

Road Beat: 2018 Hyundai Santa Fe Sport impresses



The 2018 Hyundai Santa Fe Sport continues to be at the top of its class. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

Last year I called the Santa Fe Sport at least tied for the spot of No. 1 in the class of compact CUVs (crossover utility vehicles). Crossover means an SUV based on a sedan chassis, sort of like a modern day tall station wagon. Wagons of the '50s, '60s and '70s averaged about 57-58 inches in height, most crossovers are 66 inches or slightly taller. Lots of headroom inside, plus much more cargo capacity and flexibility.

With just finishing a week with the new 2017 Mazda CX-5, I thought it prudent to re-experience the Santa Fe Sport to see

how the new 2018 version stacks up. In many respects the new Hyundai still retains its title, and an important title it is.

Compact CUVs are a huge seller with the sales leaders, the Honda CR-V and Toyota RAV4 both selling over 400,000 units annually and a bunch of other manufacturers not far behind. One item worth mentioning with the CX-5, in its new iteration, albeit with somewhat improved looks and enhancements. It is a great looking ride and interior, and while horsepower was up by 3 to 187, performance and fuel economy remained relatively constant.

With the 2018 Santa Fe Sport, its looks were just ever so slightly tweaked which is good because you don't fix what isn't broken and the Santa Fe Sport certainly isn't even close to broken. It still has a sporty, fresh, muscular appearance. At 185 by 74 x 66 inches it is sized just right on a long 106-inch wheelbase.

Under the bonnet is a powerful 2.0T DOHC, 16 valve turbocharged power plant that knocks down 240 at 6,000 rpm and a stump pulling 260 pounds of twist from a mind boggling 1,450 -3,500 rpm. This makes for an unbelievable throttle response and the SF Sport will wow you with its part throttle response, absolutely no turbo lag. Power gets to the front wheels via a six-speed torque converter auto cog-swapper. It shifts beautifully.



Specifications

Price \$25,350 to about \$40,000

Engine

2.0T DOHC, 16 valve,
directed injected
turbocharged inline four 240
hp @ 6,000; 260 lb.-ft. of
torque @ 1,450-3,500 rpm

Tranny

Six-speed torque converter
automatic

Configuration

Front mounted, transverse
mounted engine/FWD/AWD

Dimensions

Wheelbase 106.3 inches

Length 185.0 inches

Width 74.0 inches

Height (w/o/with roof rack)
66.1/66.5 inches

Track (f/r) 64.1/64.5 inches

Weight 3,949 pounds

GVWR 5,004 pounds

Fuel capacity 17.4 gallons

Cargo capacity (behind front
seats/second row) 71.5/35.4
cubic feet

Wheels 19 x 7.5 inch alloys

Tires 235/55 x 19

Tow capacity 3,500 pounds
with trailer brakes

Steering lock to lock 2.96
turns

Turning circle 35.8 feet

Co-efficient of drag 0.34

Performance

0-60 mph 6.92 seconds

50-70 mph 3.47 seconds
50-70 up a steep grade 6-7 percent) 5.49 seconds
Top Speed Well into triple digits
Fuel economy EPA rated 20/27/23 mpg city/highway/combined. I recorded 26-27 mpg overall with 50 percent in rural country driving and 10 percent freeway. Highway mileage should average 31 mpg at legal speeds.

Straight line performance is slightly improved over my last visit with 0-60 mph arriving in under seven seconds at 6.92 seconds. Simulated passing times are also marginally improved with a 50-70 mph jaunt taking just 3.47 seconds and the same run up a steep grade sowing that time to 5.49 seconds. Prior numbers were 7.17, 3.51 and 5.65 seconds, respectively. It actually feels much quicker. And when up in the Sierras, there is the turbo bonus that altitude will not strangle this SF Sport and it will still deliver sea level power throughout the Sierra.

Fuel economy is EPA rated at 20/27/23 mpg city/highway/combined. Overall mileage was down by about an mpg with a two-way 70 mph run capturing 31.3 mpg, but still a big improvement over the EPA test cycle. A two-way run to Carson City average a reasonable 28.1 mpg and in rural driving 26 mpg should be the norm. Fuel capacity is a large 17.4 gallons, so range should extend out an easy 500 miles. My tester was a FWD model so expect about a one mpg loss in a AWD model from weight and drive gear losses.

Handling is sport sedan secure. SF Sport has all the

credentials, 19 x 7.5-inch alloys, 235/55 series rubber, independent suspenders and coils in all four corners along with gas filled shocks. Stab bars reside at both ends and the steering is reasonably quick at 2.96 turns lock to lock. The totals equal oodles of cornering power, crisp turn in, great on and off-center steering and it does the tango in the twisties like that well sorted out sporting sedan. SF Sport gets it done with a flat attitude. Turning circle is a tight 36 feet.

Ride quality is quiet. The engine spins at just 2,050 rpm at 70 mph and is inaudible. And it is a smooth mover, very smooth. And here's why the SF Sport is such a good ride. It performs like gazelle, it is reasonably fuel miserly, achieving over 30 mpg on the highway (real numbers), handles like a sporting sedan with accurate, easy steering and serious grip and feedback, rides like a much larger car and gives passengers the feeling of real spaciousness because of its extra inch or two in shoulder and hip room, never mind swallowing most of Home Depot during a big garden sale.

Safety is also second to none with most, if not all the acronyms including lane departure warning. But the piece d'resistance is the Multiview camera which shows everything in a 360-degree top view when in reverse and going forward at less than 10 mph. This is besides the backup camera. There will be no excuses for every touching any part of its gorgeous body on anything during parking maneuvers. Headlights are very good.

Inside is a well-designed instrument panel, with tach and speedo and trip computer front and center. The center stack is also very well done and no three-unit college course required to figure out its operation. It's intuitive.

Seating is leather and comfortable with full power in the Ultimate with about every adjustment you can imagine or want, but there is no ejection seat. Who wants to get blown out of

the roof of a car by a 37mm cannon shell? Without a sunroof it might shorten your neck. Rear seating is also copious with legroom galore and some adjustability. It's an almost luxo ride for under \$40K even with go anywhere AWD.

Larry Weitzman has been into cars since he was 5 years old. At 8 he could recite from memory the hp of every car made in the U.S. He has put in thousands of laps on racetracks all over the Western United States.