



Outback 2.5i Limited

Photos by Michael Cooney

## 2010 Subaru Outback 2.5i Limited and Legacy 3.6R Ruling the All Wheel Drive Niche

It's easy to see why Subarus are such popular cars in inclement New England and the Rocky Mountain states. And why these two all-new designs should be even bigger hits.

When I reviewed the then all-new Subaru Forester 14 months ago, I gave my neighbors a ride in it because they were looking for something practical and good on gas that sat a bit higher, and they didn't want a big SUV. A week later, they bought a new Forester, and still tell me they "love it!"

Maybe Subaru's on to something here. Take this Outback, for example. Even with its base 2.5L, 170-hp 4-cylinder mated to a CVT automatic, acceleration is satisfying because it weighs less than 3,600 pounds. It sips fuel responsibly, and has a quiet, comfortable ride. And, of course, it has All Wheel Drive for added security and handling ability when things get slippery or you're driving on dirt or gravel.

Outside, the new Outback is a handsome car. It's basically a wagon with more ground clearance—you'll sit a bit higher than in most cars—yet it's sized right for easy parking. My only real complaint with both these Subarus was that the front door detents are too weak. On the moderate

incline in front of our house, the doors on both would not hold open.

From the driver's seat, you'll find attractive instruments, cruise and stereo controls on the steering wheel, and quite comfortable seats. The Limited edition adds leather and heated front seats.

With a soft-ish suspension and all-season tires, cornering hard produced moderate body roll and tire squeal but AWD helped maintain its composure. It can be hustled through the canyons at a decent clip if need be, and when you hear the tires complaining you'll know when to back off a notch.

On the road, wind and tire noise is low, making for relaxed cruising. The CVT automatic seems a perfect match for this engine, helping provide good acceleration when needed while letting the engine loaf along at about 2,150 rpm at 70 mph.

Subaru's redesigned Legacy sedan is another handsome car, more stylish than last year's model. Inside, same story. Attention to detail shows throughout with the more substantial look and feel of quality materials and pleasing design. Plus,


this had my favorite combination of comfortable, fabric covered seats with front seat heaters. Mmmmm... And in back, loads of legroom. Everyone should be happy.

This Legacy had the 3.6L 256 horsepower engine with 5-speed auto. Both models give you a choice of regular or turbo 4-cylinder engines, along with this example's 6-cylinder unit. With that, it's a quick car—lots of punch when you nail the throttle. The higher performance comes with a 4-mpg fuel consumption penalty, according to the EPA. And that's about what I experienced.

Combined with AWD, you've got a car that manages both ends well—a comfortable road car that also handles competently with fairly high limits. I pushed it very hard through a set of tight hairpin curves and although the suspension is a bit soft initially, it takes a set and carries you through, tires squealing all the way. It's a fun (and with AWD, safer) car in which to explore your abilities.

On both Subarus when you use the remote locking feature, instead of a blast from the horn you get a polite, low-volume "peep." Thank you, Subaru.

This Subaru Outback is EPA-rated at 22-city, 29-highway mpg. I got an exemplary 25.5 mpg. Its window sticker showed \$32,498 including options and destination. The Legacy 6-cylinder sedan is EPA-rated at 18-city, 25-highway mpg. I got 22 mpg—not bad at all. It was priced at \$29,206 with options and destination.

Kudos to Subaru for major improvements in style, quality and value. This brand may not come to mind first if you're shopping for a mid-size sedan or wagon. But as more drivers discover how good these all-new models are, that is bound to change. 

Mike Cooney is a lifelong auto enthusiast living and writing in Southern California. Comments are welcome at [Michael@GlobalBrand.com](mailto:Michael@GlobalBrand.com).



Legacy 3.6R