

2005 SUBARU LEGACY GT



The latest-generation Legacy is built on a new platform with new components at just about every level. All dimensions are more generous than on previous models and, with Subaru now looking to compete with carmakers like Audi and Volvo in the sports sedan market, it has also ramped up performance considerably, with some trim lines like the GT sedan we road-tested-boasting a 2.5 litre turbocharged power plant.

Interior and trunk

This car sits fairly low on the road and the bucket seats feature prominent side supports, so access is fairly difficult. The seats are enveloping and very comfortable for drivers with the right body type. Stockier individuals, though, will find themselves sitting with their trunk and thighs on the side supports rather than in the seat. The seat back is also a bit short for tall people. The driving position is very good despite the lack of a telescoping steering column (it does tilt, however). Headroom is good even for taller drivers, and even with the sunroof. The seat warmers now feature four heat settings as opposed to two on earlier models.

Access via the rear doors could be easier. The rear bench seats two adults comfortably. In the sedan model, though, the back doesn't fold down; this is a shortcoming, as most competing models in this segment offer the feature. There is a ski pass-through, however. Rear head- and legroom are somewhat restrictive for tall passengers.

The trunk is roomy, with a large enough opening, and the floor is flat. Note that the trunk doesn't have an outside lock, so you're at the mercy of the inside trunk release or the remote entry control.

Convenience and safety

The interior is very well finished and the quality of the materials is a cut above the previous generation. When operating the controls, drivers have a better sense of quality than before. Soundproofing is merely adequate: there is a fair amount of road noise.

There are plenty of storage spaces, all large-capacity. The cupholders are quite versatile, but their location just behind the shift lever is problematic: with a tall cup, this can be a nuisance.

Instruments and controls are well arranged and lighting at night is good. The automatic climate control system does its job well, but stays in the Recirculation position too long before reaching the desired temperature in hot weather. The air vents constantly direct air into the driver's hands, even if the vents are directed away from the steering wheel with the hands in the "10 past 10" position.

Safety-conscious Subaru has outfitted the Legacy with a reinforced structure and no less than six airbags (two front, two side, two side-curtain). The head restraints, unfortunately, don't adjust high enough for tall people in the front or average-height (and taller) passengers in the rear. Visibility to all sides is very good and headlight intensity is within acceptable limits. The base of the windshield features a heating element to reduce ice buildup on the wipers. (The wipers, by the way, are a little on the slow side.)

Engine and transmission

The Legacy GT's 2.5-litre 4-cylinder engine has been seriously pumped up and, with the turbocharger, now develops an impressive 250 hp and 250 lb-ft of torque. Below 3,500 rpm, acceleration is merely respectable, but beyond that, things get interesting, with a powerful surge all the way up to 6,000 rpm. Under normal acceleration, the increase in speed is relatively progressive and linear. When it comes to higher accelerations, though, it is not as linear and progressive as the Subaru Forester Turbo engine, which is joy in that department. The accelerator is not always smooth, either. This lack of progressiveness takes some of the pleasure out of driving the Legacy GT. Above 3,500 rpm, however, this is a very lively and responsive performer indeed. The engine meets LEV (low emission) standards.

The 5-speed automatic transmission is well geared and generally very smooth. Manual shifting is possible via steering-wheel-mounted pushbuttons or the shift lever; in either case gear changes are fairly quick. Starting in second is possible. As usual on a Subaru, the AWD system, which permanently sends torque to all four wheels, works efficiently and unobtrusively.

On the road

The GT's sport-tuned suspension is firmer than that on the other versions of the Legacy. And though that firmness is generally well controlled, even minor road defects at lower and medium speeds result in some harsh reactions, due also in large part to the 45 profile, Z speed-rated tires. In turns, this Subaru demonstrates superior handling on just about any type of road surface-indeed, its behaviour corresponds to what one expects of a sport sedan worthy of the name. And it provides a good overall feeling of solidity.

Power steering is very well weighted, stable, precise and relatively quick, transmitting a bit of road feel; the turning circle is fairly short. The four-wheel disc brakes, boasting four-channel ABS, are powerful and fade-resistant. Brake, disc and pad longevity is to be hoped for, as replacement parts aren't cheap.

Up on the lift at a CAA-Quebec Technical Inspection Centre, we noted the Legacy is a solidly built vehicle with generous rustproofing. The wiper fluid tank is on the left side of the engine compartment at the front. A right-side configuration is safer, but at least the tank can be filled from in front of the car.

Conclusion

Given the refinements made since the last generation, the new Legacy will have no trouble retaining current owners looking to upgrade-or wooing new ones, for that matter. The most notable improvements are found in the quality of materials, the nicely powered engine, and safety. And the GT-trimmed models offer those eager for performance a sport sedan or wagon that truly lives up to the name.

FOR: Smooth ride, seat comfort, generous equipment, visibility, build quality, roominess.

AGAINST: Road noise, torque at low rpm, manual A/C lacks power, slow wiper speed, impractical cupholder location (with manual gearbox), head restraints too low.

2005 SUBARU LEGACY

Engine: 16-valve 2.5-litre 4 cyl.; 16-valve 2.5-litre turbocharged 4 cyl.

Horsepower: 168 hp @ 5,600 rpm; 250 hp @ 6,000 rpm

Torque: 166 lb-ft @ 4,000 rpm; 250 lb-ft @ 3,600 rpm

Transmission: 5-speed manual; 4- or 5-speed automatic depending on trim

Suspension: fully independent

Brakes: 4-wheel disc

Length: 473 cm; wagon 479.5 cm

Width: 194.5 cm

Height: 142.5 cm; wagon 147.5 cm

Wheelbase: 267 cm

Weight: 1,500 to 1,615 kg

Tires: 205/55R16; 215/45R17

Towing capacity: 1,224 to 1,360 kg, depending on trim

Air bags: Two front, two side, two side-curtain

Fuel consumption with base 2.5 L engine and manual transmission:

Transport Canada rating:

City: 10.2 L/100 km (27 mpg)

Highway: 7.5 L/100 km (37.5 mpg)

Test result: 10,5 L/100 km (27 mpg)

Fuel tank capacity: 64 litres

Acceleration:

0-100 km/h: 7.5 seconds

60-100 km/h: 5.2 seconds

Competition: Audi A4 Avant, BMW 3 Series Touring, Jeep Grand Cherokee, Volkswagen Passat 4Motion, Volvo V70 AWD and XC

Warranty:

- Full basic coverage: 3 years/60,000 km
- Major components: 5 years /100,000 km
- Surface corrosion: 3 years /60,000 km
- Perforation damage: 5 years/unlimited km
- Emission control system: 3 years/60,000 km full coverage; 8 years/130,000 km (catalytic converter, electronic control module and onboard diagnostic device)

Factory replacement parts:

- Rear bumper: \$866
- Front brake disc: \$177
- Brake pads: \$198
- Muffler: \$468 each
- Front fender: \$272

Average insurance premium (Quebec City, replacement cost endorsement, claim-free insurance record, male or female driver 30 to 40 years old): \$1,006 to \$1,627

Price according to trim line:

- 2.5i sedan: \$27,995
- 2.5i Limited sedan: \$35,195
- GT sedan: \$36,495
- 2.5 GT Limited sedan: \$40,295
- 2.5i wagon: \$28,995
- 2.5i Limited wagon: \$36,695
- GT wagon: \$37,495
- GT Limited wagon: \$41,795

Main options:

- 4-speed automatic: \$1,200
- 5-speed automatic: \$1,500

Price as tested: \$40,295

Freight and preparation: \$1,295

Dealers: Quebec: 28 Canada: 95

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