

# Durable concept by Joe Sage

**GMC** Yukon's roots go back to the first Chevrolet Suburban in 1935 (the longest-running nameplate in the business), establishing a solid claim for the broad Chevy-GMC-Cadillac family of short and long models as the original SUVs, all still full-size truck-based body-on-frame vehicles.

Various name changes along the way aside, these vehicles are proven survivors and thrivers, still enjoying great popularity in today's complex utility market. With shared and shifting evolution, generational math can be looked at more than one way—thus the new 2021 GMC Yukon is generation five of the shorter wheelbase Yukon, while a venerable generation 12 of the fundamentally same but longer Suburban-Yukon XL models.

The basic styling and format of the new Yukon are immediately recognizable, while beneath its

familiar skin are a number of changes. First is four-corner independent suspension, along with available Air Ride active suspension. Add an all-new Active Response 4WD system comprising an automatic two-speed transfer case, new Traction Select, chassis controls and a new electronic limited slip differential—all aimed at providing the comfortable ride and less trucklike isolation of a smaller crossover, in this same big package.

Powerplants are expanded to include a base 5.3L gasoline V8, a new 420-hp iteration of the optional 6.2L V8 used in the Denali, and an all-new 3.0L inline-six Duramax turbo-diesel.

Long models (Yukon XL in GMC's case) have the same seat count, with a little more rear legroom but a lot more rear cargo volume. Payloads and tow capacities vary by only very small amounts.

There is also a new model, the GMC Yukon AT4—the one we are driving here—derived from the GMC Sierra AT4 pickup, which we've been duly impressed by at multiple off-road comparo events. Upgrades for the AT4 include skid plates, an off-road Traction Select mode, hill descent mode and 20-inch all-terrain tires for rugged-road duties. An upgraded interior features leather, accent stitching, a Jet Black color theme with Brandy accents, and the joy of heated-cooled front seats, heated steering wheel and heated outboard rear seats.

Beyond ride quality, air suspension can raise and lower the new Yukon for entry and egress, and automatically-deploying running boards can be turned off, or can be set to stay on with the doors closed for rooftop gear or hand-washing missions.

The transmission's stylish shift interface is a brushed metal panel high on the center stack, differentiating functions by a light press (P-N-L) or firm pull (D and R)—functionally more likable than

many other alternative shifters. That bottom button marked L includes plus-minus options, being in fact the manumatic, surely better marked as M.

The 355-horse 5.3L V8 in this almost-three-ton big beast is adequately strong, though we'd be more than a little interested in having the Denali's 420-hp 6.2L V8 optional for the special duty AT4.

Handling is not sports-car-precise, but appropriate for the vehicle's purposeful build and format—and it delivers surprisingly tight maneuverability, even with the AT4's 20-inch wheels. Brakes get the job done, though we'd prefer a firmer feel.

Many SUVs are good for stylish occasions in town, but not dirt, and others vice versa. So handsome was our Onyx Black over Jet Black leather sample—perfect for transporting four executives from boardroom to club—we could almost forget its special skills off-road. Yukon AT4's differentiating factor is its high level of suitability for both.

We headed out to an off-highway area in the farther reaches. The moment we left the pavement, hitting suddenly dramatically rutted, heaving and climbing surfaces, the ride was notably harsh, but we got used to it very quickly and, as you might suspect, basically wouldn't want it any other way

—strong, firm, smooth considering the conditions, insulated to an appropriate degree.

The heads-up display includes useful information in these conditions—compass direction, angles of inclination and so on. We drove a wide variety of terrain without giving the transfer case or traction options a moment's thought—never needing to add to or override the smart system.

The Yukon has a decent audio system—nothing overly glamorous, but with tons of headroom for both the high end and nicely rounded bass tones.

We liked the Yukon more and more as our week wore on. You need only look around you to know these vehicles are keepers. There are other things you can buy—smaller, maybe cheaper or maybe far more expensive, depending what you're trying to achieve. But for a formula of size, roominess, capability, all-American character, power and presence, this group still has it all locked up in one strong and affordable package.

These pioneering vehicles were instrumental in inspiring the phenomenal variety in crossovers and SUVs that dominate the market today.

And the GMC Yukon has stayed true to its original form and mission—when SUVs were SUVs. ■



## SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY.....	Arlington, Texas
ENGINE/TRANSMISSION.....	United States
SEATING ROWS.....	three
ENGINE.....	Ecotec 5.3L V8 VVT DI
HP/TORQUE.....	16v OHV, dynamic fuel mgmt, alum/alum
DRIVETRAIN.....	355 hp / 383 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION.....	new Active Response 4WD
FINAL DRIVE RATIO.....	Hydra-Matic 10-spd auto
SUSPENSION.....	3.23
STEERING.....	indep coils, Magnetic Ride
BRAKES.....	standard; indep Air Ride Adaptive
WHEELS.....	Suspension available (as on ours)
TIRES.....	elec pwr assist rack-and-pinion
LENGTH / WHEELBASE.....	four-wheel disc;
TURNING CIRCLE.....	vented front and rear, Duralife rotors
HEADROOM (F/2/3).....	(AT4) 20-inch aluminum
LEGROOM (F/2/3).....	(AT4) P275/60R20
CARGO CAPACITY.....	210.0 / 120.9 in
GROUND CLEARANCE.....	(20" wheels) 39.7 ft
APPR/DEPART/BRKOV (AT4 with Air Ride).....	42.3 / 38.9 / 38.2 in
WEIGHT.....	44.5 / 42.0 / 34.9 in
TOW CAPACITY.....	122.9 / 72.6 / 25.5 cu.ft
FUEL CAPACITY.....	(w Air Susp) 8-10 in
MPG.....	APPR/DEPART/BRKOV (AT4 with Air Ride):
	31.5-34.5 / 20.5-22.5 / 18.5-22.0°
	5677 lb
	(std/max) 7700 / 8200 lb
	24 gal
	16/20/18 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE.....	<b>\$64,800</b>
ONYX BLACK PAINT.....	195
2ND ROW HEATED BUCKET SEATS.....	370
POWER SLIDING CONSOLE.....	350
AT4 PREMIUM PLUS PKG: pwr dual-pane pano sunroof; power retract assist steps w lighting; electronic limited slip diff; Air Ride adaptive suspension; enhanced cooling radiator; Prograde trailering system; trailer side blind zone alert; in-vehicle trailering app; trailer brake controller; hitch guidance w hitch view; HD surround vision; multicolor heads-up display; rear pedestrian alert; 10.2" HD color touchscreen infotainment w nav, voice, Bluetooth, Apple/Android, apps & personalization; rear seat media incl 12.7" color touch LCD screens.....	9145
DESTINATION CHARGE.....	1295

TOTAL.....	<b>\$76,155</b>
(On ours: AT4 Prem Plus pkg savings.....)	1000
TOTAL (our sample).....	\$75,155

## YUKON / YUKON XL LINEUP 2021

	YUKON	YUKON XL
SLE.....	2WD \$51,995	\$54,695
.....	4WD 54,995	57,695
SLT.....	2WD 59,095	61,795
.....	4WD 62,095	64,795
AT4.....	4WD ▼ 66,095	68,795
Denali.....	2WD 69,695	72,395
.....	4WD 72,695	75,395

- SLE, SLT, AT4 have 355-hp 5.3L V8 VVT DI; Denali has 420-hp 5.3L V8 VVT DI; and all but AT4 offer a 3.0L Duramax turbo diesel
- Yukon = 120.9" wheelbase, 210.0" overall; Yukon XL = 134.1" wheelbase, 225.2" overall
- Yukon XL adds 1.8" third row legroom; adds 16.5 cu.ft rear cargo volume (for 41.5 cu.ft); and has a 38-gallon fuel tank