

Subaru Forester enters the Wilderness for 2026

The Subaru Forester is like the odd middle child in the Subaru lineup. Sandwiched in between the more popular Outback and compact size Solterra, the Forester has always had a solid following and those loyal to the Subaru brand continue to find it appealing. Last year, Subaru redesigned the Forester, and this week, one is sitting in my driveway.

The Subaru Forester, now in its sixth iteration, has been around since 1997. Now in its sophomore year, today's Forester continues with the original recipe in that it is a five-passenger, 2-row compact SUV.

I still have a hard time spotting the new Forester from the old one. While Subaru states that every exterior body panel on the Forester is new, the only way for me to spot the new from the old is if they are side-by-side, or from the front, where the new one has slimmer headlights and a larger grille, giving the Forester a more modern look.

While not many changes were expected for the 2026 Forester, one thing Subaru has done is bring back the Wilderness trim level, which is starting to become a popular sub-brand for Subaru. Going with the

Wilderness, the Forester gets an increase ride height giving it 9.3 inches of ground clearance, a revised transmission tuning for better off-road responsiveness, larger all-terrain tires, and unique gold accents.

Inside, the Forester feels modern and simple with a very easy-to-learn layout. And it's fun as there are cool little Easter eggs scattered around, like paw prints embossed on the interior door panels and a small bird printed on the windshield. There is a large 11.6-inch tablet-style touchscreen (standard on all Foresters except for the base model, which gets a pair of 7-inch screens) that has large, legible touch-sensitive selections. New for 2026 is a redesigned center console design. It now has a smartphone charging pad ahead of the now larger front cupholders, along with a redesigned shifter that sits closer to the driver.

Under the hood resides the same 2.5-liter flat four-cylinder engine as before, making 180 horsepower and 178 lb-ft of torque. It is mated to a continuously variable automatic transmission (CVT) and sends power to all four wheels. There is a Hybrid version that pairs the engine with an electric motor, increasing power to 194 horses.



The tester is the new Wilderness trim, carrying an MSRP of \$42,035. Pricing for the 2026 Forester starts at \$31,445. If you prefer luxury over adventure, the top-of-line Touring is available and comes in at \$43,045.

Of course, a key element to owning a Subaru is its ability to take you just about anywhere. And with the Forester's Symmetrical All-Wheel Drive System, it can. This system consists of three components: full-time All-Wheel Drive (AWD), a horizontally

opposed boxer engine, and a four-wheel independent suspension. All three pieces working together provide a confident feeling behind the wheel of the Forester, regardless of if you are on a road or not. A nice thing about Subaru's All-Wheel Drive system is that because it is working all the time, there are no buttons to push or levers to pull, unless you find yourself in extreme conditions, in which case you can enable X-Mode. X-Mode controls the engine throttle, keeps the transmission in gear longer and maximizes traction to all wheels. *Continues on next page*

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