AUTOMOTIVE

Crossover Vehicles With Manual Transmission

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The Vanishing Breed: Why Crossover Vehicles With Manual Transmission Still Matter

There is a quiet revolution happening in the automotive world, though it is not the one making headlines. While the industry races toward electrification and autonomous driving, a smaller, more passionate battle is being fought on another front: the preservation of the manual transmission. For enthusiasts, the joy of rowing through gears is a visceral connection to the machine that no dual-clutch automatic or CVT can replicate. But here is the rub: the market has shifted dramatically away from sedans and hatchbacks toward crossover SUVs. This leaves driving purists with a pressing question: can you still buy a crossover vehicle with a manual transmission?

The answer, thankfully, is yes, though the pickings are increasingly slim. The combination of a raised ride height, all-weather capability, and a third pedal is a rare but rewarding formula. This article explores the current landscape of crossover vehicles with manual transmission, examining why they matter, which models are still available, and how to find one in an increasingly automated world. We will also discuss the driving dynamics, the practical trade-offs, and what the future holds for this endangered species.

The State of Manual Transmissions in Modern Crossovers

To understand the scarcity of manual crossovers, one must first understand the market forces at play. The manual transmission has been in steady decline for decades. In the United States, less than 2% of new cars sold today are equipped with a manual transmission. The reasons are well-documented: automatic transmissions have become more efficient, faster, and more convenient. The rise of the crossover has only accelerated this trend. Crossover buyers are typically seeking practicality, ease of use, and fuel economy. A manual transmission, viewed through this lens, is often seen as a hindrance rather than a benefit.

However, this does not mean the market has completely dried up. A handful of automakers, particularly those with a performance or outdoor-oriented brand identity, continue to offer a manual gearbox in select crossover models. Subaru, for example, has long been a champion of the manual transmission in its all-wheel-drive lineup. Mazda, too, has offered manual options in its subcompact crossovers. Even Jeep has kept the manual alive in some of its off-road-focused models. These vehicles cater to a specific buyer: one who values engagement, control, and a sense of connection that only a manual can provide.

Notable Crossover Vehicles With Manual Transmission (Current and Recent)

If you are in the market for a new crossover with a manual transmission, your options are limited but compelling.

Below is a detailed look at the models that still offer, or have very recently offered, a manual gearbox. It is important to note that availability can vary by model year and region, so always check with your local dealer or a reputable used car source.

Subaru Crosstrek

The Subaru Crosstrek is arguably the most popular and widely available crossover with a manual transmission. For enthusiasts who need ground clearance and all-wheel drive, this is a top contender. Subaru continues to offer a six-speed manual transmission on the base trim of the Crosstrek, paired with a 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine. The combination is not particularly fast, but it is honest and engaging. The manual Crosstrek offers a level of control that is especially welcome on winding roads and in slippery conditions. The clutch is light, the shifter is precise, and the all-wheel-drive system provides excellent traction. It is a perfect example of a crossover that does not forget the joy of driving.

- Engine: 2.0-liter four-cylinder (152 hp)
- Transmission: 6-speed manual
- Drivetrain: All-wheel drive (standard)
- Ground Clearance: 8.7 inches
- Why it matters: It is the most accessible and practical manual crossover on the market today.

Mazda CX-30 (Recent Model Years)

Mazda has built a reputation for making driver-focused vehicles, and the CX-30 is no exception. In its early model years, the CX-30 was available with a six-speed manual transmission on the front-wheel-drive base trim. The manual CX-30 is a joy to drive, with a slick shifter and a well-weighted clutch that make every gear change a pleasure. The 2.5-liter engine provides ample torque, and the chassis is responsive and composed. However, Mazda has largely phased out the manual in the CX-30 in recent years, making it a rare find on dealer lots. If you can find a used one, it is a gem.

- Engine: 2.5-liter four-cylinder (186 hp)
- Transmission: 6-speed manual
- Drivetrain: Front-wheel drive (manual only available on FWD)
- Ground Clearance: 8.0 inches
- Why it matters: It offers premium interior quality and engaging driving dynamics.

Jeep Renegade (Discontinued Manual Option)

The Jeep Renegade, for a time, offered a six-speed manual transmission. It was available on the Trailhawk trim, which is the most off-road-capable version of the Renegade. The manual Renegade was a niche within a niche, but it had loyal fans who appreciated the ability to control the vehicle's low-speed crawling. The Renegade has since been discontinued in the American market, but used examples are still available. It is not the most refined manual crossover, but it has undeniable character.

- Engine: 2.4-liter four-cylinder (180 hp)
- Transmission: 6-speed manual
- Drivetrain: Four-wheel drive
- Ground Clearance: 8.7 inches (Trailhawk)
- Why it matters: It is a genuine off-roader with a manual gearbox.

Mini Countryman (Older Model Years)

The Mini Countryman is a larger, more practical take on the classic Mini formula. In its earlier generations, it was available with a six-speed manual transmission. The manual Countryman offers a playful, go-kart-like driving feel that is unique in the crossover segment. The shifter is notchy and mechanical, and the steering is responsive. It is a car that invites you to take the long way home. Newer model years have moved to automatic-only, so the manual is a used-market proposition.

- Engine: 1.6-liter or 2.0-liter four-cylinder (depending on year)
- Transmission: 6-speed manual
- Drivetrain: Front-wheel drive or all-wheel drive
- Why it matters: It is quirky, fun, and stands out from the crowd.

Honda HR-V (Discontinued Manual Option)

The Honda HR-V was once available with a six-speed manual transmission. The manual HR-V was a rare sight, but it was a fantastic little crossover for those who wanted something practical and fun. The shifter was typically Honda: precise and satisfying to use. The HR-V offered excellent cargo space and a versatile interior. Manual examples are now sought after on the used market.

- Engine: 1.8-liter four-cylinder (141 hp)
- Transmission: 6-speed manual
- Drivetrain: Front-wheel drive
- Why it matters: It is a practical and reliable daily driver with a great shifter.

Ford EcoSport (Discontinued Manual Option)

The Ford EcoSport, a subcompact crossover, was offered with a five-speed manual transmission in its early years. It was a budget-friendly option that prioritized simplicity and affordability. The manual EcoSport is not particularly sporty, but it gets the job done. It is worth considering if you are looking for a cheap, used manual crossover.

- Engine: 1.0-liter three-cylinder turbo or 2.0-liter four-cylinder
- Transmission: 5-speed manual
- Drivetrain: Front-wheel drive or all-wheel drive
- Why it matters: It is an affordable entry into the manual crossover club.

The Used Market: Your Best Bet for a Manual Crossover

If you are searching for a manual crossover today, the used market is likely where you will find the most options. As automakers continue to drop the manual from their lineups, the pool of available vehicles is shrinking. However, this also means that well-maintained examples are becoming increasingly collectible. Here are some tips for navigating the used market:

1. Expand your search radius: Manual crossovers are rare, so you may need to travel to find the right one. Use national search engines and be prepared to have the car shipped to you.
2. Check enthusiast forums: Online communities dedicated to Subaru, Mazda, or Jeep often have classified sections where owners list their well-maintained manual vehicles.
3. Be patient: The right manual crossover may not appear overnight. Set up alerts on popular used car sites and be ready to act quickly when a good one pops up.
4. Verify the transmission: Always confirm that the vehicle is a true manual. Some listings may be mislabeled or may include a manual mode on an automatic transmission.
5. Get a pre-purchase inspection: Manual transmissions can be expensive to repair. Have a trusted mechanic inspect the clutch, shifter, and transmission before you buy.

Why Choose a Manual Crossover? The Driving Experience

The appeal of a manual transmission in a crossover goes beyond nostalgia. There are tangible benefits to choosing a vehicle with a third pedal. For one, a manual gives the driver complete control over the engine's power band. This is especially useful when driving on hilly terrain, towing a small trailer, or navigating off-road trails. In a crossover, which is often heavier and less aerodynamic than a sedan, being able to hold a gear can make a significant difference in performance and fuel efficiency.

Furthermore, a manual transmission encourages active driving. It forces you to be engaged with the road, to anticipate corners, and to time your shifts perfectly. This makes even a mundane commute feel more rewarding. For many enthusiasts, this is the core reason to seek out a manual crossover: it turns a practical vehicle into a driver's car.

There is also a sense of satisfaction that comes with mastering a manual transmission. The coordination between clutch, throttle, and shifter is a skill that takes time to develop, but once learned, it becomes second nature. In a world of increasing automation, this skill feels like a small rebellion.

The Future of Manual Crossovers

So, what does the future hold for crossover vehicles with manual transmission? The outlook is not particularly bright, but there are glimmers of hope. As of 2025, Subaru remains the only mainstream automaker offering a manual in a crossover in the American market. The Subaru Crosstrek continues to be available with a six-speed manual on its base trim, and it has a loyal following. There are also rumors that some performance-oriented models, like the upcoming Hyundai Ioniq 5 N, may offer a simulated manual experience, but that is not the same as the real thing.

In other markets, such as Europe and Japan, manual transmissions are still more common, particularly

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