

Toyota royalty

BY JOE SAGE

Here's a new idea. Or it seems that way to us, as it turns out that in almost 20 years of doing this, we've never had a Land Cruiser in the fleet before. Amazing. But it has been around for some time, of course: various flavors of Land Cruiser (and there are still multiple flavors worldwide) are Toyota's longest-standing badge and have collectively sold 6.5 million copies. They've had time to get it right.

Today's Land Cruiser has bloodlines back to the first model in 1951 (which more directly begat the well-known J40 short-wheelbase sport off-roader), but descends more directly from the long-body FJ55 born in 1967.

Our Land Cruiser's Monroney sticker, where models and trim levels are generally spelled out, says simply "4WD SUV V8," the only way it comes. And it works fine like that. In fact, in this case it simplifies a complex challenge. As with any vehicle to a degree, and this vehicle in particular, they must position it within the rest of the Toyota SUV and crossover lineup (itself comprising 13 of Toyota's 37 US models); against the competition; and against its Lexus luxury equivalent. Having just one Land Cruiser trim and drivetrain simplifies things, avoiding overlap and providing clarity. It also

suits the vehicle's core persona. Fundamental. Solid. Established. No muss, no fuss. Just getting the job done. And it suits it in style and finish, too (to a degree), as this leaves headroom for the \$86,080-and-up Lexus LX 570.

You know how some vehicles have a cool option that you know will always put a smile on your face, if you fork out some extra cash? On the Land Cruiser, if it was a good idea, it's already included—such as a cooler box in the console, providing you with an ever-ready chilled beverage on a hot Arizona day.

As for fundamentals, suspension and handling that are equally comfortable on- or off-road, an advanced 4WD system, 8100-pound tow capacity, almost 9 inches of ground clearance, and even an especially tight turning circle of 38.7 feet are an impressive combination.

If you like the perennially popular 4Runner, you'll like the Land Cruiser. It's not just meat and potatoes—Land Cruiser does have premium touches along with its deep layers of capability—but it has that same sort of function-first feel with user-friendly controls and interface (for the most part).

If you've asked yourself what kind of Toyota you can get for almost 90 grand, here's your answer. The audio could be a little better, USB ports could be in a better location, and we wish we could turn off the tilt-away steering wheel. Its interior styling is a little plainer than its price, but that may well be the point.

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	5.7L V8 DOHC 32v w/dual indep VVT-i, EFI, aluminum block w aluminum alloy head
COMPRESSION RATIO	10.2:1
DRIVETRAIN	full-time 4WD
HP/TORQUE	381 hp / 401 lb-ft
TRANS	8-spd electronically controlled automatic with intelligence (ECT-i)
TRANSFER CASE / 4WD	high 1,000 / low 2,618, A-TRAC and Torsen locking limited-slip center diff; multi-terrain select, hill-start assist, crawl control w off-road turn assist
SUSPENSION	F: Kinetic Dynamic Suspension System (KDSS), indep double-wishbone w coils, 1.68" stblzr bar; R: 4-link w coils, 0.98" stblzr bar
STEERING	vehicle speed-sensing, variable ratio, power-assisted rack & pinion
BRAKES	F: 13.9" vented disc / R: 13.6" vented disc, center-mounted hand brake
WHEELS / TIRES	18x8.0 alloy / P285/60 R18, full-size spare
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	194.9 / 112.2 in
TURNING CIRCLE	38.7 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	8.9 in
APPROACH / DEPART	32 / 24°
SEATING CAPACITY	three-row, eight-passenger
HEADROOM (F/2/3)	38.3 / 38.9 / 35.8 in
LEGROOM (F/2/3)	42.9 / 34.4 / 28.3 in
CARGO CAPACITY	16.1 / 43.0 / 81.7 cu.ft
WEIGHT / GVWR	5815 / 7385 lb
PAYLOAD / TOW CAPACITY	1320 / 8100 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	87 oct regular / 24.6 gal
MPG	13/18/15 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	\$84,765
REAR SEAT ENTERTAINMENT: DVD system w two indiv 11.6" displays, RCA jacks, HDMI input, remote and two wireless headsets	2220
DESTINATION CHARGE	1295
TOTAL	\$88,280

For purity of purpose, Toyota Land Cruiser represents a mission accomplished. ■

