

Edmunds: Five high-tech vehicles for less than \$36,000

March 25 2020, by Rex Tokeshi-Torres Of Edmunds



This undated photo from Mazda shows the CX-30, an extra-small SUV that features a head-up display, which puts information right in the driver's light of sight. (Courtesy of Mazda North American Operations via AP)

Every year brings new technology features in vehicles. Most of them

undeniably enhance a vehicle's modern appeal and safety, such as widescreen infotainment displays and safety systems that can automatically help prevent or mitigate accidents.

But these high-tech features also come with a higher price tag. The average national transaction price of a new vehicle in February was a little more than \$37,000, an increase of about \$5,700 in the past five years, according to Edmunds data.

Some of that price creep is due to the popularity of SUVs, which typically cost more than sedans. But the fact remains that if you want a high-tech car today, it can quickly get expensive. With that in mind, the experts at Edmunds have picked their favorite high-tech vehicles for under \$36,000. These models get you the most for your money and still come in under the average transaction price.

To get on the list, a vehicle needed to have the following features: traffic-adaptive cruise control, a 7-inch infotainment screen or bigger, Android Auto and Apple CarPlay smartphone compatibility, and a collection of advanced driver safety aids. The latter included an automatic braking system to help avoid a front collision, a blind-spot warning system to monitor the vehicle's sides, rear cross-traffic alert to help when backing out of parking spots and driveways, and a system to warn about unintended lane departures.

The listed manufacturer's suggested retail price (MSRP) includes destination fees. Since options on a car can vary, we've also recommended the trim level and equipment package that get you all the tech we're discussing.



This undated photo from Kia shows the Forte GT, a small sedan that features auto-leveling headlights and automatic high beams. (Courtesy of Kia Motors America via AP)

2020 NISSAN VERSA SR WITH CONVENIENCE PACKAGE

MSRP: \$19,465

The redesigned Versa sedan is small but packed with the latest tech. It comes standard with Nissan's Safety Shield 360 suite of safety aids. LED headlights with automatic high beams also come standard, as well as a 7-inch infotainment display along with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay integration. The Convenience package we recommend adds a traffic-adaptive cruise control system.

Other advantages to the Versa include a roomy trunk and high fuel economy. Sluggish acceleration is the car's main drawback.

2020 KIA FORTE GT WITH GT2 PACKAGE

MSRP: \$25,655

The Kia Forte small sedan comes with a majority of features on our list, along with an 8-inch display, lane keeping assist and automatic high beams. The Forte GT trim's optional GT2 package adds missing elements such as the blind-spot monitor, adaptive cruise control, rear cross-traffic alert, and a pedestrian detection upgrade to the standard forward collision mitigation system.



This undated photo from Hyundai shows the Tucson, a small SUV that features a surround-view monitor, which provides drivers with a bird's-eye view of the vehicle when parking. (Courtesy of Hyundai Motor America via AP)

We like how the Forte provides so many features for the money. Fuel economy is also high. On the downside, the Forte has a slightly uncomfortable ride.

2020 MAZDA CX-30 WITH PREMIUM PACKAGE

MSRP: \$29,300

The all-new CX-30 is a stylish addition to Mazda's small SUV lineup. Get a CX-30 with its optional Premium package, and it'll come loaded with everything in our criteria and more. You also get a system that can help steer to keep you in your lane, headlights that automatically adjust when you turn the wheel, a head-up display that shows you important information on the windshield, and an 8.8-inch infotainment screen.

In addition to its technology, the CX-30 also has upscale interior and poised handling. The rear seats are a little snug, however, so try them out if you have taller passengers.



This undated photo from Nissan, shows the Versa SR, an extra-small sedan that features Nissan's Safety Shield 360, a suite of advanced safety features usually found in more expensive vehicles. (Courtesy of Nissan North America via AP)

2020 HYUNDAI TUCSON ULTIMATE

MSRP: \$33,020

The Hyundai Tucson small SUV is comfortable and loaded with easy-to-use tech. It comes standard with nearly all of our required features. LED headlights with automatic high beams are also standard. You'll have to step up to the Ultimate to get traffic-adaptive cruise control, but when you do you'll also get a wealth of other technology-oriented features. These include a surround-view camera system to help see what is around

you when you're parking, pedestrian detection, an 8-inch display and wireless device charging.

Hyundai's Tucson has less cargo space and lower fuel economy numbers than its competitors, but overall it's a smart pick for a tech-loaded small SUV.

2020 SUBARU FORESTER TOURING

MSRP: \$35,605

The Subaru Forester small SUV meets most of our criteria even in its base configuration. But it's lacking a big enough touchscreen and blind-spot monitoring with rear cross-traffic alert. For those, you'll need to get the Limited or top-level Touring trim. Going with the Touring gets you a Forester with tech extras such as steering-responsive headlights, a driver distraction monitor and reverse automatic braking.



This undated photo from Subaru shows the Forester, a small SUV that features steering-responsive headlights and a driver distraction monitor. (Courtesy of Subaru of America via AP)

Other positive attributes include standard all-wheel drive and a comfortable ride quality. Compared to other small SUVs, however, the Forester's engine is underpowered.

EDMUNDS SAYS: While modern vehicle technology has made new cars more expensive, the good news is that the best tech is no longer relegated to the high end cars.

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