



www.autodatasolutions.com

2014 Subaru XV Crosstrek Hybrid joins recently introduced lineup.

Overview

The Subaru XV Crosstrek was launched as a 2013 model and essentially replaced the Impreza Outback Sport. It shares the platform and basic components used in the Impreza, which was redesigned for 2012, with upgrades to the suspension including wheels, tires and brakes.

The XV Crosstrek is taller than a sedan and has more ground clearance. It drives like a car because it mostly is one. On the freeway it's surprisingly smooth and quiet. The 2.0-liter four-cylinder boxer engine makes 148 horsepower and 145 pound-feet of torque. It's quick enough, although speed isn't what it's here for. The Crosstrek is suitable for those who want to go beyond the highway, not reach the end of it before the others.

New for 2014, an XV Crosstrek Hybrid model was introduced. EPA mileage is 29/33 mpg. Efficiently packaged, the electric motor is built into the continuously variable transmission, and the 13.5 kw nickel-metal-hydride battery is tightly tucked into the rear floor so only 3 percent (1.7 cu. ft.) of cargo storage is lost; also, the battery lowers the center of gravity for better cornering. The Hybrid is capable in deep snow and one ice.

The Hybrid is quicker and faster than the standard version, with a suspension tuned for agile handling, quick-ratio electric power steering, and aero 17-inch alloy wheels with 225/55 tires, while using the same Symmetrical All Wheel Drive with 8.7 inches of ground clearance. Think sport gaining hybrid, not hybrid adding sport. The Hybrid uses the same 2.0-liter engine, modified with a slightly higher compression ratio, low-friction piston rings and valve springs, and a gas regenerative system (EGR) with cooler. It adds 13.4 horsepower and more importantly 48 pound-feet of torque from 0 to 1500 rpm, for a net 160 hp and 163 pound-feet at 2000 rpm, as opposed to the base engine's torque of 145 pound-feet at 4200 rpm.

The Crosstrek suspension handles bumps both big and small.

The Crosstrek isn't fancy inside, but it's not compromised by inexpensive materials. It feels practical. The standard cloth interior is rugged and clean, with heated front seats standard. There's good room in front, a decent rear seat with plenty of headroom, and room for two mountain bikes behind the front seat and three golf bags behind the second seat. The instrumentation is good and simply laid out, with switches and controls in logical positions.

Crosstrek is well-equipped and a good value with standard equipment. The base price includes solid accessories including heated outside mirrors and front seats. Navigation with infotainment, and moonroof, are available.

Crosstrek gets 5-star ratings from NHTSA government crash tests, and the insurance industry's IIHS classifies it a Top Safety Pick. Subaru's reliability record is admirable. More owners swear by them than at them.

The Crosstrek competes in a crowded, ever-expanding market with the Mazda CX-5, Honda CR-V, Hyundai Tucson, Kia Sportage, Toyota RAV4, Volkswagen Tiguan, Nissan Juke and Mini Countryman.

Model Lineup

Subaru XV Crosstrek five-door hatch comes with a 148-hp 2-liter boxer engine in two trim levels. The XV Crosstrek Premium model comes with a 5-speed manual transmission and optional continuously variable transmission; the CVT is standard on the XV Crosstrek Limited version.

XV Crosstrek Premium is available with 5-speed manual (\$21,995) or CVT (\$22,995) and comes standard with cloth upholstery, air conditioning, power windows/locks/heated mirrors, tilt/telescoping steering wheel, 17-inch alloy wheels, 6-way driver/4-way passenger manual seat adjustment, privacy glass all rear windows, rear spoiler, 60/40 split folding rear seat, AM/FM/CD stereo with hands-free and audio-streaming Bluetooth, cruise control, multifunction display, heated front seats and wiper de-icers, removable cargo tray, and floor mats.

XV Crosstrek Limited (\$24,495) upgrades with leather upholstery, automatic climate control, CVT, a 4.3-inch display with rearview camera and audio functions, Bluetooth, auto on/off headlamps, and rear-seat armrest with cupholders.

The XV Crosstrek Hybrid (\$25,995) is equipped like the Limited.

Options include moonroof, navigation with 6.1-inch screen and smartphone integration, rearview camera, XM Satellite Radio, HD Radio, iPod, USB, SMS messaging, iTunes tagging.

Walkaround

The Subaru XV Crosstrek is conspicuously rugged, like the Audi Allroad or Volvo XC70 CrossCountry. It's distinctive and edgy. Compared to the Impreza, it gets its own bumpers and grille with aero shutters, tinted rear windows, and wheels that maybe try a bit too hard to look tough. Except for the center of the rear bumper, the cladding protects the entire lower perimeter from sticks and stones.

Hawkeye headlights and fog lights frame a grille mildly pinched in the middle, and with an open lower grille. At the front corners the cladding notches into the wheel opening, a creative touch literally adding some edge.

Substantial corners on the rear bumpers add visual strength and look like they might fit on a fishing boat. LED taillamps have more white in them than other Crosstreks. Exhausts are tucked and hidden to keep them from being dinged by offroad adventure.

Aero tweaks on the roof rails gain 1 mpg, says Subaru. Roof cross bars are not standard on crossovers and SUVs because they hurt highway mileage.

The XV Crosstrek is four inches higher than an Impreza, with 8.7 of ground clearance at the exhaust pipe, as much as some pickup trucks. Most parts are well protected and we expect the XV to be quite reliable.

Interior Features

The Crosstrek cabin is functional without being Spartan. Contrast-stitched fabric upholstery appears durable, breathes well to minimize temperature extremes and would be our choice if we're using the car to get dirty. Trim is matte-finish to avoid reflections, upper surfaces are soft-touch for comfort, and lower panels are plastic for easy cleaning.

Manual seats and a tilt/telescoping wheel offer good adjustment so almost anyone can get comfortable, and support is quite adequate for road trips. We're pleased to find headrests that adjust for height and angle, and seat cushions long enough for Western-size inseams. Heated front seats are standard.

Rear seats offer plenty of headroom, even with the optional moonroof. Our 6-foot, 3-inch passenger sat in the middle position without scraping the ceiling with his noggin. His legs were another story, as the Crosstrek offers 35.4 inches, compared for example to the Subaru Forester at 38.0.

Comparing cargo space, the Forester has 63 cubic feet, 9 more than the Crosstrek, although much of that comes with the taller roof.

Only the Limited and Hybrid have a center armrest (with cupholders), but all models have seatbacks that fold nearly flat an inch or two above cargo deck height without removing the headrest, as long as the front seats aren't too far back. The center shoulder belt stows in the right side of the cargo area, out of the way of folded seats. Back doors open wide for easy entry and exit or securing awkward cargo.

Instrumentation is simply adorned, illuminated deep amber for easy glancing at night. A rev counter and optimistic 150-mph speedometer frame a digital display for fuel level and gear data, with an analog economy gauge that follows your right foot, duh. The top center display provides trip, time and ambient temperature, but the control knob is around the steering wheel.

Basic three-ring climate controls get desired heating and cooling with minimum fuss; automatic control comes on the Limited. Each dashboard vent closes individually and the darker window tint keeps the rear seat cooler than on the Impreza.

Side mirrors that look large on the Impreza look right at home here, the extra viewing handy off the pavement or on it. Outward visibility is superb forward and very good everywhere else, a benefit of slender windshield pillars, low hood line, high windshield, articulated inside mirror, and outside mirrors set well back. Standard electric de-icers will thaw wipers frozen to the windshield soon after startup, eliminating scraper damage to them. Shading around the mirror helps driving into the sun, but the visors do not have extensions on them.

Cabin storage includes useful pockets in the console, doors and glovebox. There's 22 cubic feet of cargo space behind the back seat and 52 with it folded down. One advantage of the body height is that there's decent head clearance under the open liftgate. The cargo cover will fit on the floor so you never need leave it home, and there's a temporary spare tire under the floor.

Driving Impressions

The Subaru XV Crosstrek drives like a car. Though taller and heavier than an Impreza, it still weighs in at just 3100 pounds, svelte for its class. It's only slightly slower and less nimble than the sedan. With 145 foot-pounds of torque, the 148-hp 2-liter flat-four engine accelerates well up to 60 mph, and keeps pace on the freeway without much effort.

Fuel economy for the base engine is an EPA-rated 25/33 mpg City/Highway with the CVT (continuously variable transmission), and 23/30 mpg with the 5-speed manual transmission. On one jaunt with a 5-speed 2.0, over 60-mph freeway, 35-mph two-lane through towns, and 15-45 mph off pavement, we got 26.2 mpg.

Later we spent one week in a 2014 XV Crosstrek Hybrid that's EPA rated at 29/33 mpg. With cruise control set at 72 mph on a freeway with some climbs, we got 26.6 miles per gallon; in the

city we got about 24. It has an auto stop/start system that's mostly seamless, although some situations caused a hiccup. The Hybrid is quite smooth at speed and plenty fast. That increase in torque, to 163 pound-feet at 2000 rpm from 145 pound-feet at 4200, makes a huge difference in the car's acceleration from stop.

The Hybrid introduction took place in Iceland, where it over-achieved in its offroad performance, in ice and snow and even river crossings. Subaru wanted to prove that you can treat your Crosstrek like a Jeep, and it'll still get you there.

Clutch effort with the 5-speed is moderate and releases near the floor, and the shifter is adequate. The gear ratios are shorter than the Impreza sedan's to allow for the added weight, so 70 mph is 3150 rpm, but the engine hum is isolated from the cabin. Even on steep inclines and chugging around town, the engine pulled well with the manual transmission in the correct gear.

The CVT is designed to feel like an automatic; that is, the revs and speed accelerate at the same time, unlike some older CVTs that put engine revs high while vehicle speed catches up, like an outboard struggling to get on plane. This continuously variable transmission has six settings to imitate a 6-speed automatic's gears, with paddle shifters. As with the 5-speed manual, mountain passes or overtaking will need healthy revs and all of the horsepower.

Every XV Crosstrek is all-wheel drive. Manuals use a lockable viscous coupling which splits power evenly front and rear, while the CVT uses an electronically controlled clutch pack and can vary the split 100 percent to either end. Both are transparent to the driver, and only if their limits have been reached does the traction control come into play by applying a brake to a spinning tire. Switching VDC off deactivates traction control.

Brakes and tires are both larger than those on the Impreza and appear appropriate for this small SUV.

Although the suspension is raised and has stouter parts, it feels much like a straight Impreza sedan, perhaps just a bit slower in response. The front antiroll bar is bigger to combat lean, wheels are set wider apart, the rear springs are softer to let the wheels move up and down more for off-highway traction, and the shock absorbers are stiffer, especially in front. The Crosstrek has the lowest center of gravity in its class, even more balanced than the VW Tiguan that we've driven with much enthusiasm around an autocross course. We can say the Crosstrek handles better than almost anything else with nearly nine inches of ground clearance. Perhaps because of this, the electronic stability control is aggressive, intervening before an XV gets out of shape rather than attempting to correct it once that point is reached.

Electric-assist steering is quite heavy on center, as if to improve directional stability, and lightens up with cornering. It needs 34.8 feet for a U-turn, which is better than average.

Road noise is medium to light, mostly from the tires on the grainy road surfaces. Wind noise from the mirrors is minimal.

It's rated to tow 1500 pounds, and it's not uncommon to see a Subaru pulling something, like a motorcycle trailer. Payload (including passengers, cargo, and roof load) is about 1200 pounds, equal or more than some full-size 4x4s.

Summary

Rugged, reliable, sporty, nimble, comfortable, fuel efficient, distinctive, offroad-ready, cargo-packing, and last but not least that great all-wheel drive, for less than \$22k with a 5-speed. Can not beat it.

[Autodata Solutions](#), Inc. is an authorized distributor of [NewCarTestDrive Reviews](#).