

# PASSPORT RENEWAL

New TrailSport trim toughens up hardy Honda lineup - by Joe Sage

Capability matters, but when it comes to playing rough, so do appearances. You'll notice that tough machines like the Honda Pilot and its unibody pickup cousin the Ridgeline have had burly facelifts over the past couple of years, an appropriate match to their off-road rally-winning bones.

Depending upon your personal timeline, it may seem the Honda Passport has pretty much always been with us, solidly established from the early '90s through the first few years of this millennium—augmented by the fact that Hondas seem to stay on the road longer than average. Passport, however, was absent from our market for 18 years, discontinued after 2002 and just returning in 2019. In the interim, the Honda utility lineup concentrated on the three-row Pilot and the smaller CR-V and then also HR-V.

Honda Passport delivers a more spacious cabin similar to the Pilot, while bearing a shorter length and taller stance. Most of all, it returns the brand to the red hot two-row midsize utility segment.

Introducing the TrailSport treatment via the new Passport is a great way to shine a spotlight on both the new trim level and on the return of the Passport, each augmenting awareness of the other.

For 2022, the fourth year of its third generation,

Honda simplifies the Passport family at the same time they add this model, moving from four or five trim levels to just three—of which TrailSport is the middle by price. Underscoring the Passport's overall off-road readiness, while all except the top luxe trim were previously available in 2WD or AWD, now only the base model offers a front-drive build.

A number of basically off-road-capable vehicles have been getting the more rugged treatment lately, partly visual cues and partly capability—adding a tougher looking grille, some ride height, badging, colors, a tougher interior and so on—thus appeal-

ing to a broader market and to a particularly discriminating niche. Honda is doing that here.

Fact is, this new Honda Passport TrailSport is a stepping stone to even rougher and tougher looks and features to follow. Not a highly radical transformation at this point, nor intended to be, it's a useful bump and a prelude to what's coming next.

Honda Passport is a pretty tough SUV already, so on the one hand it didn't have a pressing need to be amped up. This initial TrailSport treatment has most of the same specifications as other trims, so it's more of a defining moment—for Passport and for the future of the TrailSport badge, which we've been told will spawn more extreme treatments.

TrailSport is a great name for this transformation, and Passport was a solid place to start. For one thing, "Passport TrailSport" rolls right off the tongue. And for another, Sport is a good term for its mission—it's not intended to be an extreme rock-conquering trail warrior, but does get a boost off-pavement from its 18-inch wheels, tires with beefier sidewalls, and a skidplate upgrade. This is plenty to give you an increased edge on those routine forays off-pavement, whether heading to your favorite camping and fishing spots or general off-highway driving spots.

Finished in Platinum White Pearl, our sample

looks quite sophisticated, but it's still ready for some rough and tumble. We took our Passport TrailSport for a long unpaved desert trail drive, on a gravel road with lots of curves and hills (but not major gullies, rocks or cliffs).

It's a full-time all-wheel-driver, not bearing a dedicated 4x4 transfer case—though it offers snow, mud and sand Intelligent Traction Management options (as well as a normal drive mode). We chose sand as our route's most likely match from the above, proceeding with considerable speed for much of the road, throwing in impressive steep climbs and crawls to access a photo spot or two.

(We confirmed and expanded the experience at NWAPA's Mudfest event, also in this issue, taking a Cement gray sample on a dedicated four-wheel-drive obstacle course, which it easily conquered.)

Passport benefits nicely from the TrailSport treatment. It may not seem to add a large degree of capability to the vehicle, as it is already very solid, but at the same time it makes it clearer that there was a fair amount of strength to it all along, an awareness that is very well deserved.

Watch for TrailSport to be developed into much more, of which this is just the start. Not overly extreme and not overly expensive, Honda Passport TrailSport delivers good clean fun. ■



## SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Lincoln, Alabama
CONTENT	75% US/Canada
ENGINE/TRANSMISSION	US / US
ENGINE	3.5L i-VTEC dir inj V6 24v SOHC w variable cylinder management
HP/TORQUE	280 hp / 262 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	11.5:1
TRANSMISSION	9-spd auto shift-by-wire w paddle shifters
DRIVETRAIN	i-VTM4 all-wheel-drive
INTELL TRACTION MGMT	snow-sand-mud
SUSPENSION	F: MacPherson strut, 25.0 mm stblzr bar (solid); R: multi-link, 26.5x4.5mm stblzr bar (tubular)
STEERING	elec pwr-asst rack & pinion
BRAKES	F: 12.6 vented, R: 13.0 solid
WHEELS	18-in machine-finished alloys w pewter gray inserts
TIRES	245/60 R18 all-season; compact spare
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	189.1 / 110.91 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	8.1 in
APPROACH / DEPARTURE	21.2 / 24.3°
TURNING CIRCLE	39.3 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	39.5 / 40.0 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	40.9 / 39.6 in
CARGO CAPACITY	41.2-50.5 / 77.7-100.8 cu.ft
WEIGHT	4229 lb
WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION (F/R)	58.5 / 41.5%
TOW CAPACITY	5000 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	reg unl / 19.5 gal
MPG	19/24/21 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	\$42,470
PLATINUM WHITE PAINT	395
DESTINATION CHARGE	1225
TOTAL	\$44,090

## 2022 HONDA PASSPORT LINEUP

	2WD	AWD
EX-L	\$37,870	\$39,970
TrailSport		\$42,470
Elite		45,430

## TRAILSORT KEY FEATURES

### EXTERIOR

- Gloss black upper grille bar, side mirror caps and roof rails
- Gloss black Passport and AWD badges, orange TrailSport logo
- Matte black window pillars, tailgate trim and side mirror base
- Gloss black power folding, heated power side mirrors with integrated turn indicators, memory and reverse tilt-down
- 18-in machine-finished alloy wheels with pewter gray inserts
- 245/60R18 105H Firestone tires with rugged 'sidewall tread' design
- 10mm wider track: 67.1 vs standard 66.7 in
- Silver painted skid plate garnish front/rear

### INTERIOR

- Leather-trimmed seats with orange TrailSport logo on front headrests
- Leather-wrapped steering wheel with orange stitching
- Amber ambient LED lighting
- All-season floor mats with TrailSport logo
- Heated wiper zone