches shorter than the seven-passenger Audi Q7. Even the longer Santa Fe's wheelbase is 8 inches shorter than the Q7. And in fact, it's a hair shorter than the Q5, too.

A base Santa Fe GLS with front-wheel drive weighs 3933 pounds—a full 333 pounds less than the departed Veracruz—making Santa Fe the only V6-powered midsize crossover under two tons.

**Comparative head count.** Another reason we say "longer" and "shorter" is because seat-count shorthand only half works. While the Sport is always a five-passenger, the longer Santa Fe can either be configured for six or seven (one for one trim level, the other for the other)—one of the first things we learned in San Diego. Hyundai had in fact just sold their first new longer Santa Fe the day before—a six-passenger model in Atlanta.

COMPARATIVE SPECIFICATIONS

	Santa Fe	Santa Fe Sport
Models	GLS...Limited	Base...2.0T
Seats	7	6
Base FWD	\$28,350...\$33,100	\$24,700...\$27,950
Base AWD	\$30,100...\$34,850	\$26,450...\$29,700
Engines	3.3L V6	2.4 I-4...2.0T I-4
Power (hp)	290	190...264
Torque (lb-ft)	252	181...269
Weight FWD	3900-4150±	3459...3569
Weight AWD	4050-4325±	3616...3706
MPG (c/h/c) FWD	18/25/21	21/29/24...20/27/23
MPG (c/h/c) AWD	18/24/20	20/26/22...19/24/21
Turning circle (ft)	36.9	35.8
Wheelbase (in)	110.2	106.3
Length (in)	193.1	184.6
Passenger vol (cu.ft.)	146.6	108.0
Cargo (behind first row)	80.0	71.5
Cargo (behind two rows)	40.9	35.4
Cargo (behind third row)	13.5	--

Whereas the Santa Fe Sport has two models with different engines, but the same five-passenger seat count, the longer Santa Fe has two models with the same V6 engine, but different seat counts. A base Hyundai Santa Fe GLS is a seven-seater, two-three-two, front to rear. For almost five grand more, you can move to the up-featured Santa Fe Limited—but you lose one seat (the second row has two captain's chairs in this model).

So what appeared to be a choice between two capacities turns out to be three—although the top model falls short of its base equivalent for head count, yet with the same cargo volume in the rear.

Hyundai says this is the first time a two-wheelbase, same-style, modified-body model scheme has been done in the SUV/CUV market. (Minivans have done the two-wheelbase variant for years, while SUVs with two- or three-row layouts are common, but within the same body shell.) We would say the GMC Yukon/Yukon XL and Cadillac Escalade/Escalade ESV do the same already, but Santa Fe brings it to the affordable midsize range—more CUV than SUV—that's selling well today.

Santa Fe and Santa Fe Sport are the same from the B-pillar forward. To spot the difference, look at the rear-most side window glass. On the shorter Sport, the beltline sweeps up along its lower edge; on the longer Santa Fe it stays more level, and the back edge of that glass angles down to it.

**Wired.** Santa Fe comes standard with Blue Link®—Hyundai's safety, service and infotainment system, accessed from buttons on the rearview mirror, or via the web or smartphone. Blue Link comprises voice text messaging, POI web search download, turn-by-turn navigation,

KEEP RIGHT >>

IMPRESSION : 2013 HYUNDAI SANTA FE SPORT AWD 2.0T

## Revisiting the 5-PASSENGER Santa Fe Sport

The Hyundai Santa Fe has had us all over the West, from its New Mexico name, to the short-wheelbase launch in Utah, to the long-wheelbase launch in California, then home to Arizona to drive the short-wheelbase Sport another time.

Though smaller and bearing a modified name, the Sport is certainly not a lesser sibling. Hyundai simply saw no need to burden the buyer with two names in their lineup (Santa Fe and Veracruz), when the main choice is purely size—five seats or 6/7.

The handsome Santa Fe Sport below—an AWD 2.0T in Mineral Gray over Black—has a base price of \$29,700, a Leather & Premium Equipment Package for \$2450 (a very comprehensive kit with everything from leather to advanced climate control, rear camera, upgraded power and heat for seats, color audio display and more), plus carpeted floor mats, cargo net and cargo cover (\$100, \$50, \$150), for a total of just \$33,275 including \$825 destination.

Logbook highlights from our week in the Santa Fe Sport include:

- We adjusted controls and noted "the thing feels like a Swiss watch." (Hyundai now has the number two best residual value among mainstream brands, behind only Honda, not surprising as we note the vehicle's many superb details of fit and finish. And it still has that 10-year/100,000-mile warranty.)
- The fuel filler release and hood release

are elegantly low-key, concealed yet convenient.

- The audio screen is small and useful; we like this.
- Audio sound quality was very good, as is typical for Hyundai. We did find one surround setting that seemed to mostly cut out the vocals (karaoke, anyone?), but we just moved on to other settings.

We had trouble with the iPod interface. Online forums told us the fix: use our own cable, not the one that came with. Ironically, their cable had a detail we've always been amazed Apple never thought of—a tactile detent on one side of the plug, so you could hook it up without scrutinizing. The genius of Hyundai tops Apple on this one.

We had noted the vehicle's tight turning circle on the gravel mountain roads outside Park City, Utah, and we appreciated them equally on the boulevard U-turns of metro Phoenix.

We were continuously impressed by the Santa Fe's feature inclusions. Noted at various times were hill start assist and descent controls (typical of more expensive and/or purpose-built SUVs), as well as Sports and Eco interfaces.

Sports mode is not a suspension/shift map profile, but rather their term for using the manual. Once in this mode, you need to stay with it... the system will not override you if you get distracted.

Eco does remap engine and transaxle for fuel economy (depending upon cooling system temperature, hills, use of Sports mode and so on—all tracked through an integrated smart system).

Not for the first time, we comment that many others are copying current Hyundai-pioneered style.

The 6/7-passenger Santa Fe and 5-passenger Santa Fe Sport are both attractive, capable and well-appointed machines. You can choose by cost, size and handling, or head count and cargo volume. The bigger Santa Fe starts just \$4000-5000 higher than the Sport. But if you don't foresee that other passenger or two, the Sport does zip around in a smaller footprint, and it gets better fuel mileage. ■





The interior of Hyundai's new full-length Santa Fe is spacious front and rear, with additional stowage throughout. An optional panoramic sunroof brings in the big sky, while rear side sunshades can keep it under control. Towing capacity of 5000 pounds enabled us to bring quite a few toys to the Torrey Pines Gliderport during our San Diego launch drive.

monthly vehicle reports and more. Three Blue Link packages—Assurance, Essentials and Guidance—offer collision notification, roadside assistance, remote door lock/unlock, remote start and more. A complimentary trial of up to one year is included.

An optional eight-inch touchscreen delivers third-generation navigation and audio systems. Enhanced voice recognition is more intuitive now, understanding complete city and street addresses in one sentence. Upgraded nav screens with simple pop-up messages display speed limits and details for your next three moves. Most functions can be achieved with one or two button pushes.

Four audio systems start with standard six-speaker AM/FM/SAT/CD/MP3 with iPod/USB/aux inputs. Two upgrades can add a 4.3-inch color screen, HD Radio, rear camera, Gen 3.0 Nav, and 10-speaker Dimension audio with 10 speakers. Top of the line is 12-speaker, 500-watt Infinity surround sound including an eight-inch subwoofer and external amplifier, plus premium nav.

**Three sizes fit all.** At launch last year, the new Santa Fe Sport came with a grand total of just 24 build combinations. (There are just 91 different ways to build any Hyundai, from Accent to Equus.) Key decisions on Santa Fe are between two wheelbases, seat count (six or seven) on the bigger model, two engines on the smaller model, and front- or all-wheel drive on any of the above.

When it comes time to decide which Santa Fe is for you, Hyundai brings the small Tucson into the equation, too—rounding out a simple Goldilocks formula. They anticipate many pre-family sales going to the Tucson, with family buyers taking the Santa Fe (based on a track record from Veracruz) and post-family buyers opting for the Santa Fe Sport. All are worth a look for anybody.

The new Santa Fe Sport has experienced red hot sales. Some of (both) Santa Fe's key competitors are what you would expect, such as the Kia Sorento or Chevy Equinox. Others are in the true crossover spot, such as the Ford Edge and Toyota Venza. The number one cross-shopped vehicle is the Honda CR-V. Ultimately, some 58.6 percent of Santa Fe buyers are conquests, new to the Hyundai brand. That is proof of a compelling product. With a highly-featured and attractive vehicle that brings a winning mix of price, capacity and fuel mileage to the game—all in a trim and athletic package that parks and handles among the very best—the Hyundai Santa Fe delivers. ■

