

Stress-Free SUVs That You'll Love Driving and Owning

These vehicles got high scores in CR's evaluations for quietness, visibility, easy-to-use controls, and rear-seat comfort

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An SUV shopper can't discover every flaw in a car during a brief test drive. Even if you take the vehicle home for a weekend, there are certain problems that will become apparent only after living with it. Sometimes the flaw isn't noticeable until you bring along a passenger or two, run some errands, and travel on varying roads.

That's why Consumer Reports' auto experts drive each car, SUV, and truck for a lot of miles—2,000, in fact—before we even begin to test it. By doing this, we live with and use the cars in everyday situations, just like you do. Add partners, spouses, and children into the mix, and each CR expert

comes away with a unique take on what works for them and what doesn't when driving and living with a vehicle.

After that, we evaluate every vehicle in more than 50 objective and subjective tests. The results are tabulated to create composite scores that are presented on the car model pages, where CR members can find our complete road tests and survey results.

Through this process, we've identified four categories where there can be deal-breaking flaws that will make a buyer regret a purchase: how the controls work, visibility, rear-seat comfort,

and cabin noise. These are things that can be easy to overlook on a test drive but become a true annoyance over time that could have been avoided.

To steer you in the right direction, we have identified the compact and midsize SUVs that perform best in each category, along with alternatives in rank order. All are recommended by CR, meaning they scored well in our road tests, have good reliability, have key active safety features, and performed well in crash tests.

We also note the SUVs with the worst performance in our evaluation.

Best Usability and Controls

CR QUICK TAKE

84 **RECOMMENDED**
2023 Subaru Crosstrek

CR MPG: Overall 29 / City 20 / Hwy 39 mpg
#2 of 18: Subcompact sport-utility vehicles

- ROAD TEST
- PREDICTED RELIABILITY
- PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

Subcompact SUVs

The Crosstrek's controls are mostly logical to use and well-placed. The center control area has two screens. The lower one is for the infotainment system and the one mounted on the top of the dash displays vehicle data. The standard Android Auto and Apple CarPlay are appreciated and make the already easy-to-use infotainment system even better. It's annoying that the climate control's temperature display disappears a few seconds after the driver adjusts it. There's also a multifunction display in the center of the instrument cluster. It displays fuel economy, vehicle trip information, and more, but it's a bit fussy to toggle through. A subwoofer are available.

Other good choices: Honda HR-V, Kia Seltos

Ones to skip: Mercedes-Benz GLA, Mercedes-Benz GLB, Volvo XC40

CR QUICK TAKE

83 **RECOMMENDED**
2023 Honda CR-V

CR MPG: Overall 26 / City 19 / Hwy 33 mpg
#2 of 28: Compact sport-utility vehicles

- ROAD TEST
- PREDICTED RELIABILITY
- PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

Compact SUV

Honda is taking a "bottom-up" approach here with the controls. Starting with the Civic, then the HR-V, and now the CR-V, they've all been overhauled and simplified. Overall, it's very basic but incredibly usable. We found that most controls in the Honda CR-V EX that we tested are easy to use, thanks to physical dials, buttons, and knobs for the 7-inch infotainment system. A 9-inch infotainment screen in the EX-L and Sport Touring trims lacks a tuning knob. A few drivers mentioned that the ignition button is hidden from view, although with time a driver will become used to it. And the connectivity screen on our EX looks dated, with just text rather than flashy graphics.

Other good choices: Chevrolet Equinox, Subaru Forester, Nissan Rogue, Ford Escape Hybrid, Mitsubishi Outlander, Hyundai Tucson

Ones to skip: Genesis GV70, Tesla Model Y, Volkswagen ID.4, Acura RDX, Infiniti QX50

CR QUICK TAKE

78 **RECOMMENDED**
2023 Chevrolet Traverse

CR MPG: Overall 20 / City 14 / Hwy 28 mpg
#5 of 20: Midsize sport-utility vehicles 3-row

- ROAD TEST
- PREDICTED RELIABILITY
- PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

Midsize SUV

Overall, the Traverse's controls and displays are simple to use and read. The controls are easy to operate with large, legible buttons logically clustered. A convenient charge mat sits beneath the climate controls; it can replenish a compatible phone when it's placed on the grippy rubber surface. The infotainment system takes center stage with its colorful, intuitive screen and abundant features. As a nice surprise, the screen is power-retractable, revealing a hidden storage bin behind it. Android Auto and Apple CarPlay compatibility are standard. There are plenty of USB charging ports throughout the cabin to cater to the connected family.

Other good choices: Chevrolet Blazer, Subaru Ascent, Kia Sorento Hybrid, Honda Passport, Nissan Murano, Kia Telluride

Ones to skip: Tesla Model X, Mercedes-Benz GLE, Genesis GV80, Acura MDX, Land Rover Range Rover Velar, Lincoln Aviator, Toyota Venza

Best Visibility

CR QUICK TAKE

87 **RECOMMENDED**
2023 Subaru Forester

CR MPG: Overall 28 / City 20 / Hwy 38 mpg
#1 of 28: Compact sport-utility vehicles

- ROAD TEST
- PREDICTED RELIABILITY
- PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

Compact SUV

The Forester may look like a box on wheels, but that shape gives it several advantages: good headroom, plenty of cargo room, and incredible visibility. In fact, it has one of the best outward views of any vehicle we've tested. Every roof pillar is slim, and the windshield and side glass are large. The side mirrors sit low, so it's easy to see pedestrians and cars at traffic intersections. The rear window is also large, but head restraints can block the view somewhat.

Other good choices: Honda CR-V, Toyota RAV4, Toyota RAV4 Prime

Ones to skip: Kia EV6, Mini Cooper Countryman, Land Rover Range Rover Evoque, Mazda CX-30

CR QUICK TAKE

80 **RECOMMENDED**
2023 Subaru Outback

CR MPG: Overall 24 / City 16 / Hwy 32 mpg
#2 of 14: Midsize sport-utility vehicles

- ROAD TEST
- PREDICTED RELIABILITY
- PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

Midsize SUV

The Outback delivers one of the airiest outward views of any vehicle on the market. It starts with the SUV-like raised ride height and slightly elevated seating position, both of which contribute to the generous view out over the hood. But it's the slim pillars all-around combined with long and tall side windows that grant the Outback excellent outward visibility. Other helpful elements include the front triangle windows, which make it easier for the driver to see around the side mirrors to spot vehicles or pedestrians at intersections, along with a very large third side window to alleviate rear three-quarter blind spots. And last, the rear window is quite large.

Other good choices: Honda Passport

Ones to skip: Jaguar I-Pace, Tesla Model X, Alfa Romeo Stelvio, Jaguar F-Pace, GMC Acadia, Mazda CX-9, Land Rover Range Rover Velar

Best Rear-Seat Comfort

CR QUICK TAKE

59 **RECOMMENDED**
2023 Volkswagen Tiguan

CR MPG: Overall 25 / City 16 / Hwy 35 mpg
#18 of 28: Compact sport-utility vehicles

- ROAD TEST
- PREDICTED RELIABILITY
- PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

Compact SUV

The Tiguan is one of the largest models in the small-SUV segment. That length allows for an optional third-row seat and an enormous second-row seat. The second-row seat offers good support, and there's a lot of room for occupants. As with the front seats, they look basic but work well. Rear access is extremely easy with an enormous entryway and tons of floor space to step onto. The third-row seat is tiny, as expected for a compact SUV. Still, it works in a pinch to carry two children (no adult wants to use this row) to and from school or a local sporting event. It's a tight squeeze to get back there, but kids are pretty flexible, right?

Other good choices: Subaru Forester, Hyundai Tucson, Honda CR-V, Kia Sportage

Ones to skip: Mercedes-Benz GLB, Lexus UX

CR QUICK TAKE

68 **RECOMMENDED**
Volkswagen Atlas Cross Sport

CR MPG: Overall 21 / City 14 / Hwy 30 mpg
#9 of 14: Midsize sport-utility vehicles

- ROAD TEST
- PREDICTED RELIABILITY
- PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

Midsize Two-Row SUV

The rear seat offers lots of space all-around, especially in terms of knee room and foot space underneath the front seats. Because the Cross Sport only has two rows vs. the three rows in the regular Atlas, VW was able to move the seat rearward to gain more legroom. But the lower roofline results in less rear headroom, though there's still plenty for most people. The rear doors have a huge opening; vehicle entry and exit don't get much better than this. It's easy to get in without having to duck your head to avoid hitting the roof. Although the Cross Sport loses some cargo room vs. the regular Atlas, the space back there is still ample.

Other good choices: Hyundai Santa Fe, Ford Edge, Chevrolet Blazer, Subaru Outback

Ones to skip: Ford Bronco, Jeep Wrangler

CR QUICK TAKE

78 **RECOMMENDED**
2023 Chevrolet Traverse

CR MPG: Overall 20 / City 14 / Hwy 28 mpg
#5 of 20: Midsize sport-utility vehicles 3-row

- ROAD TEST
- PREDICTED RELIABILITY
- PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

Midsize Three-Row SUV

It's very easy getting into the second- and third-row seats. The rear openings are huge and the flat door sill is no impediment. A wide footpath aids rear entry. Third-row access is relatively easy but only the passenger-side second-row seat flips up out of the way to clear a path to the rear. Small children can also just jump in and walk through the middle of the two captain's chairs. The second row is very roomy, and the captain's chairs provide lateral support and facilitate good posture. They can also slide fore-aft and recline. The third-row seat is expectedly low and tight but it's tolerable, especially if you slide the second row forward a notch.

Other good choices: Hyundai Palisade, Kia Telluride, Subaru Ascent, Volkswagen Atlas

Ones to skip: None

Best Cabin Quietness

CR QUICK TAKE

83 RECOMMENDED
2023 Hyundai Tucson Hybrid

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

#3 of 28: Compact sport-utility vehicles

- ROAD TEST
- ROAD TEST
- PREDICTED RELIABILITY
- PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

CR QUICK TAKE

87 RECOMMENDED
2023 Kia Telluride

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

#1 of 20: Midsize sport-utility vehicles 3-row

- ROAD TEST
- PREDICTED RELIABILITY
- PREDICTED OWNER SATISFACTION

Compact SUV

While the regular Tucson is among the quietest in the class., the Tucson Hybrid is even better. It has the same quiet cabin, with well-suppressed levels of road and wind noise. Driving on electric power results in a very quiet experience; it's only under hard acceleration that the four-cylinder engine gets a bit thrashy. The Tucson is among the more comfortable compact and subcompact SUVs, doing a good job of smoothing out most impacts, so there isn't any suspension or impact noise transmitted to the cabin.

Other good choices: Mazda CX-5, Toyota RAV4

Prime, Kia Sportage Hybrid, Chevrolet Equinox, Hyundai Tucson, Mazda CX-50, Nissan Rogue, Honda CR-V

Ones to skip: Toyota RAV4, Fiat 500X, Kia Seltos

Midsize SUV

The Telluride is truly well rounded, and noise suppression is just another area where it excels. It's pleasantly quiet, with good road and wind isolation, and a mild but unobjectionable engine hum in the background. The sound character is very similar to the Hyundai Palisade and more serene than several competing models. The suspension and the 20-inch tires do a decent job of absorbing bumps without allowing them to noisily invade the quiet cabin.

Other good choices: Hyundai Palisade, Ford Edge, Chevrolet Traverse

Ones to skip: Jeep Wrangler, Ford Bronco