

The long and the short of it

BY JOE SAGE

Fate delivered us two out of six in Toyota's SUV-crossover lineup recently, not at the same time and without any disciplined event at hand, but impossible to miss as a casual comparo opportunity. One is the biggest (though not the priciest)—Sequoia—and one is the smallest—C-HR.

Wait, you might ask, is the \$50k-or-so Sequoia the biggest? Or is it the \$85k-and-up Land Cruiser? Fair question. Luxury level and features aside, the Land Cruiser has the same powertrain as Sequoia and is also a three-row eight-seater (or five-seater on one model). Its length and wheelbase are about ten inches shorter than Sequoia, for notably less legroom in the second and third rows, though Land Cruiser's turning circle is about half a foot bigger.

The Sequoia and C-HR are popular models, potentially even attracting the same shoppers, subject to personal tradeoff factors. They weren't with us back-to-back, but we knew both were coming.

With other vehicles between the two, directly comparing driving or emotional experiences could suffer or could benefit. We're not here to choose one over the other, for ourselves nor certainly for you, anyway, rather just to say here they both are.

(To round it all out further, we unexpectedly had a brief drive in the same general timeframe in their middlest-sized SUV—an all-new Highlander.)

SEQUOIA TRD PRO (the biggest)

Anyone who loves pickups, or who loves traditional body-on-frame SUVs in their own right, will appreciate the Toyota Sequoia, a structural close cousin of the Tundra full-size pickup.

And anyone who loves traditionally-missioned SUVs—conceived in an era of outdoor utility more so than country club utility—will appreciate the Sequoia's straightforward approach to the driver interface, such as its big gnarly knurled knobs you could operate with gloves on, as in the similarly durably-purposed and eternally popular 4Runner.

A number of vehicles offer two "top" models—perhaps one sportier and one more luxurious. As with many big 4x4s, Sequoia offers two top models—one beefier and one more luxurious. If your duty leans more toward the club, you might choose Platinum luxe. If you shop for Arizona's rocky and rough terrain, TRD Pro is the choice (and it's even a couple of grand cheaper, while still providing such niceties as a leather-with-red-stitch interior, all in all a win-win for even potential off-roaders).

There are five trims total for Sequoia, starting with the SR5 at \$49,980. All have the same 381-hp 5.7L V8 and 6-speed automatic, and all weigh in the neighborhood of three tons, factors that deliver its not unexpected tradeoffs—you don't buy it

SPECIFICATIONS: SEQUOIA TRD PRO

ROWS / SEATS	.....3 rows / seats 8
ENGINE	.....alum 5.7L 32c DOHC V8 w dual indep VVT-i
HP / TORQUE	.....381 hp / 401 lb-ft
DRIVETRAIN	.....4x4
TRANSMISSION	.....6-spd ECT auto
SUSPENSION	.....F: high mount coil indep dbl-wishbone w low-pressure gas shocks, 1.42" hollow stblzr bar; R: coil indep dbl-wishbone w low-pressure gas shocks, 0.91" hollow stblzr bar (avail rear air, adaptive var)
STEERING	.....eng speed-sens variable flow rack & pinion
BRAKES	.....F: 13.9 vented; R: 13.6 vented
WHEELS / TIRES	.....8.0x18 / P275/55R18 111H
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....205.1 / 122.0 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....38.1 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....10.0 in
APPROACH / DEPART	.....27 / 21 deg
HEADROOM (F/2/3)	.....34.8 / 34.9 / 34.5 in
LEGROOM (F/2/3)	.....42.5 / 40.9 / 35.3 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....18.9 / 66.6 / 120.1 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....5985 lb
TOW CAPACITY	.....7100 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....87-octane reg unleaded / 26.4 gal
MPG	.....13/17/14 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE (TRD PRO)	.....\$64,030
OPTIONS: Cargo cover (245), TRD performance exhaust system (1050), carpeted mats/door sill protect (379)	.....1674
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1325

TOTAL (lineup starts at \$49,980).....\$67,029

for its fuel economy, and despite its power, shifts can be a little slow in aggressive urban freeway or rural grade-climbing competitive conditions.

But its storm trooper persona (certainly in this Super White paint) underscores its solid bearing—power and presence, with a sense of purpose, but without the arrogance of a luxury badge.

SPECIFICATIONS: C-HR LIMITED

ROWS / SEATS	.....2 rows / seats 5
ENGINE	.....2.0L 16v 4-cyl DOHC w Valvematic
HP / TORQUE	.....144 hp / 139 lb-ft
DRIVETRAIN	.....FWD
TRANSMISSION	.....CVT w intel & shift mode (CVT-i-S)
SUSPENSION	.....F: Indep MacPherson strut w 26mm stblzr bar, coils, hydraulic shocks; R: multi-link w coils, trailing arms, 26mm stblzr bar, hydraulic shocks
STEERING	.....elec power steering
BRAKES	.....F: 11.7 vented; R: 11.1 solid
WHEELS / TIRES	.....7x18 / P225/50R18 95V
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....172.6 / 103.9 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....34.2 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....5.9 in
APPROACH / DEPART	.....14 / 26 deg
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....38.1 / 38.3 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....43.46 / 31.7 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....19.1 / 37.0 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....3300 lb
TOW CAPACITY	.....(na)
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....91-octane+ unleaded / 13.2 gal
MPG	.....27/31/29 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE (LIMITED)	.....\$26,350
OPTIONS: Audi Plus incl HD radio (465), special Supersonic Red paint (425), two-tone paint (500)	.....1390
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1120

TOTAL (lineup starts at \$21,295).....\$28,860

C-HR (the littlest)

C-HR stands for compact high roof, compact high rider, coupe high rider or cross hatch R-something, depending who you ask. (Most of these do help you remember where to put the hyphen in C-HR.)

Price comparison alone might suggest the C-HR is half the vehicle the Sequoia is. On the other

hand, you could buy two of these for the price of one of those, with ten grand left over.

Weight is about half, power way less than half, seat count five versus eight, cargo capacity less than a third, and tow capacity zilch. The C-HR is 85 percent shorter (but its turning circle less-pro-rata tighter). Fuel economy, though, is roughly double.

Any real "utility vehicle" comparison between these two fades quickly. C-HR ground clearance is carlike (41 percent less than Sequoia TRD Pro), and C-HR is not available with all-wheel drive.

Our initial drive home from the airport at 2 am demonstrated a general lack of power, with presence of front-drive torque steer characteristics.

You can adjust for lower power, of course, and that's just what we did all week, logging repeat instances of giving up traffic advantages for lack of oomph to grab a spot, its small size not adding enough nimble squeezability to make up for that.

The C-HR is a sharp-looking little unit, though. We'd be more than a little curious to see whether they could engineer some more horses into it.

AND BETWEEN? (the middlest)

At roughly the center of six Toyota utilities sit two different flavors—4Runner and Highlander. As fate would have it, we also had a very short drive in the all-new 2020 Highlander in Tempe, a week after seeing the already-newer 2021 Highlander at the Chicago Auto Show. Meet Highlander at right. ➔

SPECIFICATIONS: HIGHLANDER

ROWS / SEATS	.....3 rows / seats 7 or 8
ENGINES	.....[V6] aluminum alloy 3.5L DOHC V6 ...[4-hyb] aluminum alloy 2.5L L4HV DOHC hybrid
HP / TORQUE	.....[V6] 295 hp / 263 lb-ft ...[4-hybrid] 186 hp / 175 lb-ft
DRIVETRAIN	.....FWD, AWD
TRANSMISSION	.....8-spd auto / CVT
SUSPENSION	.....F: Indep MacPherson strut, stblzr bar, trailing-wishbone; R: multi-link, stblzr bar
STEERING	.....elec power-assist rack & pinion
BRAKES	.....F: 13.3 vented; R: 13.3 solid
WHEELS / TIRES	.....18-in, 20-in
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....194.9 / 112.2 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....37.4 / 36.1 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....8.0 in
APPROACH / DEPART	.....17.9-18.1 / 22.7-23 deg
HEADRM (F/2/3)	.....38.4-39.9 / 37.1-39.4 / 36.1 in
LEGROOM (F/2/3)	.....40.4 / 41.0 / 27.7 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....16 / 48.4 / 84.3 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....4145-4595 lb
TOW CAPACITY	.....3500 / 5000 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....87 oct+ unl / 17.1-17.9 gal
MPG	.....20/27/23 to 36/35/36 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	.....FWD \$34,600-46,850
	.....AWD \$36,200-48,800
	.....Hybrid FWD \$38,200-48,250
	.....Hybrid AWD \$39,800-50,200
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1120



HIGHLANDER (the newest)

Adding perspective about the two models at left, we met and drove the all-new gen-four 2020 Toyota Highlander briefly, not long after the others. Our time with the all-new RAV4 a few months earlier (see our JanFeb issue) was also useful, as the new Highlander picks up many of its key styling and build cues. Built on a version of the K platform used for Camry, Avalon and RAV4, Highlander hits the Goldilocks spot it aims for, with a 295-hp 3.5L V6, 8-speed automatic and up to 5000-lb tow capacity. There is also a hybrid model. While the 2021 version is also already being shown, Toyota is still actively selling the 2019 Highlander, as well, starting at \$31,830 (or \$37,520 hybrid). Watch for an in-depth look at the new Highlander in a subsequent issue. ■



2020 Toyota Sequoia 4x4 TRD Pro



2020 Toyota C-HR Limited