

The whole Package

Ian Lamming drives the new Subaru Forester

LIFE can be full of disappointment; things, people, places, not quite living up to expectations, so full of promise but often falling short of the mark.

My trick is to set the bar low, expect little or nothing that way at least you can bore people with an endless stream of 'I told you sos'.

It's a cynical, energy-sapping way to live your life, but we are English after all and suffer indignity after indignity as we take an early exit from the very sports we invented. Then there's the weather, don't even get me started on the weather...

There is one way to avoid all this heartache, of course, drive a Subaru Forester. The stalwart SUV demands nothing from the world but offers everything. There is no fanfare, flash marketing hype or expensive product placement. It just stands in the showroom waiting to be discovered and when it is drivers are delighted – and they love to talk about it in hushed tones like it is a best kept secret.

That's because Forester is a stunning SUV. It is honest, reliable, and ever so capable. Already the roads are starting to coat with autumnal scum; mud and goodness knows what else trampled and dragged from the fields by countless tractors and muck spreaders.

Mushed leaves, rain and the accompanying deluge of gravel will be complemented soon by the scourge of motoring mankind, ice, sleet and snow. It's a combination that sorts the off-roaders from the soft-roaders and Forester thankfully is the former.

Subaru's peerless all wheel drive has been around for donkeys and works brilliantly well by shifting the power around to the wheel with the most grip. It does so seamlessly and without any help or hindrance from driver resulting in forward progress at all times.

Helping the super drivetrain is a unique diesel engine, a 2.0 litre boxer – that means the cylinders lie flat not stand upright – which is turbine smooth, refined and torquey. It is fantastically characterful, economical and powerful, it's cracking.

The latest look is smart with a sheen of quality. It isn't trick or trendy, it doesn't rely on the badge. Its strengths lie in its honest lines, aesthetics that will not date.

Inside is also much-improved. It is spacious and comfortable, as you would expect, with a good size boot and plenty of room for all concerned. But the dash is now modern, boasting very clever touch screen technology and all the gadgets modern drivers demand. The latest Forester is a proud successor for a brand that prides itself on trust. Those people who have never considered the brand have missed out but those in the know recognise the promise, the practicality, the pleasure and won't be disappointed by the whole package.



Fact File

- Subaru Forester
- Engine: 2.0 boxer diesel
- Power: 147BHP
- 0-62mph: 10.2 secs
- Top speed: 118mph
- Combined miles per gallon: 49.6
- Transmission: six speed manual
- CO2 g/km: 148