

# Subaru Outback 2.0D SE Nav Plus

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**BIG, BOLD and brilliant, the fourth generation of Subaru's Outback is better than ever.**

Launched in Europe in 1996, the Outback pioneered the 'Crossover' concept, combining the comfort, interior space and superior on-road handling of a family estate, with the off-road capability and ground clearance of a Sports Utility Vehicle (SUV). This blend of abilities has now been further refined.

The Japanese-made car is longer, wider and taller than ever before and, inside, the cabin perfectly complements the latest Outback's muscular exterior lines. There is a feeling of spaciousness and the large leather seats, which are fitted as standard, offer excellent support. Behind the wheel, a revised instrument cluster features four dials outlined in aluminium rings, and the three-spoke steering wheel is leather-wrapped, with integrated audio and cruise controls. On the technology front, the apparent lack of a USB port shows the Subaru to be a little behind the times as far as iPhone-style connectivity goes, but the premium six speaker stereo is MP3-compatible. A Bluetooth hands-free and hi-tech sat-nav system is also fitted.

On the road, the most recent Outback, with its completely re-engineered suspension, has decent handling and stability. It is not slow off the mark and the presence of its All-Wheel-Drive (AWD) system reassures you that it is safe and sure-footed in all weather conditions. The 1998cc diesel engine, which is linked to a rather notchy six-speed manual gearbox, produces a maximum of 148 bhp. The oil-burner has a top torque figure of 258 lb/ft and, considering the Outback has permanent AWD, it is surprisingly economical. During the time I had the Subaru, my trips consisted of long dual-carriageway commutes and rugged rural routes. I didn't get the claimed average of 47.8 mpg, but I got a consistent 35+ mpg, which is still not bad for a 4x4.

On the practical front, the rear seat backrest is split 60/40 and folds flat to offer the best people/cargo carrying versatility. The tailgate is nice and wide, and this makes life easy for loading. But what really makes the Outback such a good workhorse is its self-levelling suspension. Not only does this guarantee the Subaru to be a good load-lugger, it also helps it to be a great towcar.

At over £30,000 the Subaru Outback 2.0D SE is not cheap, but it is a seriously competent all-rounder. Still, you could buy a premium German car for that amount of cash. It's a tricky one.



## PROS 'N' CONS

- Comfortable ✓
- Great Grip ✓
- Spacious ✓
- Good towcar ✓
- Notchy gears X
- No USB port X

## FAST FACTS

- Max speed: 120 mph
- 0-62 mph: 9.7 secs
- Combined mpg: 47.8
- Engine: 1998 cc 4 cylinder 16 valve (Boxer Diesel)
- Max. power (bhp): 148 at 3,600 rpm
- Max. torque (lb/ft): 258 at 1800-2400 rpm
- Max. towing weight (braked) 1700 kg
- CO2: 155 g/km
- Price: £30,070 on the road