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Subaru Crosstrek Touring – Road Test

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Author:

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Subaru has one of the smallest model ranges on sale in Britain, but arguably it is also one of the best, says Robin Roberts (and WheelsWithinWales).

After building a reputation on performance in the World Rally Championship, Subaru has since focused on active leisure and lifestyle buyers and now is exclusively a four-wheel-drive producer.

Early in 2024, the new Subaru Crosstrek replaced the venerable XV model in the brand's UK range alongside the Forester, Outback and Solterra BEV and is available in Limited and Touring trim levels with prices starting at £34,345 and going up to £36,345 for the range-topping Touring variant, the version we tested.



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With its proven and highly effective all-wheel-drive transmission, there is a faster response time, more agile handling, and better control both on-and off-road. Driver-selectable X-MODE with Hill Descent Control maximises wheel control on slippery surfaces and steep inclines.

Touring variants upgrade to dual-function X-MODE for increased capability in a wider range of conditions and permits an experienced driver to finely tune traction through snow, mud and sand.

All models feature Incline Start Assist, which briefly holds the vehicle while the driver pulls away from a stop on a hill, along with Subaru Intelligent Drive with two selectable drive modes, Intelligent and Sport.

Inside there is now a 11.6-inch high-resolution touchscreen on all Crosstrek models, and all come with wireless Android Auto & Apple CarPlay. The onboard multimedia system also works as an information display with combination meter integration and on-screen controls for audio, climate, and vehicle functions.

Additional features include Bluetooth hands-free phone and audio streaming connectivity, AM/FM stereo and DAB audio, and a rear vision camera.

So the Crosstrek really lacks nothing you'd find in a much more expensive all-wheel-drive competitor.

The 2.0 litre engine is of a flat four-cylinder design as found in many Porsche models, which aids handling but tends to be thirstier and noisier than a conventional upright quad-cylinder block.

Our test car's performance was reasonable but not remarkable in a comparatively mild state of tune but its best feature was the intelligent four-wheel-drive transmission which could be switched along through the column paddles and offered the fine tuning modes for grip as well as economy and sport settings.



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The Subaru Crosstrek is very much a car for any reason or season.



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Everything worked very smoothly, the acceleration, braking and steering were positive and precise, it really gripped the road very well and didn't display any vices.

Hill ascent and descent aided ultimate control and the ground clearance of nearly nine-inches meant it could ease through many ruts and over rough ground without grounding.

Secondary controls grouped about the wheelspokes needed familiarisation while the usual stalks were well placed and worked silently. Ahead of the driver were the regular gauges, large and clearly marked and to the centre of the fascia the impressive multi-purpose infotainment screen combined essential and desirable features, showing them quickly and clearly.

Heating and ventilation worked well to fill the cabin with air and backed up by powered windows and a sunroof.

Oddments room was reasonable throughout and the boot's regular shape was easy to load and empty with a low cill and quick folding seatbacks almost tripled volume.



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Access to seats was also easy and the room inside was very good with the front pair having a wide adjustment range. All were very well shaped and supporting and combined with the long travel springs made for a very smooth experience over any surface.

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The Crosstrek did not roll about to any great degree and it stayed planted on the road in a reassuring manner, instantly coping with changes to grip and incline.

Visibility was very good with a low waistline and deep windows, long wide beam headlights and excellent wipers.

The engine did sound busy at higher revs and some surfaces introduced more noise into the cabin but otherwise it was a pleasant environment and experience.

The flat-four engine design is not the best for fuel saving and some may think the 42 mpg achieved could have been better but it's acceptable unless you're a particularly hard driver.

VERDICT

As it stands, the Subaru Crosstrek Touring is very competitively priced against other 4WD rivals, offers a lot of sophistication and style and delivers a very comfortable experience.

For: Very comfortable, well equipped, good soft-road ability and ground clearance.

Against: Average economy and performance, modest luggage space, some engine noise, high emissions, high road tax cost.



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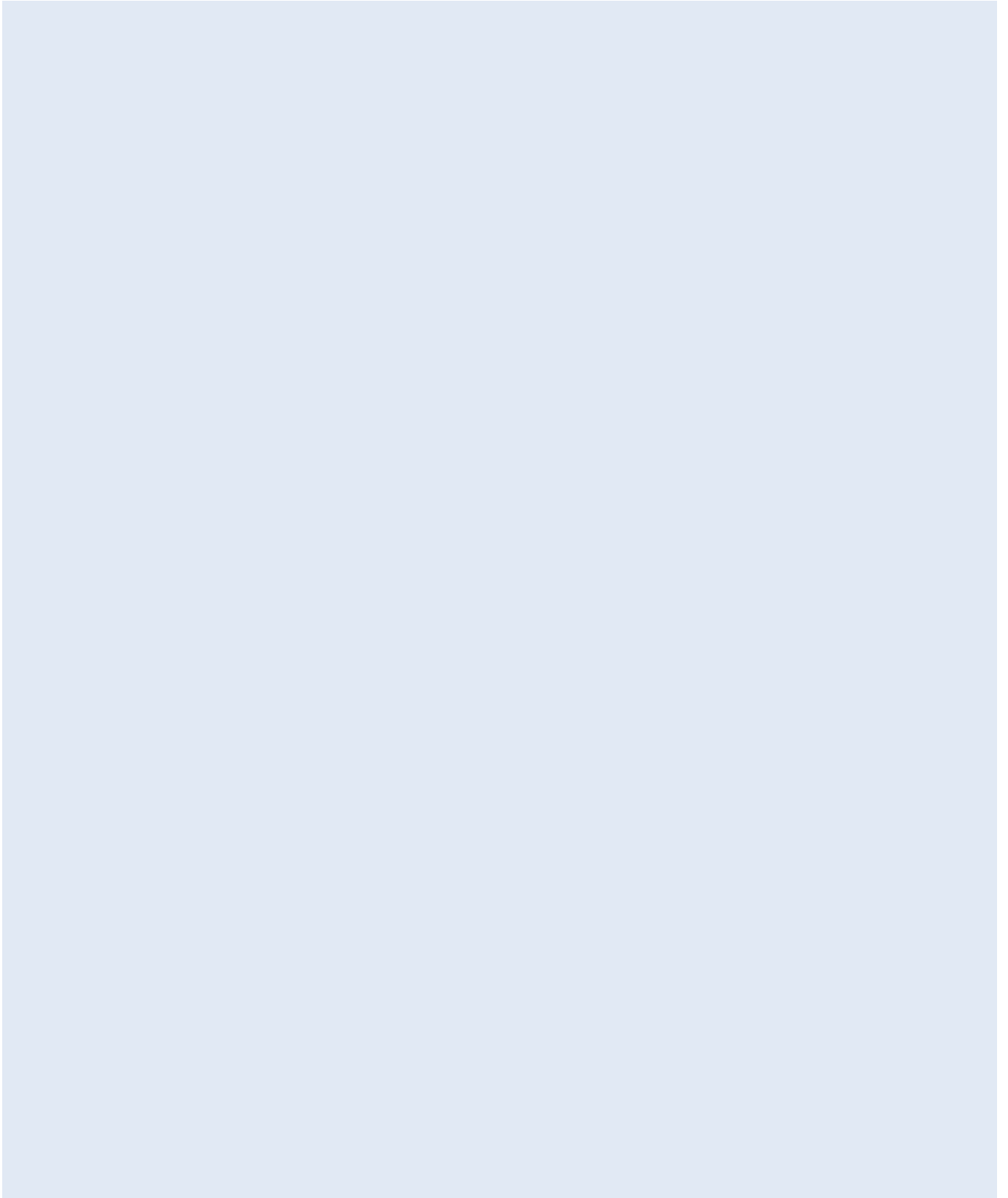
FAST FACTS

Model: Subaru Crosstrek Touring



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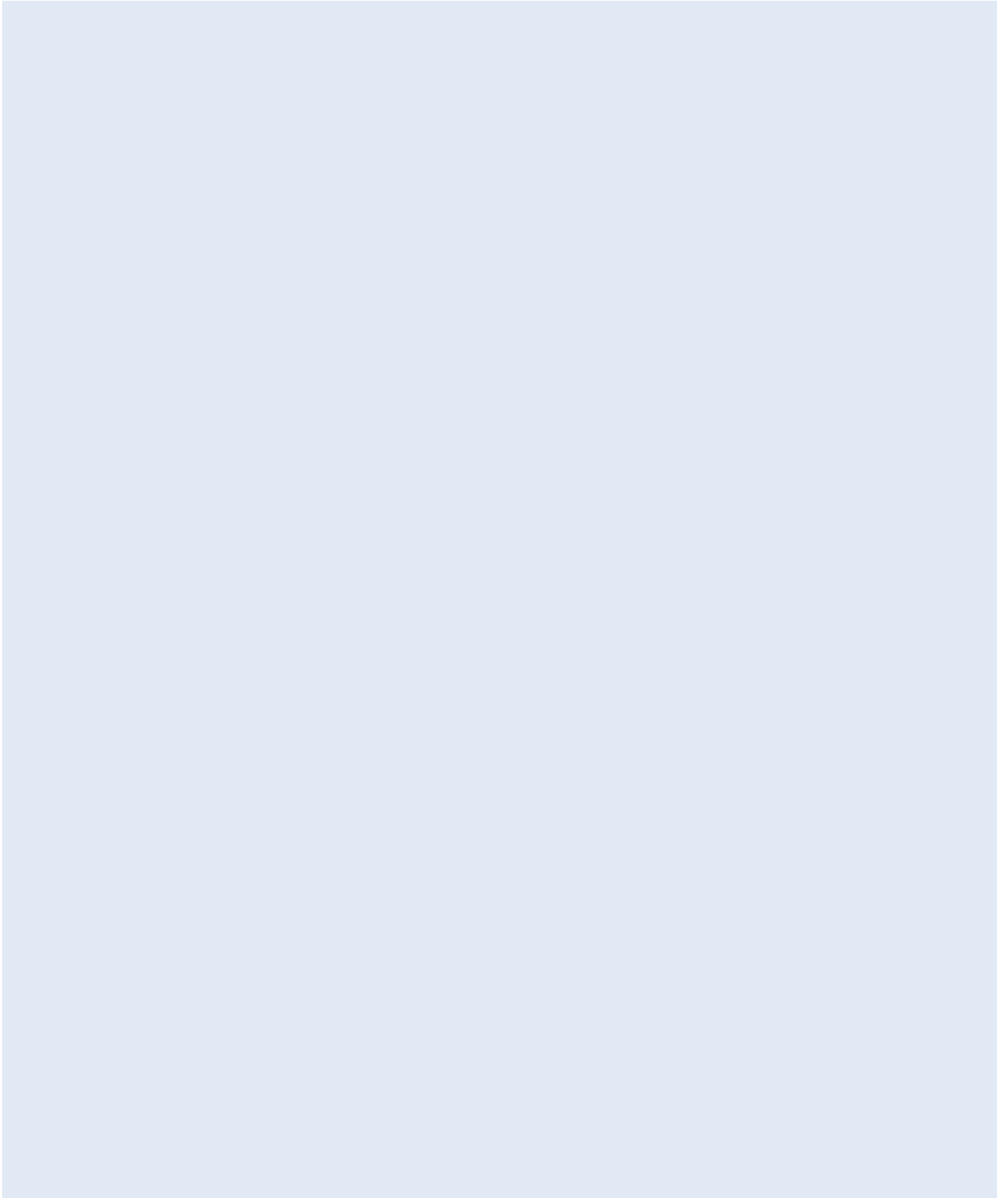
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Price: £36,345

Mechanical: 136 PS 4 cyl 2.0 petrol-hybrid engine, 4WD 8 speed CVT

Max Speed: 123 mph

0 - 62 mph: 10.8 secs

Combined MPG: 42 mpg

Insurance Group: 20

CO2 emissions: 174 g/km

Bik rating: 37%, £1,085FY, £180SR

Warranty: 3 years/ 60,000 miles, 8 years/ 100,000 miles battery

Size: L 4.50 m (14.76 ft), W 1.80 m (5.91 ft), H 1.60 m (5.25 ft)

Bootspace: 315 to 922 litres (11.12 to 32.56 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,703 kg (3,754 lb)