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## Subaru Solterra Touring – Road Test

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Subaru's first all-electric model – the Solterra Touring test driven by Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).

Subaru made its name in Britain with some compact go-anywhere estates before its reputation accelerated through the World Rally Championship.



Both disciplines relied on a thoroughly designed and engineered all-wheel-drive system which would put much more expensive and complicated if less reliable rivals to shame.

Subaru were better where it matters, as their marketing speak says, but that's not to decry the new generation and their interpretation of a modern SUV with its pure electric platform and powertrain. Essentially a joint development with Toyota, the Subaru Solterra fulfills many roles with ease and ability.

It's not a particularly inexpensive 4WD EV but it's not as pricey as some competitors and will undoubtedly widen the brand's appeal to new owners.

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The first all electric Subaru Solterra scored a maximum five stars in the Euro NCAP tests, principally on its driver assist systems but also for the protection afforded to adults and children inside its five-seater SUV body which has a coupé styled rear end.

It stays true to Subaru tradition and builds on the all-wheel-drive technology for which the brand is famous, and unlike some SUVs it stands with 21 cms (8+ in) of ground clearance, meaning it can easily take on wintry roads and some mild off-road conditions.

The Solterra comes with domestic and fast charge cables to utilise overnight recharging, typically 4 hours on a fast charger or just 30 minutes on a rapid point.

The Solterra is sold in Limited trim from £52,495 or the higher specified Touring beginning at £55,495 with a £550 optional special paint finish on top. The Limited has a slightly longer range than its stablemate Touring which comes with a fixed long sunroof, heated leather seats and steering wheel, powered passenger seat and tailgate as well as wireless phone charging.

Both have adaptive LED headlights, auto wipers, privacy glass, heated front and rear seats and steering wheel, keyless entry, a 7.0-inch digital instrument cluster and 12.3-inch



infotainment screen, powered tailgate, Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, sat-nav, and a full swathe of safety equipment.

The 'Touring' spec brings larger, 20-inch alloy wheels, leather upholstery, wireless smartphone charging, a panoramic glass roof and a Harman Kardon sound system.

The powertrain is a reasonable-sized battery with fairly conventional electric motors each end to drive front and rear wheels while the on-board computer monitors where the grip is best utilised to keep going in adverse conditions.

Selection is simply a push down and turn knob on the central console and away you go. Secondary switches allow the driver to choose eco, normal or sport performance and familiar paddles on the column will increase or decrease the regenerative braking effort so it becomes a single-pedal operation if preferred.

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Auto and manual parking assist is there as well but if you need them the brakes are light yet powerful and the steering is speed progressive and gives a fairly good turning circle without any kick-back at speed.

The larger wheels in the Touring pack do produce a firm ride but it's never uncomfortable or hard and the generous seats throughout have deep cushions with nice bolsters on the powered front pair and a very good adjustment range.

Access is trouble-free into the cabin and you feel spoiled by the powered tailgate opening and closing to use an average sized boot which can be increased in capacity with folding rear seatbacks.

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Drivers will appreciate the simple and clear variable display immediately ahead of the wheel



and the proximity of secondary switches on the spokes, but they need familiarisation to find every time. A big screen in the centre of the fascia covers infotainment including mobile phone connections and content, and the sound system was awesome.

Heating and ventilation did a very good job on all but the hottest days during our test and then it needed time to work down but it did keep the chill going once it hit base.

Oddments room was good for a family car with a lot of rear space in particular and twin points.

Visibility was a bit restricted for shorter people in the rear to see outside and the narrow back window may irritate but big mirrors with sensors on the doors were useful and worked well with the car's comprehensive camera panorama.

Noise levels were low, the tyre rumble and suspension bump thump being most noticeable in the near absence of engine and transmission whine.

Despite Subaru's sporting heritage, the Solterra did not feel particularly agile or sharp handling. It was firmly planted on the road and had no worrying bad manners. It just felt heavy.

## VERDICT

The Subaru Solterra Touring's high safety rating and comprehensive equipment list give it an advantage and appeal in an increasingly important sector of the market.



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**For:** Extremely comfortable seats and ride, smooth powertrain and good controls with brisk performance, fair range and reasonable off-road ability.

**Against:** Unexciting interior trim, some road noises, really needs those sensors and cameras with corners out of sight but driver attention monitor is too sensitive.

## FAST FACTS

Model: Subaru Solterra Touring EV





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Price: £55,495

Mechanical: 160 kW twin-motors, 71,4 kWh battery, 4WD

Max Speed: 100 mph

0 - 62mph: 6.9 secs

Range: 240 miles

Insurance Group: 47



CO2 emissions: Zero

Tax costs: Bik rating 2%, VED £ZeroFY, £ZeroSR

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

Size: L 4.69 m (15.39 ft), W 1.86 m (6.10 ft), H 1.65 m (5.41 ft)

Bootspace: 452 litres (15.96 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 2,020 kg (4,453 lb)