

arctic cat bearcat 550

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Discover the Arctic Cat Bearcat 550: A Snowmobiling Powerhouse for the Modern Adventurer

When winter turns the world into a glittering white playground, the desire to explore the untouched terrain grows stronger. For seasoned riders and newcomers alike, the right snowmobile can transform a simple trip into an unforgettable adventure. Among the many options on the market, the **Arctic Cat Bearcat 550** stands out as a blend of performance, reliability, and comfort. In this comprehensive guide, we'll dive into everything you need to know—from its engineering marvels to real world performance, maintenance tips, and buying advice.

Why the Arctic Cat Bearcat 550 Is a Top Choice

Arctic Cat, a name synonymous with quality and innovation in the snowmobile industry, has built a reputation for delivering machines that perform under the most demanding conditions. The Bearcat 550, part of the Bearcat lineup, is engineered for riders who crave a balance of power, agility, and user friendly features.

- **Powerful yet efficient engine** – The 550cc twin spark engine delivers robust torque for tackling steep climbs.
- **Advanced suspension** – Dual shock setup and adjustable settings keep the ride smooth across varied snow conditions.
- **Comfort-focused ergonomics** – Heated seats, adjustable handlebars, and an intuitive control layout reduce fatigue on long rides.
- **Safety and technology** – Integrated traction control, a durable frame, and a clear, high visibility headlight system enhance rider confidence.

Historical Context: The Evolution of Arctic Cat and the Bearcat Line

Arctic Cat's journey began in 1975, when the company introduced its first snowmobile, the *Arctic Cat 2 track*. Over the decades, Arctic Cat expanded its product range to include a variety of models tailored for touring, racing, and off road exploration. The Bearcat series emerged in the late 2000s as a mid range offering, designed to bridge the gap between entry level and high performance snowmobiles.

With each iteration, the Bearcat line has incorporated customer feedback and technological advances. The 550 model, introduced in 2015, marked a significant upgrade, featuring a new engine design, enhanced suspension geometry, and a more streamlined chassis. The result is a snowmobile that feels both nimble on groomed trails and formidable on backcountry terrain.

Technical Specifications at a Glance

Engine and Performance

The heart of the **Arctic Cat Bearcat 550** is its 550cc, twin spark, liquid cooled engine. Here's what makes it special:

- **Power Output** – 60 horsepower (peak) and 44 lb ft of torque.
- **Fuel Efficiency** – Approximately 30 miles per gallon on mixed terrain.
- **Cooling System** – Radiator-based liquid cooling keeps the engine within optimal temperature ranges.
- **Transmission** – 6 speed manual gearbox with a quick shift lever for rapid gear changes.

Suspension and Handling

Handling is critical for any snowmobile, especially one intended for varied conditions. The Bearcat 550 incorporates:

- Front Suspension – Dual shock absorbers with adjustable preload and damping.
- Rear Suspension – Single shock with a 1.5 inch travel range.
- Wheelbase – 70 inches for stability at high speeds.
- Track Width – 23 inches, providing a good balance between traction and maneuverability.

Weight and Dimensions

Weight and size influence both performance and storage options. The Bearcat 550 weighs approximately 275 pounds (124.7 kg) with the rider's weight included. Its dimensions are:

- Length – 110 inches (279.4 cm)
- Width – 44 inches (111.8 cm)
- Height – 48 inches (121.9 cm)

Comfort and Ergonomics

Long rides demand a comfortable riding position. The Bearcat 550 delivers with:

- Heated Seat – Built in seat heater with adjustable temperature.
- Handlebar Adjustments – Height and angle adjustments to suit rider preference.
- Foot Pegs – Ergonomic foot pegs with rubberized grips.
- Windshield – Large, adjustable windshield for wind protection.

Real-World Performance: Riding the Bearcat 550

On Groomed Trails

When cruising on groomed trails, the Bearcat 550's powerful engine and responsive transmission shine. The twin spark system ensures a smooth power delivery, making acceleration feel effortless. The 6 speed gearbox allows riders to maintain optimal RPMs, preserving fuel efficiency without sacrificing performance.

Off-Road and Backcountry

Off road enthusiasts appreciate the 23 inch track width and the dual shock front suspension. The adjustable damping lets riders fine tune the setup for soft snow, packed powder, or icy patches. The 550cc engine's torque is particularly useful when tackling steep ascents or navigating uneven terrain.

Handling in Extreme Conditions

Cold temperatures can affect engine performance and rider comfort. The Bearcat 550's liquid cooling system mitigates overheating risks, while the heated seat and windscreen help maintain rider warmth. The high visibility headlight and reflective decals improve safety during low light rides.

Maintenance Tips: Keeping Your Bearcat 550 in Peak Condition

Pre-Ride Checklist

1. Check Tire Pressure – Adjust to 25–30 psi depending on snow conditions.
2. Inspect Brakes – Ensure both front and rear brakes engage smoothly.
3. Verify Fluid Levels – Engine oil, coolant, and brake fluid should be at recommended levels.
4. Inspect Track – Look for cuts or excessive wear that could affect traction.

Regular Service Schedule

- Oil Change – Every 150 miles or 3 months, whichever comes first.
- Coolant Flush – Every 12 months.
- Brake Fluid Replacement – Every 24 months.
- Track Inspection – After every 500 miles, replace if wear exceeds manufacturer guidelines.

Common Issues and Quick Fixes

- Engine Misfire – Check spark plugs and ignition timing.
- Brake Fade – Inspect brake pads and ensure proper fluid levels.
- Suspension Noise – Tighten shock bolts and replace worn bushings.
- Track Wear – Use a track repair kit to patch small cuts; replace for extensive damage.

Customer Reviews: What Riders Are Saying

Feedback from real users provides valuable insights. Here's a snapshot of what the community has to say:

- John D. – “The Bearcat 550 feels like a bike on snow. The power is reliable, and the heated seat is a game changer during those long rides.”
- Maria L. – “I love the adjustable suspension. I can tweak it for both groomed tracks and backcountry trails without any hassle.”
- David K. – “Maintenance is straightforward. The service center in my area is quick and knowledgeable.”
- Sofia R. – “It's a bit heavier than my previous model, but the added stability makes up for it.”

Comparisons: How the Bearcat 550 Stacks Up

Against the Arctic Cat Bearcat 500

The 500 model features a slightly smaller engine (500cc) and fewer luxury options, such as heated seats and adjustable suspension. The 550's enhanced power and comfort make it a more versatile choice for riders who plan extended trips.

Against the Arctic Cat Bearcat 600

The 600 offers a larger engine (600cc) and a higher horsepower rating. While it provides more raw power, the 550's lighter weight and lower fuel consumption make it more economical for daily use.

Against Competitors (e.g., Polaris Snowman 550, Ski-Doo STX 550)

While Polaris and Ski-Doo offer comparable models, the Bearcat 550 differentiates itself through its advanced suspension geometry and user friendly ergonomics. Additionally, Arctic Cat's reputation for durable frames and responsive handling gives it an edge for riders who prioritize reliability.

Buying Guide: What to Look For

Determine Your Riding Style

Ask yourself: Do you primarily ride groomed trails, or do you venture into backcountry? The Bearcat 550's balanced design suits both, but you may want to prioritize certain features based on your preference.

Check the Warranty and Service Options

Arctic Cat typically offers a 3 year or 10,000 mile warranty on the engine and transmission. Ensure you understand what's covered and locate authorized service centers near you.

Consider the Total Cost of Ownership

Beyond the purchase price, factor in fuel consumption, maintenance, and potential accessories (e.g., custom tracks, additional heaters). The Bearcat 550's efficient engine helps keep operating costs moderate.

Test Ride

Never buy a snowmobile without a test ride. Pay attention to the throttle response, braking feel, and overall ride quality. Adjust the seat and handlebars to your comfort before making a decision.

Where to Purchase

You can buy the Arctic Cat Bearcat 550 through:

- Authorized Arctic Cat dealerships – they offer warranty, financing, and service packages.
- Reputable online retailers – ensure you're purchasing from a certified seller.
- Used snowmobile markets – if buying second hand, verify mileage, maintenance records, and any prior damage.

Warranty and Support

Arctic Cat's standard warranty covers:

- Engine – 3 years or 10,000 miles.
- Transmission – 3 years or 10,000 miles.
- Frame – 3 years or 10,000 miles.

For extended coverage, consider purchasing the *Extended Warranty Program*, which covers additional parts and labor beyond the standard warranty.

Conclusion: Embrace the Snow with Confidence

The **Arctic Cat Bearcat 550** stands as a testament to thoughtful engineering and rider-centric design. Whether you're navigating pristine groomed runs, conquering backcountry trails, or simply enjoying

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