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Passionate About Subaru's



tech stuff

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Subaru History

This Subaru History was sourced from the Subaru Impreza Drivers Club FAQ, which you can see in full at



1994 & 1995

The Impreza was first introduced to the UK in 1994, initially as a five door hatchback/estate, and later as a 4 door saloon. A number of different models were available, with a choice of 1.6, 1.8 and 2.0 litre engines, and a choice of either front or four wheel drive.

1996

In the UK, the 1.6, 1.8 and front wheel drive derivatives were never great sellers, and were dropped from the range in 1996 (although many are still doing sterling service as Subaru dealers' courtesy cars!), leaving the 2.0 GL, 2.0 Sport and 2000 Turbo models. The last few examples of the '96 Turbo model received the revised brake calipers of the '97 model.

1997

Over the years, Subaru has constantly improved the cars, addressing many of the criticisms raised against the earlier cars. The most significant changes were introduced late in 1996 as part of the 1997 model year. The external changes were relatively minimal, with a new style bonnet and a more aggressive nose. The Turbo model received a revised engine with a higher compression ratio, low friction pistons, smaller turbo and revised engine management system. Power output was unchanged at 208 bhp, but maximum torque increased by 5% to 214 lb ft at a lower 4,000 rpm. The suspension was also revised and improved, with the turbo receiving a new/thicker rear anti-roll bar. Brake calipers were also revised.

For 1997, the turbo also received much improved sports seats, replacing the unattractive non-sporty seats of previous models. The seats are still not ideal though, as there is a difference of opinion amongst owners. Many owners find them somewhat lacking in lower back support, whilst others just report them as fantastic.

The ICE system was also changed from the Subaru badged Panasonic radio cassette to a badged Philips unit with removable fascia, and the heater controls changed.

1998

1998 saw a major overhaul of the interior, with the introduction of a new dashboard, taken from the Forester, featuring white dials, a computerised odometer and a low fuel light. Other improvements include a passenger airbag, Momo leather steering wheel, leather covered handbrake lever and a shorter throw gear lever. ICE equipment remained the same but the apertures and grills (and reportedly wiring) for the "tweeter kit" is supplied as standard. Revised inner door panels and centre console that includes the current trend for putting cup holders in cars, completes the changes. The only external changes are the 16 inch alloys on 205/50 VR16 Bridgestone Potenza tyres now fitted as standard to the Turbo model.

1999

The 1999 car continues the trend of fitting parts from the Japanese STi cars, including the front seats (although with a bit more padding) including height adjustment for the drivers seat; 4-pot front brake calipers and vented rear discs; and the high rear wing. Suspension, in line with STi's, is now considerably firmer.

The front bumper has been slightly modified, being a little deeper and with just one vane (instead of two) and a naff orange plastic wedge outside the fog lights. The bumper now passes a 5 mph impact test. The fog lights and headlights have multifaceted reflectors and clear lenses.

The engine is a "Phase 2" boxer incorporating some changes to the head, and claimed power output is 7 bhp higher at 215 bhp (although torque stays the same).

Inside, the car benefits from cup holders and a slightly different Momo steering wheel. The car is at last fitted with a Thatcham "Category 1" alarm and immobiliser.

The price has risen by a very reasonable (in view of the changes) £1200, now taking the car over the £20,000 mark.

2000

The 2000 car added some minor but welcome changes to the 1999 model, following the theme of continual development.

The most obvious changes are the wheel design. Out went the much loved curved 5 spoke design, to be replaced with a 6 slender spoke design. Opinions on the new wheel style are generally mixed, but more owners prefer the older 5 spoke design to the newer one.

Other changes include colour coded mirrors and door handles, adjustable intermittent wiper speeds, remote central locking (was already fitted prior to delivery for UK cars with the alarm system), a metallic fascia, map reading lights and a new gear knob.

The very popular Dark Blue Mica colour was replaced by a slightly lighted Deep Blue Mica, and a new Red Mica Metallic colour was added to the range.

The Impreza has been in the same basic form for nearly 8 years now, and a completely new model is expected for the 2001 model year.

Special Editions

One of the main aims of motor sport for any manufacturer (rallying in particular), is to promote their cars on a world stage. Many manufacturers produce limited edition and homologation specials to "celebrate" their successes. Subaru are no exception to this game and have been quick to introduce a series of limited edition models throughout the world to help give their many fans a chance to own a part of history. Other famous examples include the Clio Williams ranges introduced by Renault, and the Carlos Sainz version of the Toyota Celica GT4 Turbo.

UK Special Editions

Series McRae

In June 1995, to celebrate their winning of both the manufacturers and drivers World Rally Championship titles, Subaru in the UK released a limited edition run of two hundred cars (numbered 1 to 201 - no number 13!) prepared by Prodrive going by the name of the Series McRae. The main improvements over the standard model are:

- Special mica blue paintwork
- 6.5 x 16 inch eight spoke gold Speedline Safari alloy wheels
- Pirelli P Zero 205/50 ZR 16 low profile tyres
- Recaro sports front seats with open headrests and Series McRae motifs
- All seats (front and back) and door panelling retrimmed in Le Mans/Avus material
- Factory fitted electric tilt and slide sunroof
- Interior numbered Series McRae plaque
- Side and rear Series McRae decals

On the road price was £22,999

Catalunya

In 1996, Subaru again won the manufacturers title in the FIA World Rally Championship, finally winning the title with the points gained on the Catalunya rally of Spain. To celebrate this, another limited edition run of 200 cars (again with no number 13) was produced, this time going by the name of the Catalunya (I wonder why?) The main features of the "Cats", as they are commonly known as are:

- Special black mica paintwork (red metallic flecks)
- Colour matched door mirrors
- Gold Alloys (same ones as fitted to 2.0 Sport, but painted gold)
- Front and rear seats and side door panelling re-trimmed in black with red highlights
- Short rally style gear knob (initial sales blurb promised a quick shift!)
- Carbon fibre effect dashboard
- Air conditioning
- Special floor mats (black with red trim and Catalunya logo)
- Side and rear Catalunya decals
- Interior numbered Catalunya plaque

The first examples were registered during March 1997, for an on the road price of £21,610. Note that some dealers decided to cash in on tremendous demand for "Cats", and fitted leather seats, sunroof and other options to all their Cats, forcing buyers to hand over significantly more money than the list price, increasing their profit margin on each car sold.

Terzo

1997 saw Subaru win the WRC manufacturers title for a third time in succession. Even before the official announcement to the UK Subaru dealers, rumours were circulating over the inevitable release of a third special edition, with the possible specification suggested being very close to the final car. Available from April 1998 onwards, at an on the road price of £22,995, a total of 333 "Terzo" special editions have been produced (numbered 1 to 334, omitting 13). Terzo is Italian for third. This is to celebrate the third WRC championship victory in a row, and hence the third special edition. Specification for the Terzo is as follows:

- Special mica blue paintwork (similar but not identical to the current WRC cars)
- Current style 16 inch alloys, but painted gold
- Air conditioning
- Alacantara + suede effect interior trim (Same front seats as fitted to recent STi models, but without embroidered STi logo, and red shoulder flashes)
- Interior number Terzo plaque
- Cobra 6422 Thatcham Category 1 alarm with remote central locking
- Side and rear Terzo decals
- Special Terzo floor mats
- Non folding rear seat

22B "Type UK"

In late 1998, Subaru UK officially imported 16 22Bs, and passed them on to Prodrive for modification. The UK cars differ from the privately imported 22Bs, not just in their 3 year factory warranty, but with revised gear ratios more suited to UK roads. This was achieved by changing the final drive ratio from 3.9 to 4.44 to lengthen the gearing. Cosmetically, the car got the headlights from the '99 model, UK rear light clusters and driving lights (not fog lights!) were fitted where the normal 22B has blanking plates. From the back, you can tell you're looking at one of the rarest cars in the world by the "Type UK" and "Prodrive" stickers. The price was £39,950, and demand for the cars was overwhelming.

Interestingly, Subaru UK were not able to put their 16 cars through the Single Vehicle Approval scheme because the maximum of 50 privately imported 22Bs had already been registered in 1998. Consequently the Type UKs were registered in 1999. The cars do not meet European Type Approval regulations for noise and emissions.

RB5

To celebrate Richard Burns' first year in the Subaru World Rally Team, the RB5 (5 was the number Richard used during the 1999 WRC championship) was launched to critical acclaim by the press. 444 examples of this car were made available to the general public. A "WR Sport" version of the car was available at extra cost, specified at delivery time by the first owner.

- Blue Steel metallic paintwork
- Fully colour-coded exterior (mirrors, door handles, skirts and driving lamp covers)
- Blue 'Alacantara' and suede-effect interior trim, with black 'jersey' surround on seats
- Special graphite trim for the centre console
- Air conditioning
- Unique titanium/pewter coloured 17in, 6 spoke Speedline alloy wheels with Pirelli 'P Zero' 205/45 ZR17 tyres
- PIAA front driving light conversion
- Prodrive quickshift
- Roof-mounted map reading lamps
- RB5 side and rear decals (and also on driving light covers)
- RB5 embossed carpet mats
- RB5 interior-mounted, numbered plaque "Limited Edition" only 444 available
- On the road price: £24,995

RB5 Owners Club - www.rb5oc.co.uk

WR Sport Performance Package

Prodrive High wing (similar to the new STi 5 but with the brake light on the wing rather than boot lid). Prodrive Performance pack, consisting of Prodrive ECU, exhaust and revised intercooler piping. On the road price: £27,500

Prodrive WR Sport

Take the standard Impreza Turbo from new and add the full Prodrive interior treatment, suspension package, body kit, wheels with exclusive WR interior and exterior badging (engine upgrade not compulsory) and an official World Rally Sport limited edition of the Impreza Turbo is yours (for £30,000).

Prodrive P1

Throughout 1999, there were strong rumours that the UK market was at long last going to receive a Japanese specification Impreza, with improved levels of overall performance. A two door white Impreza Turbo running on 17 inch gold alloys and Prodrive number plates had been spotted several times. September 22nd 1999, Autocar magazine ran a scoop showing this very same white car, along with a glowing write-up, and an estimated price tag of £30k. Despite having a few inconsistencies (e.g. 2.2 litre engine with 350bhp!), the article answered many of the questions enthusiasts across the country had been asking for many weeks. The white car was actually a prototype for the forthcoming UK spec Impreza supercar. Based on the 2 door Impreza body shell (but without the wide arches of the 22B), the car had been developed by Prodrive during the previous year in conjunction with Fuji Heavy Industries and Subaru Tecnica International in Japan. It had been designed from day 1 to be Subaru UK's response to both 'grey imports' and the phenomenal Mitsubishi EVO 6, which had been receiving rave reviews all year long. "Shock Subaru Announcement - New UK Spec 280 PS Impreza Turbo" was the title of the press release, which ran to a full 9 pages. This car was to be called the Prodrive P1 (Prodrive One), would have the full 280PS (276bhp) of the Japanese spec cars and carried a full 3 year warranty with support from all Subaru UK dealers. This astonishing car had been painstakingly developed, and not only met all requirements necessary for full European Type Approval, but also set class-leading standards for both ride and handling. The main features of the car are as follows:

- **2 Door Saloon Body**
- **Available exclusively in Sonic Blue, similar to the WRC cars, and the same as the 22B**
- **280PS engine, with an estimated 260 lb/ft of torque**
- **Top speed of 155mph, 0-60 in 4.6 seconds**
- **Special Hella driving lamps**
- **Specially Designed "Titanium" 10-spoke O.Z. 17 x 7 alloy wheels**
- **High Ratio Steering Rack**
- **Ventilated front and rear brakes**
- **Shorter throw "Quickshift" gearchange**
- **4 Channel ABS brakes**
- **Rear wiper**
- **Specially designed aerodynamically superior front and rear spoilers**
- **Category 1 alarm/immobiliser, and RAC Trackstar tracking system**
- **Air Conditioning**

Japanese Special Editions

STi 22B

This stunning machine is based on the 1997 World Rally Championship-winning car. Only 399 were built for sale to the domestic market (another 25 were made for overseas markets) and they pre-sold almost instantly in early 1998, although many of those sales were to importers hoping to sell the car immediately. In Japan the car was sold for a retail price of about £28,000, but by the time they appeared in the UK as grey imports, many were sold for over £40k!! There are three cars known to have been issued with the 000 number, belonging to Dave Richards of Prodrive, Colin McRae and Nicky Grist. Colin and Nicky both purchased their cars directly from Subaru for an undisclosed sum.

Features include

- **2.2 litre engine restricted to 280 PS (276 bhp) for the Japanese domestic market.**
- **seam-welded body shell (supposedly identical in shape to the WRC)**
- **Driver-adjustable front/rear diff**
- **Twin-plate racing clutch**
- **Quick steering rack (13:1 ratio)**
- **Adjustable rear wing**
- **revised suspension and bigger brakes over the STi 4**
- **7.5 x 17" BBS alloy wheels with 235/40 ZR17 tyres**
- **Blue Alacantara seats and interior trim**
- **Nardi (non-airbag) steering wheel**

Uniquely numbered identity plate (1 to 400, with No 13 not being issued)

(A reader has pointed out that 22B in hexadecimal is 555 in decimal ...)

Non UK Impreza models

Australasia

In the UK the 208/214 bhp Impreza is officially known as the Impreza Turbo 2000. In Australia and New Zealand, the same Impreza is known as the WRX. In Europe and other markets (e.g. South America), the model is known as the Impreza GT. Apart from minor regional variations (climate control instead of air-con, cruise control, automatic transmission, special editions, heated seats etc.), the cars are essentially identical: 2.0 Turbo, 208/214 bhp, and a quoted 0-62 mph (100 km/h) time of about 6.2 - 6.4 seconds.

The 280 PS WRX models are also available as official imports in Brunei, Hong Kong and Singapore, and Cyprus. Automatic versions are also available, but only in 250 PS 5 door (wagon) form.

In January 1999 there were 400 STi V coupes officially imported to Australia, in a choice of blue or white. Sold at AU\$60k, demand was such that they could be immediately resold at a premium of up to 30%!

In December 1999, the Australian market was fortunate to receive a further 400 STi models (4 doors) based on the STi VI. Rumours persisted that this version had been detuned following some blown engines with the previous STi model, but several independent tests have found the performance of the cars to be virtually identical.

Japan

In Japan, home of Subaru Impreza, the standard model is known as the WRX (not to be confused with the Australian WRX). Most of the current 2 and 4 door models produce 280 PS (276 BHP), on Japanese 100 RON super unleaded fuel, and between 240 to 260 lb ft of torque. Acceleration times are close to 5 seconds for the 0-62 sprint, however top speeds are limited by Japanese law to 112 mph. A Japanese gentleman's agreement also prevents any production vehicle producing over 280 PS (276 bhp), hence a number of vehicles quote this as their standard output, but are widely accepted to produce more.. Bypassing the speed limiter and releasing more power from the engine can be simply achieved by certain under bonnet modifications, including changes to the engine management system.

Also available in Japan, are Subaru models modified by Subaru's advanced vehicle division, STi (Subaru Tecnica International). STi are responsible, along with Prodrive in the UK, for creating the WRC cars driven by the likes of Colin McRae and Richard Burns. Over the years, they have produced a number of production models (STi versions 1 to VI), in coupe, saloon and five door format. They have also released a number of limited edition models such as the V-Limited range and the 22B-STi wide bodied Coupe. Specifications for the STi models can include blueprinted engines, with different pistons and crankshaft, closed deck blocks, uprated close ratio gearbox, uprated suspension (i.e. hard!) and brakes, as well as nice toys such as water spray cooling for the intercooler, and driver adjustable differentials. STi engines rev to a 8250 rpm red line whilst the normal Japanese spec WRX's red line at 7500 rpm. Typically, the equipment specification of the Japanese WRX models are higher than that of the standard export models.

The Japanese spec WRX STi is also available as the 2-door coupe "Type R", which has the same equipment as a STi saloon plus driver-controlled diffs, and an intercooler water spray, but no ABS!

The "Type RA" (Race Altered) is a lighter weight car with some options deleted and deemed the most suitable model in the range as the basis for a rally car. Generally they come without air conditioning, electric windows or radio, but these are available from the options list, and fitted to many road cars. The RA comes with a closed deck block, shorter gearing than standard (150mph at 8,000 rpm!), and rally style vent(s)/flap(s) on the roof.

When imported into the UK, the Japanese specification WRX retail price is approximately 25-100% higher than the standard Impreza Turbo 2000 model, depending on exchange rate, body style and options chosen. More detail on the specification of these cars can be found on the [IWOC](#) web site.

North America

The Impreza Turbo has not been sold to date in the US, partly due to emission regulations, and perhaps also because of the perceived lack of demand for a small-engined Japanese performance car. Instead, the Impreza range is topped by the 2.5RS, with a 165 bhp normally-aspirated engine (which still sports an intercooler intake on the bonnet). This car almost has as much of a cult following in the US and Canada, as the turbo models have in markets where they are available. Due to the excellent interchangeability of parts, many owners have improved their RS by fitting aftermarket wheels, suspension and exhausts, as well as basic styling features such as spoilers and stickers etc. There is now a flourishing performance market in the US, with both turbo and supercharger conversions available. However, all this is due to change for the year 2001 (MY2002 in the US!), when factory turbo Imprezas are due to be sold from Subaru dealers across the continent. No firm details are yet known regarding price and specification, but it is most likely to be based on the export models that the rest of the world receives (~220bhp).

The "Outback Sport" is the Impreza 5-door with 2.2 litre engine, slightly increased ground clearance, two-tone paint, hood scoops, and various sport utility vehicle options as standard.