

MAINSTREAMING

SUBTLE STYLING EVOLUTION SOLIDIFIES IN AN ALL-NEW FORESTER

BY JOE SAGE

You know how a facial recognition camera can tell one person from another—out of some 8 or 9 billion—instantly? Even the smallest differences are immediately perceptible.

The new gen-six Subaru Forester—totally new inside and out—seemed to have been so transformed, we set out to compare its dimensions and other vital statistics with the prior generation. But surprise—they are very, very close.

Then we went back more years, more generations, to when it was based on the Impreza sedan, (with an Outback-related engine) and universally considered more of a “tall wagon” than an SUV or crossover. And it turns out that even those dimensions were close.

Yet, if we hadn’t seen a Forester before, this new one would seem quite mainstream. While if we had seen Forester before, since its beginning, even as its build has evolved in stages for a few generations now into the Subaru Global Platform, the tall wagon impression had endured.

And yet it now appears so completely new and different. It seems to boil down to the details. The grille has been mildly yet significantly restyled on other recent Subaru models, many now a little larger and to our eye more vertical, small changes making a big difference, a simple evolution making Subaru’s SUVs and crossovers seem bolder, more in line with the segment’s image.

In this generation, this is augmented further in

Forester by incorporating the headlights into its bolder grille assembly (also more in line with current trends). And although we had expected to find a dramatic difference in cabin dimensions—as it really doesn’t look to us so much like a “tall wagon” anymore—we’re concluding this comes from a beltline (the bottom of the side windows front-to-rear) that is probably slightly higher, as well as a shift upward of everything in the rear.

While our last Forester was the welcome addition of the Wilderness Edition, great for a long dirt drive, our schedule on this one brought a range of daily driver metro duties.

We found it to be a nice vehicle, easy to find your way around the cabin and controls. The turning circle is notably tight, 35.4 feet, always one of our favorite attributes in town or in the wild.

The main downside we encountered was in aggressive driver assistance—lane-keeping fighting

back even when our turn signal was on, also leading to a jerky steering feel in some situations. This can be adjusted or turned off, but as a safety feature, we generally hesitate to do so on someone else’s vehicle. But on our own, we surely would.

HVAC also challenged us, with its mixed blessing of separate temperature and fan speed controls, a less common setup that does potentially offer more control over conditions, but needs more ongoing attention. We dove into the settings several times, in pursuit of optimal output.

The transmission is a CVT, which can be transparent or uncomfortable in various implementations. These serve a lot of commendable purposes, but are really no-one’s favorite. On this, it tends toward the favorable end, generally transparent. In fact, we had to doublecheck specs to confirm it.

This is a very solid Subaru entry, and its styling evolution brings it not only more in line with the general segment, but also among the solid overall Subaru SUV-crossover lineup. Forester’s quirky tallness has become more mainstream in appearance



1998 gen-one Forester

gradually, while its cabin utility has remained distinctive. With this generation’s tweaks, the transformation takes a leap. Through all this evolution, it’s still recognizable as a Forester and should be widely popular. We’re inclined to think more people will be happier with it than ever. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	.....Gunma, Japan
ENGINE	.....2.5L boxer (hzntly opposed) 4-cyl DOHC, Si-Drive eng perf mgmt w intelligent & sport sharp modes
HP/TORQUE	.....180 hp / 178 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....12.0:1
TRANSMISSION	.....Lineartronic CVT, 8-spd manual mode, paddles
DRIVETRAIN	.....Symmetrical AWD
MODES	.....dual-function X-Mode w snow/dirt, deep snow/mud
SUSPENSION	.....4-wheel indep, raised
STEERING	.....dual-pinion elec pwr assist
BRAKES	.....4-whl disc w assist, override
WHEELS	.....19x.5 alum alloy, bronze finish
TIRES	.....235/50R19 99V all-season
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....183.3 / 105.1 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....8.7 in
APPROACH / DEPART	.....(Sport) 19.0 / 24.7°
TURNING CIRCLE	.....35.4 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....(moonrf) 40.0 / 37.7 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....43.3 / 39.4 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....27.5 / 69.1 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....3611 lb
TOW CAPACITY	.....1500 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....reg unl / 16.6 gal
MPG	.....25/32/28 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	.....\$34,495
OPTION PKG 24: Harman Kardon 576-watt 11-speaker audio, power rear gate w memory, reverse automatic braking	.....1700
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1395
TOTAL	.....\$37,590

2025 SUBARU FORESTER LINEUP

(base)	.....\$29,695
Premium	.....31,995
Sport	.....▼ 34,495
Limited	.....35,995
Touring	.....39,995

