

Having trepidation about diving into the mysteries of EVs? Here's some welcome news—the new Subaru Solterra makes the experience so transparent, you can once again just grab the wheel, go for a spin and check out the vehicle for what it is, rather than dwelling on what's different or even baffling. This should please Subaru fans, EV fans and the general public alike.

Sure, you'll still have charging logistics to solve for your situation. And EV techies are not overlooked—you can still dive deep into this vehicle's clever implementations. But the

feeling of experiencing the new Subaru Solterra simply in terms of how it looks, fits, drives and slots into your budget—like any normal vehicle—was a refreshing revelation.

This is the brand's first global EV. It features a new StarDrive all-electric powertrain generating 215 horsepower and 249 lb-ft of on-demand torque, feeding all-wheel drive in familiar Subaru fashion, and following Subaru's outdoor- and activity-based leanings with Dual-Function X-Mode with snow/dirt and deep snow/mud modes, as well as grip control, downhill assist and hill start, all atop a generous 8.3-inch ground clearance.

Typical of EVs, its MPGe (equivalent) figures are high—111 city, 93 highway—though its range is toward the short end, at 222 miles.

Built in Japan with 35 percent Chinese

parts, our top trim Touring is about \$52k in a three-trim lineup from the mid-\$40s.

Our first impression was of a simple small package, no fuss, no muss—modern and stylish, not that expensive, a pretty standard format and controls, though entirely up to date. It's exciting, yet nearly transparent in terms of the new-everything aura (or burden) you usually get from the whole EV ecosphere.

We spent our drive time in town, though it clearly has the chops for some deep woods mountain biking, hiking or fishing.

Our inescapable feeling throughout driving the Solterra was that if you didn't know it was an EV, or even that there was such a thing as an EV, you'd simply find a handsome vehicle with a new wave of style and design points. You could drive this indefinitely without know-

ing or caring it was a different kind of anything (until you have to recharge it rather than refuel it). And that strikes us as a good thing, a level of evolutionary maturity that is ahead of the game, already moved into an era where it doesn't matter so much—you could buy one of these like it's anything else.

For perspective, we imagined a passenger and figured they wouldn't notice anything about the drive other than it's really good—quick, firm, handles nicely—and that they will notice that it has a more modern interior, not mind-jarringly moreso, but comfortably moreso, like a SpaceX capsule's interior.

(A corollary that crossed our minds is that if the EV thing doesn't catch on, overall, then a sort of late entrant like this is a more reasonable way for the brand to go back to mainstream powertrains, but having done a nice bump into future styling and features. Which is the same set of positives as it is as an EV.) You might find a couple of details of note

(as we seem to with everything)—particular controls you don't care for (we had issues with phantom rear occupant alerts, lack of lighting on vital switches in the dark, phone charging, cupholders and such), along with some adjustment to the steering, handling or firm ride, and so on. These are all things we noted, but all of which seem sure to become second nature with full-time ownership.

The 2024 Subaru Solterra lived up to its Lat-in-derived compound name, as we enjoyed our week with it under a 118-degree sun and with the known capability of enjoying the earth beneath its feet.

Most of all, it's a Subaru, a very popular brand with an extremely loyal retention rate. Whether you are a confirmed Subaru person, or anyone who has been considering an EV, or absorbing the whole EV phenomenon while not sure it even interests you, this is one that makes it easy: all the barriers to entry or understanding are pretty well wiped away. ■

Style point: flat black plastics surround the wheels on a number of vehicles currently, often those aimed at off-pavement activities. Though often quite awkward on others, Subaru Solterra has taken it further, and it's all for the better—a fairly massive amount of black composite up front that you almost don't notice completely eliminates the fender. Net effect: Storm Trooper!

## FARTHER INTO THE FUTURE FEELS MORE FAMILIAR

BY JOE SAGE



### SPECIFICATIONS

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| ASSEMBLY                            | .....Toyota, Aichi, Japan  |
| ENGINE/TRANS BUILD                  | .....Japan / Japan   |
| PARTS CONTENT                       | .....Japan 65% / China 35%   |
| CHASSIS                             | .....Subaru Global Platform  |
| MOTORS                              | .....StarDrive all-electric w front/rear (2x) 80kW AC synchronous permanent-magnet motors, integral transaxles, power inverters  |
| BATTERY                             | .....Li-ion 355.2V 72.8 kWh, 96-hour, 201 ah capacity, cooling system  |
| HP/TORQUE                           | .....215 hp / 249 lb-ft  |
| TRANSMISSION                        | .....single ratio reduction transaxles (ratio: 13.8:1)   |
| DRIVETRAIN                          | .....Symmetrical AWD, electronic power-controlled variable power distribution via indep front/rear elec motors   |
| MODES/CONTROL                       | .....X-Mode (snow/dirt, deep snow/mud); grip control; downhill assist control, hill-start assist   |
| SUSPENSION                          | .....F: MacPherson-type struts, internal rebound springs, lower L-arms, coils, stblzr bar; R: dbl wishbone, coils, dampers w internal rebound springs, steel lower arms w aerodynamic covers, stblzr bar |
| STEERING                            | .....quick-ratio elec power-assist rack & pinion, torque sensitive var ratio   |
| BRAKES                              | .....F: 12.9 vented, dual-piston; R: 12.5 vented, single-piston calipers   |
| WHEELS                              | .....(Touring) 20x7.5 alum alloy, gray finish w silver spoke inserts   |
| TIRES                               | .....235/50 R20 100V a/s   |
| LENGTH / WHEELBASE                  | .....184.6 / 112.2 in  |
| GROUND CLEARANCE                    | .....8.3 in  |
| TURNING CIRCLE                      | .....36.7 ft   |
| HEADROOM (F/R)                      | .....(moonrf) 38.6 / 37.1 in   |
| LEGROOM (F/R)                       | .....42.1 / 35.3 in  |
| CARGO CAPACITY                      | .....23.8 / 63.5 cu.ft   |
| ROOF LOAD                           | .....(dynamic/static) 176 / 700 lb   |
| WEIGHT                              | .....4486 lb   |
| CHARGING                            | .....Type 1 (SAE J1772) comb connector system (CCS)  |
| CHARGING TIME:                      |  |
| LEVEL 2 240V                        | .....(@ 32a) .....9 hours  |
| DC FAST CHARGE                      | .....(to 80%) .....35 min  |
| RANGE                               | .....(Touring) 222 miles   |
| MPGe                                | .....(Touring) 111/93/102 (city/hwy/comb)  |
| BASE PRICE                          | .....\$51,995  |
| PAINT: Cosmic White Pearl, two tone | .....890   |
| ALL-WEATHER FLOOR LINERS            | .....187   |
| CARGO TRAY                          | .....141   |
| DESTINATION CHARGE                  | .....1345  |
| TOTAL                               | .....\$54,558  |

### 2024 SUBARU SOLTERRA LINEUP

|         |               |
|---------|---------------|
| Premium | .....\$44,995 |
| Limited | .....48,495   |
| Touring | .....▼ 51,995 |