

10 Best SUVs You Can Buy Right Now

These high-scoring models do well in performance, reliability, safety, and owner satisfaction

By Jon Linkov
December 1, 2021

SUVs continue to be wildly popular in the U.S., and for good reasons. These higher-riding vehicles feature some characteristics most cars lack, such as a commanding view of the road, available (or sometimes standard) all-wheel drive, some level of off-roading ability, and a more rugged appearance.

So what are the very best SUVs of any size you can buy today? To find out, we compiled a list of SUVs ranked by top Overall Scores, according to Consumer Reports' ratings. Our Overall Score encompasses a vehicle's performance in our road tests, which include more than 50 detailed evaluations at CR's Auto Test Center; the latest results from the reliability and owner satisfaction sections of CR's exclusive Annual Auto Surveys; the availability of forward collision warning (FCW) and automatic emergency braking (AEB) with pedestrian detection; and results from government and insurance-industry crash tests if they're available. We also note the availability of blind spot warning (BSW).

The SUVs listed below are ranked from first to 10th. We excluded luxury models, which tend to be more expensive.

CR QUICK TAKE

● RECOMMENDED

97

2022 Kia Telluride

CR MPG: Overall 21 / City 14 / Hwy 30 mpg

#1 of 14: Mid-sized sport-utility vehicles 3-row

- ROAD TEST
- PREDICTED RELIABILITY
- PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

Kia's three-row Telluride isn't just the best mid-sized SUV, it's the top-rated SUV of any size. It has a slick 291-hp V6 paired with a smooth-shifting eight-speed automatic transmission. It rides comfortably and the cabin is quiet, though the big Kia exhibits more body lean through corners than some of its competitors do. The interior is roomy and comes with several well-thought-out details, such as one-touch fold/slide second-row seats. The controls are easy to use, and the Telluride offers a lot of features for the price. Towing capacity is a reasonably stout 5,000 pounds. Standard active safety features include FCW, city-speed AEB with pedestrian detection, and BSW.

CR QUICK TAKE

● RECOMMENDED

93

2022 Hyundai Tucson

CR MPG: Overall 35 / City 29 / Hwy 40 mpg

#2 of 25: Compact sport-utility vehicles

- GREEN CHOICE
- ROAD TEST
- PREDICTED RELIABILITY
- PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

The redesigned fourth-generation Tucson is much more substantial than the mediocre model it replaces. While both versions performed well in our tests, the hybrid is particularly impressive. It pairs a turbo four-cylinder engine and electric assist to put out a combined 226 hp while returning an excellent 35 mpg overall. The standard 187-hp, 2.5-liter four-cylinder and eight-speed automatic we also tested returned 26 mpg. The ride is firm yet steady, handling is responsive and secure, and the nicely trimmed cabin is relatively quiet. The back seat is roomy and the cargo area is generous for the class. Controls are very easy to use. Standard active safety and driver assist features include FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, BSW, LDW, LKA, automatic high beams, and a rear-occupant alert. Adaptive cruise control and remote parking are optional.

CR QUICK TAKE

● RECOMMENDED

90

2022 Subaru Forester

CR MPG: Overall 28 / City 20 / Hwy 38 mpg

#1 of 25: Compact sport-utility vehicles

- ROAD TEST
- PREDICTED RELIABILITY
- PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

This sensible, no-nonsense small SUV boasts a roomy interior, great fuel economy, and plenty of standard equipment. The 2.5-liter four-cylinder engine combined with a continuously variable transmission yields an excellent 28 mpg overall. Acceleration

from the 182-hp engine isn't exactly exhilarating, though, and it gets loud when pushed. The cabin has plenty of space, with a particularly generous rear seat for a small SUV, along with easy access. The controls are simple to use, including an infotainment system that's compatible with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay. Subaru's standard EyeSight safety suite includes FCW and AEB with pedestrian detection, but BSW costs extra.

CR QUICK TAKE

RECOMMENDED

88

2022 Toyota RAV4 Prime

CR MPG: Overall 72 / City 74 / Hwy 71 mpgge

#3 of 25: Compact sport-utility vehicles

- GREEN CHOICE
- ROAD TEST
- PREDICTED RELIABILITY
- PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

This plug-in hybrid version of the RAV4 is quick and quiet, with a more comfortable ride and a far nicer interior than its RAV4 and RAV4 hybrid siblings. The electric drive and 2.5-liter four-cylinder engine combine to put out 302 hp. In most situations, the immediate delivery of the added electric power keeps the gas engine from having to rev high, where it can become noisy. We were able to drive the Prime about 40 miles on electric power alone, and we got 34 mpg overall when it transitioned to hybrid mode. It takes almost 5 hours to charge the battery on a 240-volt outlet. FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, BSW, and rear cross traffic warning are all standard.

CR QUICK TAKE

RECOMMENDED

88

2022 Toyota Highlander

CR MPG: Overall 22 / City 14 / Hwy 32 mpg

#2 of 14: Midsize sport-utility vehicles 3-row

- ROAD TEST
- PREDICTED RELIABILITY
- PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

When Toyota redesigned the Highlander back in 2020, it looked a lot like the previous model. But there were many incremental improvements made to this popular—and high-scoring—midsize SUV. The standard 295-hp V6 serves up lots of passing power, and the eight-speed automatic shifts smoothly. But the biggest news is the hybrid model's excellent 35 mpg overall, which is better than many smaller SUVs. Handling agility improved while the ride remains comfortable. Interior fit and finish is also better. The Highlander's front seats are comfortable for many body types, and the second-row bench seat provides good support and affords a lot of legroom and elbowroom. The third row is snug, low, and firm. While FCW and AEB with pedestrian detection are standard, BSW is optional on the base trim.

CR QUICK TAKE

RECOMMENDED

87

2022 Hyundai Palisade

CR MPG: Overall 21 / City 15 / Hwy 29 mpg

#3 of 14: Midsize sport-utility vehicles 3-row

- ROAD TEST
- PREDICTED RELIABILITY
- PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

The three-row Palisade midsize SUV shares many components with the Kia Telluride, including its smooth 291-hp V6 paired with an eight-speed automatic. The cabin is roomy and very quiet. The Palisade rides comfortably out on the road, but handling isn't particularly nimble. The interior benefits from simple controls and thoughtful details, such as readily accessible USB ports for the rear passengers and a handy release for the second-row seat to allow access to the third row. We don't like the unintuitive push-button gear selector, though. Several active safety features come standard, including FCW and city-speed AEB with pedestrian detection. Hyundai has added standard BSW for the 2022 model year.

CR QUICK TAKE

RECOMMENDED

86

2022 Subaru Crosstrek

CR MPG: Overall 29 / City 20 / Hwy 39 mpg

#1 of 15: Subcompact sport-utility vehicles

- ROAD TEST
- PREDICTED RELIABILITY
- PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

The Crosstrek is an appealing option for buyers who want a small, versatile SUV. It delivers good fuel economy—29 mpg overall—from a 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine mated to a continuously variable transmission. The Crosstrek isn't very quick, though, and when drivers mash the throttle to accelerate, the engine gets loud. A more powerful 2.5-liter is a newly available option. There's also a plug-in hybrid version, but while its 33 mpg overall fuel economy is quite good, the high purchase price hurts its value. All Crosstreks deliver impressive ride comfort along with competent and enjoyable handling on curvy roads. The infotainment system is also easy to use. FCW and AEB with pedestrian detection are standard with the automatic transmission but aren't offered with the manual. BSW and RCTW are optional.

CR QUICK TAKE

RECOMMENDED

85

2022 Subaru Outback

CR MPG: Overall 24 / City 16 / Hwy 32 mpg

#1 of 11: Midsize sport-utility vehicles

- ROAD TEST
- PREDICTED RELIABILITY
- PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

The Outback looks more like a raised wagon than a traditional compact or midsize SUV, yet it's a formidable competitor for either. It has a solid feel, with a very comfortable ride that outshines even some luxury SUVs. The elevated ground clearance and standard all-wheel drive help make the Outback ready to tackle light off-road duties. We were impressed with its handling agility in our accident-avoidance maneuver, which simulates swerving around a vehicle or an obstacle in the road. The standard four-cylinder engine gets good fuel economy but becomes loud when pushed; the uplevel 260-hp, turbocharged engine (denoted as XT in trim names) grants the Outback effortless punch and a quieter demeanor. Standard active safety features include FCW and AEB, but BSW is optional.

22 mpg overall in our tests. The ride is comfortable and the well-finished cabin is commendably quiet. Though second-row seating is generous, the third row is tight. Mazda's dial-controlled infotainment system takes time to master, but it's compatible with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay. FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, and BSW are standard.

CR QUICK TAKE

84

RECOMMENDED

2022 Mazda CX-9

CR MPG: Overall 22 / City 15 / Hwy 32 mpg

#4 of 14: Midsize sport-utility vehicles 3-row

- ROAD TEST
- PREDICTED RELIABILITY
- PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

The stylish Mazda CX-9 is quite engaging to drive, thanks to nimble handling that makes it feel like a smaller vehicle. Power comes from a responsive 227-hp, 2.5-liter turbo four-cylinder mated to a smooth six-speed automatic transmission. We got

CR QUICK TAKE

83

RECOMMENDED

2022 Chevrolet Traverse

CR MPG: Overall 20 / City 14 / Hwy 28 mpg

#5 of 14: Midsize sport-utility vehicles 3-row

- ROAD TEST
- PREDICTED RELIABILITY
- PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

The Traverse has a quiet interior, a very comfortable ride, and responsive handling, which make it a viable alternative to full-sized SUVs that have ponderous handling and a thirst for fuel. It's also a competent challenger to established three-row midsize SUVs. The 3.6-liter V6 engine supplies quick acceleration and gets 20 mpg overall. Front- and second-row captain's seats are comfortable, and the third row is roomy. An eight-passenger configuration is available on lower trims. We like the intuitive infotainment system. For 2022 the Traverse gets exterior and interior styling updates, along with standard FCW and AEB with pedestrian detection. BSW is not standard on all trims, however.