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Subaru Levorg ST GT First Impressions

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Our man at the wheel is Robin Roberts...

It has been a long time coming but at last the Subaru Levorg is now on sale.

The natural successor to the popular Legacy Tourer is more compact outside but bigger inside. The car comes to the UK in a single GT trim level, with continuously variable belt drive automatic transmission and a new direct injection turbo-petrol "boxer" 1.6 litre engine - which puts out the same power as the existing 2.5 boxer.

It gets a good equipment list befitting its GT suffix, including automatic headlights and wipers, 18-inch dark alloys and metallic paint, privacy glass, leather heated sports seats, four USB ports with a 7-inch touchscreen infotainment system (including Starlink connectivity), and a useful rear parking camera incorporated in a cross-over alert system.



Subaru PR manager Robin Bartlett said the Levorg will be a rare model with just 500 expected in a full year. "Levorg is more exclusive than many Sports Tourers and with Subaru's history in all-wheel-drive we believe it will be popular with the country set who need to keep going in winter months but who want something more manageable than a big 4x4 the rest of the year," he added.

Subaru currently has 74 dealers but wants to gradually increase this towards 100 in a couple of years. This year, it expects to have sold 3,250 vehicles, a 20% rise over 12 months ago, and increase to 3,500 in 2016 despite not having many new models coming along.

Subaru models are particularly popular with drivers aged 40 to 60 years who still enjoy driving and who want dependable and easy to handle cars with a good winter credentials.

The Levorg five-door, five-seater is not a full sized estate but a Sports Tourer type with rounded rear roof-line, so there is a compromise on total available capacity and as it stands that is just under 1450 litres, with a low loadbed floor and easy side access.





At the other end, the new engine is a hard worker, pulling well when modestly loaded with two people for test but it's not a GT in the performance sense and using the full engine power range with the CVT it was a thirsty car.

The electric power steering has a reasonable amount of feel and provides a good turning circle, while the Levorg slowed and stopped without drama or effort, and it securely held on a slope.

Ride was on the firmer edge of comfort and generally coped well with most bumps but a few did jar the interior and I was grateful for the very well shaped and supporting seats with their uncommon cushion having a 'tilt angle', which is ideal for women drivers (for further information please refer to 'The Biology of Women', by Ethel Sloane).





The road noise generated by the wheels and tyres intruded to some extent into the usual calmness of the car, while the engine noise added to this at higher revs.

Visibility was good to the front and sides, slightly less so when reversing and the standard parking camera was a necessity to avoid items behind - and this model gets the rear vehicle detection alert system. Wipers were good but there was no opportunity to test the effectiveness of the LED headlights.

For the driver, the fascia was simple and clean with well laid out dials and secondary switches, a very good air conditioning system and plenty of oddments room in the front and back. Access was good, there was plenty of room, particularly headroom in the back, and the seats were thickly padded in the rear.

VERDICT

With only one engine and transmission available, Subaru has not done full justice to the potential in the Levorg and I can see previous Legacy owners looking elsewhere in a market that has evolved and spread.

Make no mistake, the Levorg is a good capable car, but is no longer as unique as the Legacy.



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For: Excellent seats and roomy, good equipment, rides and handles well

Against: Fuel consumption, road noise, drab interior, no manual version.



Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in brief:

Subaru Levorg ST GT

Engine: 1600cc flat four-cylinder, twin overhead camshaft turbocharged petrol engine

Transmission: Continuously variable automatic transmission with all-wheel-drive



Power: 170 PS @ 4,800 to 6,500 rpm

Torque: 249 Nm (184 Nm) @ 1,800 to 4,800 rpm

0-62mph: 8.9sec

Top speed: 130mph

Fuel consumption: 27mpg on test (claimed 'Combined'. 39.8mpg)

CO2 emissions: 164g/km

VED: Band G

BIK: 27%

Dimensions: L 4.69 m (15.39 ft); W 1.78 m (5.84 ft); H 1.49 m (4.89 ft), boot 522 to 1446 litres (18.43 to 51.06 cu.ft)

Kerb weight: 1,637 Kg (3,609 lb)

Insurance group: 19E

Warranty: 5yrs/100,000 miles

Price: £27,495