

Best All-Wheel-Drive Vehicles for 2010

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Like it or not, winter has descended on most of North America. For many folks in the U.S., that means a lot of slipping and sliding on streets made slick by snow, ice and rain. A vehicle with all-wheel drive can do much to keep your ride firmly on the cold, wet pavement and bolster your confidence in the saddle. Having four wheels turning instead of two is simply better for gripping the road when the elements are working against you. To help focus your quest for a suitable all-wheel-drive vehicle, here are our picks for the best of the 2010 model year. They are listed in no particular order, and there's one to fit every budget and style. Audi Q5

Given the company's history with all-wheel drive, it really shouldn't be any surprise that Audi makes an appearance on our list. This brand-spanking new baby ute packs all the style and sophistication of its larger sibling, the Q7, but at a fraction of the price. Under the hood is a powerful 3.2-liter V6 engine with 270 horsepower and 243 lb-ft of torque, bolted to a 6-speed automatic transmission. Like the A4 2.0T Avant, the Q5 gets its footing from quattro all-wheel drive, which means this is one crossover that can get you to the grocery store come rain, snow or shine. All that capability will set you back, though. The 2010 Audi Q5 carries a sizable price tag of \$37,350.

BMW 328i xDrive Sports Wagon

If you need to make an impression but Audi offerings don't quite crinkle your socks, look no further than the BMW 328i xDrive Sports Wagon. Just like its 4-door cousin, the 328i xDrive sedan, the Sports Wagon tackles snow, sleet and ice with BMW's capable xDrive all-wheel-drive system. The BMW wagon provides a big level of functionality over the short-roof version, and it looks better, too. Throw in a 3.0-liter inline 6-cylinder engine with 230 horsepower and plenty of torque and you can be sure this is one wagon that won't get left behind when the light turns green. BMW's solution to the all-wheel-drive conundrum carries a price of \$37,400, which puts it within a stone's throw of the A4 2.0T Avant. Chevrolet Equinox

The Equinox has come a long, long way from its humble roots as an uninspired crossover. Chevrolet has graced the car/truck mutation with sharp, new styling inside and out, and the 182 horsepower 2.4-liter 4-cylinder engine provides enough oomph to help the well-dressed ute get out of its own way. An excellent 6-speed automatic transmission handles shifting gears, and General Motors will let you deck your Equinox with all the luxury amenities that companies such as Lexus and Infiniti have to offer — for a price. While you can nab an Equinox in front-wheel drive for around \$22,240, the go-anywhere ability of all-wheel drive will cost you an additional \$2,000. Seems like a small price to pay, especially when the snow starts falling. Ford Flex

Surprised to see Ford's hip new people mover on the list? Don't be. If the sea of crossovers out there isn't to your liking, it might be worth giving the 2010 Ford Flex the once-over. Aside from a more than capable 3.5-liter V6 engine with 262 horsepower and 248 lb-ft of torque, the Flex utilizes a seamless 6-speed automatic transmission and all-wheel drive to get you to the mall without the worry of being categorized by the masses. You can also opt for the new twin-turbocharged EcoBoost V6 with 355 horsepower, although that option will set you back nearly \$7,000 over the all-wheel-drive Flex's price tag of \$33,200. Throw in the ability to comfortably seat seven and this might be the sharpest way to go dashing through the snow in 2010. Subaru Outback

If the Forester strikes you as a little too truckish for day-to-day living and the Impreza is too small, there's always the Outback. Although this legendary Subaru wagon has garnered a reputation as the vehicle of choice for free-spirited, self-sacrificing granola crunchers, it is more than comfortable enough for more mundane, everyday driving adventures. When the snow starts falling, its well-executed full-time all-wheel-drive system makes efficient use of the power from either a 2.5-liter 4-cylinder or a beefy 3.6-liter 265-horsepower 6-cylinder engine. Though the new styling may not be to everyone's tastes, the large wheel arches and leaning headlights give the wagon some serious personality. The 2010 Subaru Outback starts at \$22,995. Suzuki SX4 Crossover

If even the Subaru offering is slightly over budget, Suzuki has you covered with the most affordable all-wheel-drive vehicle in 2010 — the SX4 Crossover. While the car's styling isn't going to win any beauty pageants, the low price of \$16,699 might net you the title of smartest kid on your block. And Suzuki is no stranger to all-wheel drive. The company has been perfecting its system through years of off-road racing, and the result is a more-than-capable platform to get you through the worst weather. The 2.0-liter 4-cylinder engine produces just 143 horsepower and 136 lb-ft of torque, but since the tiny crossover weighs less than 3,000 pounds, it moves along without breaking a sweat.

Volvo V50 T5 AWD

If anyone knows about frolicking through the snow, it's Volvo. The company was building safe, all-weather-capable cars and wagons before most of the motoring world was even aware of crash safety. The 2010 Volvo V50 T5 AWD gives the Audi A4 2.0T Avant a run for its money when it comes to style and performance by delivering a turbocharged 2.5-liter 5-cylinder engine. With 227 horsepower on tap and the option of a 6-speed manual transmission, this is the performance all-wheel-drive wagon to have. The V50 T5 AWD starts at \$33,050. Lexus IS 250 AWD

When it comes to stylish all-wheel-drive sedans, Lexus may suddenly have a firm grip on the market. The smallest of the Japanese company's fleet is the IS 250 AWD. The car is powered by a 2.5-liter V6 engine with 204 horsepower and 184 lb-ft of torque. That may not sound like a lot, but with power going to all four wheels via the 6-speed automatic transmission, the IS 250 AWD scoots along effortlessly. When the weather turns sour, you and your occupants are ferried about in fine leather and warm wood accents. The 2010 Lexus IS 250 AWD is priced at \$35,475. Mercedes-Benz GLK350 4Matic

Mercedes-Benz's all-new 2010 GLK350 4Matic packs plenty of power, thanks to a 3.5-liter V6 engine. With 268 horsepower and 258 lb-ft of torque, this CUV has no problem threading mountain passes, and the 7-speed automatic transmission and capable 4Matic all-wheel-drive system make short work of slippery roads. Despite the CUV's relatively short wheelbase of 108.5 inches, there's plenty of space inside for cargo and passengers. The 2010 GLK350 4Matic starts at \$36,600, including the snow-conquering all-wheel-drive system. Infiniti G37x AWD

If the 2010 Lexus IS 250 AWD doesn't flip your switches, maybe Infiniti's G37x AWD has what it takes. With a more powerful 328-horsepower 3.7-liter V6 engine, the Infiniti is considerably quicker than its 2.5-liter-equipped Lexus competition. Inside, occupants get heated front seats swaddled in excellent leather, and you can opt for one of the best navigation systems we've seen. A smooth 7-speed automatic transmission makes the most of fuel economy, helping the all-wheel-drive car deliver 17 mpg city/25 mpg highway. The base price for the G37x AWD is \$35,750, but if you want to add a technology or navigation package, expect that number to climb.