

ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

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2015 Jeep® Renegade

VEHICLES • EQUIPMENT • TECHNOLOGY • PEOPLE • EVENTS • DESTINATIONS • ATTRACTIONS

NEW GO-ANYWHERE RENEGADE IS TRUE TO ITS ROOTS

BY JOE SAGE



Some questions are easier to answer once all the facts are in hand. It becomes hard to believe they were ever questions. As rumors grew and early images were glimpsed, the all-new Jeep® Renegade generated questions as to its seriousness of duty, basically just because it seemed small. Turns out that was silly.

It is categorized as a subcompact, with dimensions smaller than the Cherokee. But our world is populated with a great many vehicles of increasingly small size, and when you see the Renegade in person, it fits right in. Jeep today seems to be like Steve Jobs was in Apple's breakthrough years—knowing what you want before you even know you want it. And getting it right.

The new subcompact SUV (or B-SUV) segment is exploding this year, a brief drop in fuel prices not slowing it down. With more upcoming entries from the domestics, Europeans and Asians, interest is high, and sales of the earliest entrants have been hot.

As surely as today's full-size cars would have been called midsize not long ago, we can only wonder how long the subcompact term will even last. It sounds so relative.

Tread lightly, reads the mantra of responsible off-road use. What better way, than to keep things small? There seems something very right about a small Jeep.

Yet treading radically is equally Jeep-like.

The Jeep name and product had long been synonymous with all-wheel drive and off-road capability, no questions asked. Having seen some front-wheel-drive models over the past decade, purists want to imme-

diately know where this falls. We understand why people ask, and so does Jeep.

We met the development team near San Jose, then drove the Renegade through the rugged coastal mountains to the California State Parks system's famous Hollister Hills State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA). The facility includes 4100 acres, 152 miles of trails, a motocross course, campgrounds—and a 2425-foot vertical drop, at least 1000 feet more than many midsize ski resorts. We would definitely be getting a serious taste of this new small Jeep's capabilities.

TRUE TO THE BRAND

Yes, there is a Trailhawk. That one fact confirms that the Renegade achieves full and unquestioned Jeep-hood. "We stayed true to the brand," says Jeep brand director Jim Morrison. There could be no other way, as we absorb the development process behind the new Jeep Renegade.

The Renegade team kept two benchmarks close to their hearts—the premium end, as represented by the runaway successful Grand Cherokee; and the unmatched formula of purpose-built utility plus freedom, forever embodied in the Jeep Wrangler. From these touchpoints, the new Renegade's personality and purpose start to come into focus.

About a year earlier, a daringly new Jeep Cherokee compact SUV provoked quite a stir at first. Once the actual vehicle saw the light of day, all questions were put to rest, and Jeep soon had yet another top-selling hit.

That process seems to be repeating itself this year with the Renegade. It's smaller, so people have questions. And once again, the questions have easy (and strong) answers. We anticipate another big hit for the brand.

Renegade has some platform commonality with an upcoming Fiat 500X (an enticing little number revealed at the LA Auto Show). The Jeep was the priority, with Fiat simply seiz-

ing an opportunity to incorporate a few things. You will never mistake the two. Elements of the Wrangler are evident in the flat-grille-and-headlights treatment. The vertical windshield and side glass are a Wrangler cue that locked in our whole perspective, once pointed out. Square taillights and trapezoidal wheels also echo Wrangler. Front and rear are signature red tow hooks, and down below are serious skid plates. Renegade is 100 percent designed and engineered in Michigan. Its Jeep roots run deep.

ALWAYS MAKE IT A JEEP

You hear "all-new" a lot. This is a pure case of it. Jeep design chief Mark Allen points out that the Renegade "is not replacing anything. It's a new red-hot segment." Indeed, this B-SUV segment has emerged suddenly as the next big thing, and Jeep's timing—on the front of the wave—could not be better.

But it's not all about styling and packag-

ing. Under the skin are elements delivering purpose and performance. "The customer expects capability," says Morrison, "and we deliver it. It's in our DNA."

Compared to Jeep Cherokee, Renegade is about 16 inches shorter, with about a 6-inch shorter wheelbase, is about 3/4" narrower and 1-1/4" lower in height, with a load floor height barely an inch lower. Renegade is 600 pounds lighter than the Cherokee.

Renegade's body has a high level of torsional rigidity, with 70 percent high-strength steel, and its suspension tackles high clearance situations under full load off-road, with no comfort or performance penalty on-road.

The Trailhawk's suspension can reach 8.1



SPECIFICATIONS: 2015 RENEGADE

Engine: 1.4L MultiAir Turbo I-4
 POWER/TORQUE160 hp / 184 lb-ft
 TRANSMISSION6-speed manual
 FUEL.....unleaded reg; premium recom'd
 MPGt.b.d. ("more than 30 MPG hwy")
 TOWINGnot recommended
 ENGINE ASSEMBLY.....Termoli, Italy
 • STANDARD ON:.....Sport, Latitude (4x2, 4x4)

Engine: 2.4L MultiAir2 Tigershark
 POWER/TORQUE180 hp / 175 lb-ft
 TRANSMISSION9-speed automatic
 FUEL.....unleaded regular
 MPGt.b.d. ("more than 30 MPG hwy")
 TOWING(with 4x4) 2000 lb
 ENGINE ASSEMBLY.....Dundee, Michigan
 • STANDARD ON:.....Limited (4x2, 4x4)
Trailhawk (4x4)
 • (OPTIONAL ON):.....Sport, Latitude (4x2, 4x4)

4x4 Systems

JEEP ACTIVE DRIVE. Optional: Sport, Latitude, Limited models: Fully disconnecting rear axle, w auto 4x4 engagement

JEEP ACTIVE DRIVE LOW. Standard: Trailhawk: Full-time 4x4 mode w active on-demand clutch, neutral

CENTER DIFFERENTIAL	4x2	4x4	Trailhkw
GROUND CLEARANCE (")	6.7	7.9	8.7
APPROACH ANGLE	17.9°	21.0°	30.5°
BREAKOVER ANGLE	21.2°	24.0°	25.7°
DEPARTURE ANGLE	29.7°	32.1°	34.3°

STEERING	.....electric power rack & pinion
TURNING CIRCLE	.....(4x2, 4x4) 36.3 ft.....Trailhawk: 35.3 ft
TURNS LOCK-TO-LOCK	.....(4x2, 4x4) 2.68.....Trailhawk: 2.76
FUEL CAPACITY	.....12.7 gal
WHEELS	.....16,17,18-inch; 17 on Trailhawk
WHEELBASE	.....101.2 in
OVERALL LENGTH	.....166.6 in
OVERALL WIDTH	.....74.2 in
OVERALL HEIGHT	.....66.5 in
LOAD FLOOR HEIGHT	.....29.8 in
CARGO VOLUME	.....18.5 to 50.8 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....3044 to 3573 lb
FINAL ASSEMBLY	.....Melfi, Italy



inches or articulation, with 8.7 inches of ground clearance (which matches Cherokee). Sport, Latitude and Limited models have slightly lower clearance, more geared toward highway travel or more moderate outings. (More drivetrain and suspension details are given in photo captions.)

Renegade's main distinctions come down to a partly definable and partly indefinable mixture of style, function and an owner's particular purpose.

Sport and Latitude models come standard with a 1.4-liter turbo and six-speed manual. Limited and Trailhawk models have a 2.4-liter Tigershark and a 9-speed automatic (as introduced in the Cherokee). The larger engine has 20 more horsepower, but the smaller turbo has more torque. The Tigershark has tow capability, up to 2000 pounds (with 4x4 only) and is optional on Sport and Latitude (but then packaged with that 9-speed auto). All are available in 4x2 or 4x4 models, except the Trail-Rated Trailhawk, which is of course 4x4 only. Customers expect fuel efficiency in the subcompact segment. Although EPA numbers are not out yet, Jeep is confident they will exceed 30 MPG—for either engine and transmission.

Renegade safety features, many of which are segment exclusives, include forward collision warning, lane departure warning, blind spot monitoring, rear cross path detection, rear camera with dynamic backup lines, electronic stability control with roll mitigation and seven air bags.

FUN IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS

Not all of Renegade's magic is found where the rubber hits the rocks, dirt or pavement. To develop a clean-sheet interior for the new machine, interior design chief Klaus Busse took Jeep's youngest

designers on Wrangler outings, then "we would give them a pencil and see what they draw."

Results are strong, clean and complete. Classic gauges work together with contextual information. Modern touches include orange trim inspired by base jumpers. The upper instrument panel is colloquially named after virtual film star Wall-E. An electronic parking brake creates maximum console storage. All have Uconnect systems, with screen size and features climbing by model grade.

There are details added throughout just for fun and spirit (and brand). Designers have snuck in a series of what the computer industry calls Easter eggs—fun little surprises. They include splashes of mud, profiles of Jeeps, terrain maps, seven-bar grilles and more. Nobody on any one team knows where they all are, says Busse, "and management doesn't know anything." Some of our media crew searched high and low, hoping to locate every one of them. Some think they did. Happy hunting!

A recurrent "X" theme reflects the classic design of a jerry can, stamped to increase the rigidity of its large flat sides, and usually found on a classic army Jeep. The "X" appears in everything from taillights to the MySky removable roof.

That roof is inspired by the open-air spirit of the Wrangler. Available in manual or power tilt-slide removable versions, its slim and lightweight panels can be popped off and easily stowed.

Ultimately, those details are just a lot of fun. And that's the point. The new Jeep Renegade was tested all over the world, run through the full gamut of Jeep test evaluations. But ultimately, Renegade is just a lot of fun. Very serious fun, if that's your flavor. The vehicle is expected to start arriving at dealers in early March—right now. ■

Renegade is the first Jeep to incorporate Koni frequency selective damping. Front suspension comprises MacPherson strut, coil springs, flat front steel cross-member, high-strength steel double shell lower control arms for 4x4, high-strength steel mono shell lower control arms for 4x2, and stabilizer bar. Rear suspension has a new Chapman strut, high-strength steel links, isolated steel rear cradle for 4x4 (non-isolated for 4x2), coil springs, and stabilizer bar. We drove the lineup over a full gamut of challenges at Hollister Hills—tight breakovers, narrow troughs, boulder fields and water hazards—conquering even the toughest demands with ease and comfort, while showing off Renegade's tough capability.



BASE PRICES: 2015 RENEGADE

RENEGADE SPORT	4x2	\$17,995
	4x4	\$19,995
RENEGADE LATITUDE	4x2	\$21,295
	4x4	\$23,295
RENEGADE LIMITED	4x2	\$24,795
	4x4	\$26,795
RENEGADE TRAILHAWK	4x4 only	\$25,995
ABSOLUTE TOP-OPTIONED SAMPLE		\$32,000
DESTINATION CHARGE		\$995