

# EVERYTHING THEY PROMISED by Joe Sage

The new Ford Bronco needs almost no introduction—it's been on everybody's wish list, in the rumor mill and through the concept stage for years. And now it's in production. For a refresher, see our comprehensive reveal feature in the September-October 2020 issue.

The big Bronco is body-on-frame, on the Ranger platform. There is also a Bronco Sport, a small unit-body on the Escape and now Maverick platform. Bronco Sport arrived to market first, creating some room for confusion as to what's been seen to date.

Our sample is the Badlands, a serious off-roader toward the upper end of the series, with the Sas-

quatch package, making it even more serious.

It's a 4-Door, while there is also a 2-Door. Broncos in the past were all two-doors, but today's market shows a four-door is likely to be the bigger seller. Both are well executed, giving new life to that same pure Bronco character. The 4-Door's gas tank is about four gallons larger, a nice plus.

Also defining Bronco is its open top, rare among rugged off-roaders. You can opt for a ragtop or the removable hardtop on ours. The doors are also removable—you can go as open-air as you desire.

Specifications for ours are at right; the full lineup and its pricing, plus key comparatives between

the 4-Door and 2-Door, are on the next page. (Note that this sample is a 2021; full lineup pricing on the following page is for the 2022 model year.)

The entire Bronco range runs from about \$30k to about \$50k, from its most basic through its most luxe-and-tech-appointed to its most heavy-duty and special-duty models, each with either door count.

Wildtrak, a high-speed dune runner more akin to the F-150 Raptor, is tops in price. Shy of having that special goal, the Badlands is arguably the top dog off-roader. Sasquatch is a package available on several models, and a great way to add focused enhancements—also see sidebar—all in one nice-

ly priced, fully Ford-engineered bundle.

Our Bronco followed a week in the F-150. As in its platform partner, the Ranger, its cab experience feels basically as generous as the big pickup's—with about the same headroom and legroom, a little narrower overall, but also with a narrower console. The spacious cabin is nice, while the character, layout and feel of the Bronco remain appropriately completely different from the pickups.

All are 4x4s, while engines include your choice of a 2.3L EcoBoost four or a 2.7L EcoBoost V6, with 7-speed manual and 10-speed automatics available. The V6 requires the 10-speed auto, a tough choice for a manual fan—the difference between 275 and 315 horsepower might seem justifiable to gain hand shifting, but the torque difference is more dramatic, 410 vs 315 lb-ft. Give both a test drive, if you're on the fence—also paying atten-

tion to their somewhat different gear ratios.

Much about the Badlands build is strictly business. Despite sitting a few grand above the luxe-tech Outer Banks model, it has more rugged touches such as manual seat controls and a washout-ready rubberized floor with drain plugs.

Tech is there when you turn the proverbial key, of course, from an entertaining logo-and-tumbling-boulders screen animation, to extensive interfaces and controls for off-roading attitudes and stats.

Ours has a 4A-2HI-4HI transfer case with crawl feature, as well as Bronco's G.O.A.T. Modes (Goes Anywhere Over Any Type of Terrain). Being solid all-wheel-drive fans, we used 4A around town, though 2HI could bump up fuel economy on a long, dry highway run (or every day, if you prefer).

The high-torquing V6 powertrain has a powerful grunt that underlines its character nicely. The

(cont'd)



## SPECIFICATIONS

### 2021 Badlands w Sasquatch Pkg

ASSEMBLY	.....Michigan Assembly, Wayne MI
DOORS / ROWS / SEATS	.....two / two / five
ENGINE	.....(opt) 2.7 EcoBoost twin-turbo V6
HP/TORQUE	.....310 hp / 400 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	.....10-spd automatic
DRIVETRAIN	.....4x4
TRANSFER CASE	.....(STANDARD) part-time selectable engage, electronic shift-on-fly, 2.72:2 low ratio; (OPTIONAL) advanced w auto on-demand 4H engage, 2-spd electromechanical transfer, 3.06:1 low ratio
DIFFERENTIALS	.....F: Dana 44 AdvanTEK indep w available Spicer Performa-Trak electronic lock; R: Dana 44 AdvanTEK solid w available Spicer Performa-Trak
FINAL DRIVE RATIO	.....(Sasquatch) 4.70:1
CRAWL RATIO	.....auto / elec shift-on-fly: 57.19:1
CHASSIS / SUSPENSION	.....H.O.S.S. System F: indep twin alloy A-arms & coil-overs; (Sasq) Bilstein position sensitive dampers; R: solid five-link rear axle w coil-overs, (Sasq) Bilstein position sensitive dampers
SUSPENSION TRAVEL (F/R)	.....240/261 mm
STEERING	.....3-mode rack-and-pinion via Terrain Mgmt System w G.O.A.T. Modes
BRAKES	.....four-wheel disc; F: 311x34mm vented, 51mm twin-piston floating; R: 308x24mm, 54mm single-piston floating
WHEELS	.....17x8.5 black high-gloss-painted forged alum warm alloy trim ring, beadlock
TIRES	.....(Sasquatch) 35" 315/70R17 Goodyear Territory M/T
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....190.5 / 116.1 in
HEIGHT / WIDTH	.....73.9 / 76.3 in
TRACK (F/R)	.....65.0 / 65.0 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....11.5 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....39.86 ft
APPR / BRKVR / DEPART	.....43.2 / 26.3 / 37.0°
MAX WATER FORDING	.....(Sasquatch) 33.5 in
RAMP TRAVEL INDEX (Badlands only)	.....500 / 620 Sta-Bar connected/disconn
WEIGHT	.....5109 lb
PAYLOAD / TOW CAPACITY	.....1370 / 3500 lb
FUEL	.....87 oct reg unl (hp boost w 91 prem)
FUEL CAPACITY	.....20.8 gal
MPG	.....17/18/17 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	.....\$44,590
BADLANDS SERIES EQUIP GRP 334A:	.....powder coated bumpers, steel bash plates, carbonized gray paint grille w white Bronco name, rock rails, LED headlamps, LED taillamps, LED signature lighting, 17" wheels (w 33" tires), full size spare, 2 ea F/R tow hooks, Badlands suspension, front stblzr bar disconnect, Terrain Mgmt System w G.O.A.T. Modes
2.7L ECOBOOST V6	.....1895
10-SPD AUTOMATIC TRANS	.....1595
SASQUATCH PKG:	.....diff 17" beadlock capable wheels, 4.7 final drive ratio w electronic-lock axles F/R, high clearance susp, high clearance fender flares, 35" M/T tires, position-sensitive Bilstein shocks
HARD TOP:	.....molded in color
STORAGE BAGS FOR TOP	.....350
TOWING CAPABILITY UPGRADE	.....595
KEYLESS ENTRY KEYPAD	.....110
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1495
TOTAL	.....\$58,905

big Bronco can be a little awkward in tight parking lots or gauging curbs while parallel parking with the fender flares, in urban-suburban use, and the gearing is optimized for other uses than competitive boulevards or freeway ramps. But you knew that, and you'll still love it. In a high country town, it will be perfect close to 100 percent of the time. Tight maneuvers are also mitigated by a stellar set of cameras with very accurate guidelines—indispensable on the trail and often useful in town.

And it's the trails we headed for.

How can a vehicle be this tough and this comfortable all at the same time? we asked ourselves as we got underway at a big off-highway vehicle park. The combination of suspension and wheel and tire fitment is masterful on this Badlands and Sasquatch build. We had been driving in 4HI and had already gone farther than we have ever gone there, a testament not only to its nothing-will-stop-us capability, but to the why-would-we-ever-want-to-stop thrills of the Bronco's drive.

We realized we not only had had superb capability just in out-of-the-box 4HI, but that we had made many a seemingly radically tight U-turn despite a fairly average turning circle spec in the four-door format. Imagine what the two-door can do.

We found ourselves traversing some of the most challenging terrain—a shifting dry river bed with dramatic rock outcroppings, all of which we tackled in turn—as the sun was going down, glad

to have the confidence of everything about this vehicle, notably the beadlock rims. We had eased into the river bed well upstream, to be sure what we were getting into. But to get back out, and with the last of the setting sun in our eyes, we took the steepest, narrowest, gnarliest route there was, a washed-out, brush-lined trough—the up-and-out direction of an “is this a good idea?” route down that we had opted against earlier. We popped it into 4LO here, because we wanted to take it slowly, as we gauged its limits. This was the roughest stretch we ran that day, and in the Bronco, again feeling smaller than it is, it was a piece of cake.

All this, and we never even disconnected the sway bar, but that's another dimension of capability on top of all the rest, if and when needed. In fact, we had tackled slippery, mud/ruts, sand and rock-crawl conditions without using the G.O.A.T. Modes, which include exactly those, by name, among others. Imagine the edge these provide, atop a vehicle that already delivers to the max.

People have learned to be apprehensive about concept vehicles or about the reinvention of treasured heritage vehicles in a new era, in some past cases with good reason. The Bronco delivers everything you would hope and expect. It's faithful to the spirit and mission of the originals, and it satisfies 15 or more years of well-received concept builds, all properly and extensively updated to modern build parameters. We loved it. ■



## 2022 BRONCO MODELS / TRIMS

### Base

The essential Bronco  
**2-DOOR** ..... Starts at **\$29,300**  
**4-DOOR** ..... **33,450**

### Big Bend

Mainstream off-road w comfort, tech upgrades  
**2-DOOR** ..... **\$33,785**  
**4-DOOR** ..... **36,110**

### Black Diamond

Adventure off-roading, washout interior  
**2-DOOR** ..... **\$36,450**  
**4-DOOR** ..... **38,795**

### Outer Banks

Off-roading in style: leather, tech upgrades  
**2-DOOR** ..... **\$39,355**  
**4-DOOR** ..... **41,700**

### Badlands

Extreme off-road model  
**2-DOOR** ..... **\$42,495**  
**4-DOOR** ..... **44,840**

### Wildtrak

High-speed off-road desert runner  
**2-DOOR** ..... **\$47,780**  
**4-DOOR** ..... **49,475**

### PLUS PACKAGES AVAILABLE:

Standard, Mid, High, Lux, Sasquatch

## BRONCO 2-DOOR vs 4-DOOR

LENGTH / WHEELBASE	
2-DOOR	173.7 / 100.4 in
4-DOOR	189.4 / 116.1 in
HEIGHT / WIDTH	
2-DOOR	71.9-75.2 / 75.9-79.3 in
4-DOOR	72.9-75.3 / 75.9-79.3 in
TRACK ... (varies by model, same F/R) 65.0-66.9 in	
GROUND CLEARANCE	
2-DOOR	base 8.4 / 35" tires 11.6 in
4-DOOR	base 8.3 / 35" tires 11.5 in
APPR / BRKVR / DEPART	
2-DOOR	base 35.5 / 21.1 / 29.8° w 35" tires 43.2 / 29.0 / 37.2°
4-DOOR	base 35.5 / 20.0 / 29.7° w 35" tires 43.2 / 26.3 / 37.0°
MAX WATER FORDING	
BOTH (based on Sasquatch pkg).....33.5 in	
RAMP TRAVEL INDEX (Badlands only)	
2-DOOR	560 / w 35" 700
4-DOOR	500 / w 35" 620
PAYLOAD / TOW CAPACITY	
2-DOOR	1170 / 3500 lb
4-DOOR	1370 / 3500 lb

