# 2009 Polaris Sportsman gets major changes

Since the Sportsman is Polaris' all-time best seller, it may be a good thing that the 2009 models don't look all that much different. But be assured that the new XP (Xtreme Performance) Sportsman models are dramatically different and superior in every way – terrific for both utility and sport riding.

You get to choose from a Sportsman 850 XP and a smaller-engined single cylinder Sportsman 550 XP. Engine and powertrain aside, they sport an all-new narrow frame, all-new front suspension and vastly improved handling characteristics. Replacing the MacPherson strut front end is a very nifty double A-arm front design that nearly eliminates steering kickback when crawling over stone river bottoms and stump-strewn forest trails. Life gets even easier with the optional electronic power steering (EPS), which fires-up right away when you switch on the electrics, not just when the vehicle is in motion.

The 550 single is built by longtime Polaris engine partner Fuji Heavy Industries in concert with Polaris engineers. Its 40 horsepower, with lots of low and mid-range torque, as well as great driveability, will satisfy the needs of most ATV owners. A counter-balancer smoothes out the vibration of the single while computer-controlled fuel injection maintains maximum engine performance from idle to full throttle.

Sportsman 850 XP

But it's the new 850 that everyone is talking about. Built by Polaris, this eight-valve liquid-cooled twin cranks out upwards of 70 horsepower with dual balance shafts and rubber engine mounts for smoothness and maximum rider comfort. And with 450 watts of electrical output at idle, owners will have plenty of juice to run accessories. To keep up with the more powerful engine the Sportsman XP gets a 20% larger radiator and more efficient water pump.

Both engines are in-line with the frame and canted, which creates a narrower seating position and more foot room. A crankshaft runs down the middle of the Sportsman's spine.

Polaris' Active Descent Control (ADC) gives you all-wheel braking when the vehicle is in all-wheel drive and operating at speeds less than 15 miles per hour without throttle. Just point it down a steep hill and put your trust in the system. It works. The On-Demand AWD system engages automatically when you need more traction and then reverts, also automatically, back to two-wheel drive. Bringing the Sportsman to a stop is as simple as grabbing the single brake lever. On the 850 XP it clamps down on four discs; three on the 550 XP.

Polaris ATVs have long been famous for their ride, and these new Sportsman XPs are better still. The new IRS features dual-stage rear springs that provide up to 10.25 inches of travel while the new front suspension affords up to nine inches of travel. Ground clearance is an impressive 12 inches.

We doubt that any Sportsman owner has been looking for a reason to give up his ride, but the new 850 XP and 550 XP will be mighty hard to resist. ∞

Sportsman 550 XP

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