

10 Best SUVs You Can Buy Right Now

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

By Mike Monticello
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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; the latest results from the reliability and owner satisfaction sections of CR's exclusive Annual Auto Surveys; the availability of forward collision warning, automatic emergency braking with pedestrian detection, and blind spot warning; and results from government and insurance-industry crash tests if they're available.

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

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of its competitors. 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 5,000 pounds. Standard advanced safety systems include forward collision warning (FCW), automatic emergency braking (AEB) with pedestrian detection, and blind spot warning (BSW).

CR QUICK TAKE

87

✓ RECOMMENDED

2020 Hyundai Palisade

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

#2 of 20: Midsize sport-utility vehicles

● PREDICTED RELIABILITY

● PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

The three-row Palisade midsize SUV shares many components with the Kia Telluride, including its smooth 291-hp V6 that's paired with an eight-speed automatic transmission. The cabin is roomy and very quiet. The Palisade also 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 advanced safety features come standard, including FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, lane keeping assistance (LKA), driver monitoring, and rear occupant alert.

CR QUICK TAKE

92

✓ RECOMMENDED

2020 Kia Telluride

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

#1 of 20: Midsize sport-utility vehicles

● PREDICTED RELIABILITY

● PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

Kia's three-row Telluride is not just the best midsize SUV, it's the top-rated non-luxury 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

CR QUICK TAKE

87

✓ RECOMMENDED

2020 Subaru Outback

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

#1 of 1: All-wheel drive Wagons

● PREDICTED RELIABILITY

● PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

The Outback looks more like a raised wagon than a traditional compact or mid-sized SUV, yet it's a formidable competitor for either. The Outback 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. The standard four-cylinder engine does the job and gets good fuel economy but becomes loud when pushed; the up-level 260-hp, turbocharged engine (denoted as XT in trim names) grants the Outback effortless punch and a quieter demeanor. Advanced driver assistance features including FCW, AEB, lane departure warning (LDW), and adaptive cruise control (ACC) come standard.

CR QUICK TAKE



RECOMMENDED
2020 Mazda CX-9

CR MPG: Overall 22 mpg / City 15 / Hwy 32 mpg
#4 of 20: Mid-sized sport-utility vehicles
PREDICTED RELIABILITY
PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

Mazda's stylish three-row SUV is quite engaging to drive, with nimble handling that makes it feel like a smaller vehicle. Power for this mid-sized SUV comes from a responsive, free-revving 227-hp, 2.5-liter turbocharged four-cylinder engine mated to a smooth six-speed automatic. Fuel economy, at 22 mpg overall, is slightly better than many of its rivals. The ride is comfortable, and the well-finished cabin is commendably quiet. Though second-row seating is generous, the third row is predictably tight. Mazda's dial-controlled infotainment system takes time to master. Android Auto and Apple CarPlay compatibility is a new addition to the infotainment system. All CX-9s come with standard FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, BSW, rear cross traffic warning (RCTW), LDW, and LKA.

CR QUICK TAKE



RECOMMENDED
2020 Toyota Highlander

CR MPG: Overall 22 mpg / City 14 / Hwy 32 mpg
#3 of 20: Mid-sized sport-utility vehicles
PREDICTED RELIABILITY
PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

The all-new, fourth-generation Highlander looks a lot like the previous model, but there are many incremental improvements throughout this mid-sized SUV. The eight-speed automatic transmission provides smoother shifts, handling is more agile, and the ride remains comfortable. Interior fit and finish has been upgraded, too. A smooth and punchy 295-hp V6 serves up lots of power for passing or climbing hills, and there is also a 243-hp

hybrid four-cylinder available. 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 elbow room. The third row is snug, low, and firm. Toyota has stepped up its infotainment game by making Android Auto and Apple CarPlay compatibility standard. The Toyota Safety Sense 2.0 suite includes standard FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, LDW, LKA, and ACC.

CR QUICK TAKE



RECOMMENDED
2020 Subaru Crosstrek

CR MPG: Overall 29 mpg / City 20 / Hwy 39 mpg
#1 of 12: Subcompact sport-utility vehicles
PREDICTED RELIABILITY
PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

The Crosstrek is an appealing option for buyers who want a small, versatile SUV. It delivers good fuel economy—at 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 plug-in hybrid version is also available. Though the hybrid's fuel economy is quite good, at 33 mpg overall, its high purchase price hurts its value. Both Crosstrek models have impressive ride comfort along with competent and enjoyable handling on curvy roads. The infotainment system is also easy to use. We highly recommend the optional EyeSight driver assistance system, which includes AEB, LDW, and LKA.

CR QUICK TAKE



RECOMMENDED
2020 Mazda CX-5

CR MPG: Overall 24 mpg / City 17 / Hwy 33 mpg
#2 of 16: Compact sport-utility vehicles
PREDICTED RELIABILITY
PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

With this second-generation CX-5, Mazda retained most of the sporty handling that made the original vehicle enjoyable, but it's now more mature, with vastly improved ride comfort, better noise isolation, and a higher-quality cabin. The standard four-cylinder engine and six-speed automatic transmission make for a reasonably peppy powertrain. Handling is responsive, and the compliant ride is among the best in the compact class. Plenty of soft-touch surfaces, some detailed stitching, and chrome trim add to the interior's upmarket ambience. Both the front and rear seats are comfortable. There is a learning curve to mastering the infotainment system, though, and rear and side visibility are a bit compromised by the car's styling. FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, BSW, RCTW, LKW, and LKA come standard on every CX-5.

CR QUICK TAKE

84

RECOMMENDED
2020 Subaru Forester

CR MPG: Overall 28 mpg / City 20 / Hwy 38 mpg
#1 of 16: Compact sport-utility vehicles
PREDICTED RELIABILITY
PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

The Forester is a well-executed small SUV that boasts a roomy interior, great fuel economy, and plenty of standard equipment. Subaru made a lot of improvements when the Forester was redesigned for the 2019 model year without altering the SUV’s sensible, no-nonsense character. The 2.5-liter four-cylinder engine combined with a continuously variable transmission yields an excellent 28 mpg overall. Acceleration isn’t exactly exhilarating, though, and the engine gets loud when pushed. The cabin has plenty of space, with a particularly generous rear seat and easy access. The controls are simple to use, including the infotainment system that is compatible with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay. Subaru’s EyeSight safety suite of FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, LDW, and LKA comes standard, but BSW and RCTW cost extra.

The Ascent is an extremely functional, sensible, and easy-to-live-with three-row midsize SUV. Unlike most of its rivals, which offer a V6, the Ascent uses a turbocharged four-cylinder with 260 hp. This engine produces plenty of power for daily driving and gets a competitive 22 mpg overall, although we’re not fans of the jumpy throttle during initial takeoff from a stop. The Ascent’s suspension mops up bumps with extraordinary plushness. It’s not the most agile SUV in corners, but it remains steady and secure at its handling limits. The cabin is quiet and the second-row captain’s chairs are roomy and comfortable places to spend time on a road trip. Even the third-row space is relatively livable. Standard driver assistance features include FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, LDW, LKA, and ACC, with BSW and RCTW optional.

CR QUICK TAKE

79

RECOMMENDED
2020 Ford Edge

CR MPG: Overall 22 mpg / City 15 / Hwy 31 mpg
#6 of 20: Midsize sport-utility vehicles
PREDICTED RELIABILITY
PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

The Edge is a pleasant, well-rounded two-row midsize SUV that is distinguished by its fine handling agility, steady ride, quiet interior, and premium cabin feel that can rival some luxury models. The standard 2.0-liter turbocharged four-cylinder engine delivers strong yet quiet acceleration, though the eight-speed automatic transmission doesn’t shift as smoothly as the previous six-speed. The spacious cabin provides comfortable quarters, front and rear, and cargo room is generous. However, the driving position can feel cramped because the left footrest sits too close to the driver. The Edge has easy-to-use controls, including the rotary gear selector and Sync 3 infotainment system. Ford’s Co-Pilot 360 safety suite includes standard FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, BSW, RCTW, LDW,

CR QUICK TAKE

82

RECOMMENDED
2020 Subaru Ascent

CR MPG: Overall 22 mpg / City 14 / Hwy 32 mpg
#5 of 20: Midsize sport-utility vehicles
PREDICTED RELIABILITY
PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION