

Review: 5 vehicles that are easy on the wallet

August 3 2022, by MILES BRANMAN



This photo provided by Ford shows the 2022 Ford Maverick, a compact pickup truck that comes standard with a hybrid engine that gets an EPA-estimated 37 mpg. Credit: Ford Motor Co. via AP

New cars are pricier than ever in today's economy. Inflation, low inventory and now rising interest rates have all taken a toll on prices. Last week, the Fed raised interest rates for the fourth time this year,

compounding the issues that plague car shoppers. Yet in spite of the higher prices, many Americans have an insatiable appetite for trucks and SUVs, which is why automakers keep adding SUVs to their lineups and discontinuing poor-selling sedans. As a result, there's both a dearth of entry-level models and a higher cost just to get into a new vehicle.

With this in mind, the experts at Edmunds rounded up a list of the highest-rated vehicles that occupy the [lower end of the pricing spectrum](#), at around \$20,000.

[NISSAN VERSA](#)

Those who can't stretch all the way to \$20,000 but want a new, reliable and fuel-efficient vehicle should consider the 2022 Nissan Versa. Despite its small footprint, the Versa offers excellent passenger space and a roomy trunk. Driving aids like forward collision warning and lane departure warning come standard. Nissan's Zero Gravity seats are ergonomically friendly, though a few of our editors found they lacked lumbar support.

The Versa feels well built and can even be entertaining to drive—just don't expect much in the way of acceleration. In addition to a price tag that leaves room for options, Versa buyers will save at the pump with an EPA estimate of 35 mpg combined. (We averaged 41 mpg on our evaluation route.)

Starting price: \$16,675

[KIA SOUL](#)

Want a more practical shape? The 2023 Kia Soul is one of a handful of inexpensive and well-reviewed hatchbacks on sale. With car-like handling and SUV-like interior dimensions, the Soul is broadly

appealing. A standard 2.0-liter engine is peppy for around-town driving, though passing maneuvers require some forethought. The continuously variable transmission mimics automatic gear changes, eliminating the usual droning noise. Handling is on par with sportier competitors thanks to balanced steering and controlled body motions.



This photo provided by Kia shows the 2022 Kia Soul, a small wagon that offers more cargo space than you might expect at a glance. Credit: James Lipman/ Kia America via AP

The Soul's boxy exterior allows for easy entry and exit, plus generous headroom for passengers. Standard Apple CarPlay and Android Auto are accessed via an easy-to-use touchscreen. The EPA puts its [fuel economy](#)

at 30 combined mpg, though we only managed 26.8 mpg in our testing.

Starting price: \$21,085

[HYUNDAI VENUE](#)

The line between a hatchback and SUV can sometimes be faint, and the front-wheel-drive-only Hyundai Venue is caught in between. Though it offers ground clearance comparable to other small SUVs, the Venue lacks all-wheel drive as an option. Still, with a [price tag](#) just north of \$20,000, the Venue is among the cheapest ways to sneak into the most popular segment.

An 8-inch touchscreen with Apple CarPlay, Android Auto and navigation is standard and easy to operate. Given its micro size, the Venue has impressive passenger and cargo space. Seat and ride comfort is excellent for the segment, and power is adequate. The EPA rates the 2022 Venue at 31 combined mpg, but we averaged 29 mpg in our driving loop.



This photo provided by Subaru shows the 2022 Subaru Impreza, a compact sedan or hatchback that offers one of the least expensive entry points into an all-wheel-drive vehicle. Credit: Subaru of North America via AP

Starting price: \$20,295

[SUBARU IMPREZA](#)

Just because affordable sedans are primarily front-wheel-drive doesn't mean all-wheel drive is unattainable. The 2022 Subaru Impreza is the least expensive way to get the all-weather assurance of all-[wheel drive](#) in a sedan or hatchback. With a comfortable, spacious cabin and intuitive technology, the Impreza treats passengers well.

Steering and handling is solid, though lackluster acceleration and a droning CVT bring down the driving experience. Standard driving aids like [adaptive cruise control](#), blind-spot monitoring, and lane keeping assist bundle convenience and confidence. The EPA estimates CVT-equipped Impreza sedans will get 32 mpg in combined city/highway driving. Unfortunately, we struggled to average even 28 mpg.

Starting price: \$20,290

[FORD MAVERICK](#)



This photo provided by Hyundai shows the 2022 Hyundai Venue, a subcompact that straddles the line between hatchback and SUV. Credit: David Dewhurst/ Hyundai Motor America via AP



This photo provided by Nissan shows the 2022 Versa, a subcompact sedan that was once the least expensive vehicle available but has gone up slightly in price but also in its materials and build quality in this current generation. Credit: Nissan of North America via AP

When hatchback or small SUV practicality isn't enough, shoppers can turn to small pickups like the Ford Maverick. After falling out of fashion for a while, these light-duty compact trucks are back to offer an affordable alternative for DIY-ers. The Maverick's clever interior storage and a 4.5-foot bed offer versatility, while a standard hybrid powertrain vaults its EPA estimates to 37 combined mpg.

That's better mpg than even the most frugal compact sedans, plus you get

a rugged pickup style, stellar passenger space and crossover-like maneuverability. Ride quality is a tad choppy and hard plastic panels can bump uncomfortably against your knees, but the Maverick's low pricing and utility may help offset the cons. Take note that all 2022 model year Mavericks are sold-out, but Ford has started taking orders for 2023 vehicles.

Starting price: \$22,490

EDMUNDS SAYS:

Note that these inexpensive [prices](#) are for the base models, which might not be carried by dealerships in the current market. You might need to plan ahead and order the vehicle if need be.

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