Jeep Renegade Trailhawk 2.0 MultiJet-II Auto9 4x4LOW – Road Test

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Jeep vehicles have been renowned for their tough, off-road abilities for more than 70 years

...Kim Henson test drives the Trailhawk version of the Renegade.

(All words and photographs by Kim).

Jeep's Renegade is a direct descendant of the Willys MB four wheel drive military vehicle of the 1940s, and with a pedigree like that its off-road credentials should be – and are – good. Yet for most owners today's models also have to fulfil a multitude of duties in normal motoring on tarmac. Developed to cater for all such roles, the resulting Renegade is described by Jeep as 'The most capable compact SUV ever'. The model, introduced in 2015 and comprehensively upgraded since, represented the first compact SUV produced by the firm.

It may be compact but the five door Renegade – based on the Fiat 500X platform and built in Melfi, Italy (due to Fiat/Chrysler group collaboration) – offers generous interior accommodation for passengers and luggage, plus it has a proven all wheel drive set up, and looks the part, with tough-looking bodywork incorporating modern styling features.



I have been test-driving the ‘off road special’ Trailhawk version, powered by the 2.0 litre Multijet-II turbo diesel engine. The prodigious low speed torque characteristics of diesel motors are welcome for many drivers who need to use their vehicle off-road, and helpful for on-road use too…



Alternative engines offered in the Renegade line-up include 1.0 litre three cylinder and 1.3 litre four cylinder turbocharged units, and an updated 1.6 litre MultiJet-II diesel (as well as the 2.0 litre version, as tested). The diesel engines incorporate Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) technology.

It may be of interest to know that Fiat-derived MultiJet engines arrived in 2003 and were developed (from the company's innovative electronically-controlled high pressure common rail units of the late 1990s) to provide improved power, torque, fuel economy and emissions, also smoother and quieter running, with lower vibration levels, plus greater reliability coupled with less maintenance. They achieved these gains by employing five small injections of fuel per combustion cycle (compared with just two injections per cycle hitherto).

In 2009 the next generation of these engines was introduced, now incorporating eight injections per cycle and named MultiJet-II; the variety of improvements in these units helped them to achieve the coveted and essential Euro 6 emission standards.

The range-topping Trailhawk, externally identifiable by its bonnet decal and rear tow hook, also comes as standard complete with a nine speed automatic transmission, and low ratio drive to help when the ground conditions demand extra assistance to keep the vehicle moving. For off-road use it also deliberately features higher than usual ground clearance, and the 17 inch aluminium road wheels are designed for all-terrain use.





Model variants start with the Sport (with a competitive ‘On the Road’ price starting from £19,745), moving upwards through Longitude and Night Eagle variants (from £22,445 and £23,445 respectively), then comes the Limited (from £25,145) and Renegade S (from £28,745), with the range-topper being the Trailhawk, which has a base price of £31,665.

Standard equipment levels steadily improve through the line-up, but even the Sport comes with such features as (for example) cruise control plus a variety of connectivity functions.

All Renegades are packed with safety features (including a multitude of airbags plus a raft of technology-based systems, including Electronic Stability Control or ESC, plus Electronic Rollover Mitigation, or ERM), and achieve the Euro NCAP five star safety rating. The ‘Advanced Driver Assistance System’ includes Forward Collision Warning-Plus Mitigation, Lanesense Departure Warning-Plus, Traffic Sign Recognition and Intelligent Speed Assist.

Trailhawk ‘off road special’ version



The Trailhawk has been developed to provide the ultimate in off-road ability, including exceptional levels of traction, ground clearance, wheel articulation, water fording and manoeuvrability.

The inbuilt, standard-fit ‘Selec-Terrain’ system can easily and instantly be set by the driver to provide optimum traction in a variety of different ground conditions, including snow, sand, mud and rock, in addition to the ‘auto’ setting – the default mode in which the rear drive axle is disconnected, for optimum fuel economy/emissions performance. (Note too that the ‘rock’ mode is unique to the Trailhawk version).

Push-button controls bring into play ‘four wheel drive low ratio’, ‘four wheel drive lock’ and

hill descent control (HDC) drive features. The hill descent control system independently operates the vehicle's brakes to help maintain control even on steep descents with minimal grip available.



The 'Jeep Active' four wheel drive system operates automatically (with no driver intervention) and is designed to seamlessly switch into and out of all wheel drive mode at any normal road speed, as required and according to road conditions. It is also said to 'deliver yaw correction during dynamic events' and improves both understeer and oversteer situations.

The 'Active Drive Low' set-up takes the Jeep Active system to another level, including providing a 20:1 'crawl' ratio for enhanced 4×4 capability in the toughest of ground

conditions. Helping to protect the Trailhawk in off-road motoring are underbody skid plates plus shields covering the front suspension, fuel tank, transfer case and transmission.

Jeep says that the Renegade is the first compact SUV to feature nine speed automatic transmission (a six speed manual gearbox with twin clutch set-up is the alternative), and that the automatic system improves comfort and performance by monitoring temperature, speed and electronic stability control activation.

The Limited and Trailhawk versions of the Renegade feature LED headlights, fog lamps, tail and brake lights. These are said to be 50 per cent brighter and 30 per cent more efficient than normal lamps, for improved visibility.

While talking about lamps, it is interesting to note that the ‘diagonal cross’ feature built into each rear light assembly (and also into the cup/bottle holders around the vehicle), was apparently inspired by the reinforcing ‘cross’ visible on the sides of the original 1940s Jeeps’ spare fuel cans!



Our test vehicle was certainly not lacking in creature comforts, including (for example) a heated, leather-wrapped steering wheel and five leather-trimmed seats (the front ones are heated).

The driver's seat is electrically-adjustable, and all the seats provide comfortable accommodation plus generous head room for front and rear seat passengers. Leg room for people in the rear is a little less spacious with the front seats set towards the rear ends of their mounting rails.

The Uconnect central touch screen display works well and incorporates a wide variety of menus to control vehicle functions, although thankfully some of these, such as the interior

temperature variation/fan operation, and the audio volume control etc, can be set/amended by conventional facia-mounted controls.





Stowage spaces abound within the car, including pockets/bottle holders in each door, in the rear seat back assembly and in the centre console, which also features a useful box with a hinged lid/arm rest. In addition there are elasticated pockets in the backs of the front seats.



The vehicle has a large luggage compartment too. With the 60/40 ratio rear seat backs folded forwards (a quick and easy operation, by means of buttons on the seat backs), by my measurements there is a load length of approximately 60 inches or 152 cm with the front seats set about midway on their fore/aft runners. With the seat backs folded the floor is not quite flat, but has just a slight upwards ‘step’ towards the front of the compartment. The available width for loads varies between 37.5 inches (95 cm) and just over 52 inches (132 cm), in each case approximately.





Practicalities

I liked the interior treatment on the Trailhawk test car. With black leather-trimmed seats (incorporating Ruby Red Trailhawk stitching) and steering wheel, it looked smart, and attention to detail was good; the upholstery materials used looked durable too. Privacy tinted glass and all-weather floor mats are also part of the Trailhawk's standard-fit specification, and I, plus all my passengers, liked the tiny classic 'Jeep' image incorporated into the base of the windscreen – a nice touch!



On several cold mornings during my time with the car, the heated front seats and heated steering wheel were very welcome. The climate control system worked well too, and from cold start-ups the screens cleared very quickly.

The interior was comfortable and felt spacious. The seats were accommodating and the ride quality was excellent for a 4×4 vehicle, the long-travel suspension (which provides excellent axle articulation/movement in off-road use) easily soaking up minor and major undulations on main routes and byways.

Four wide-opening doors were helpful to front and rear seat passengers in gaining entry to and effecting exit from the car.





Handling and roadholding characteristics on tarmac were good for the type of vehicle, with little body roll evident despite the vehicle being fairly high off the ground (deliberately as the Trailhawk is an ‘off road special’ version).

Although I was unable to test this car’s off-road qualities, from previous positive experience with Jeep products in very unforgiving situations I would be very confident in its abilities in this regard. What I can say is that the Trailhawk felt sure-footed on slippery road surfaces, and the change between two and four wheel drive was imperceptible to this writer. In addition, when pulling away on a soft muddy surface (in a countryside lay-by) the car gripped well as all four wheels dug down to reach a stable surface. I also liked the easy-action push buttons and intuitive set-up/operation of the four wheel drive controls.

One aspect that I did find a little uncomfortable on longer trips was the positioning of the factory-fitted ‘rest’ for the driver’s left foot. For me at least this was a little too close to the driver’s seat, yet if the rest was not used, I found that my left foot was positioned uncomfortably to the right of it.

Power and Torque a-plenty

I felt that the vehicle’s performance was excellent, with the MultiJet-II diesel motor willingly delivering power and torque in plenty, even from low speeds, and helped by the sweet-changing nine speed automatic transmission which enabled the engine to always be ‘in the right ratio’ to provide optimum performance.

The engine in the test car performed admirably, with impressive acceleration both from rest and on the move, and settled down to a hushed and pleasant purr when cruising.

At 70 mph the motor was turning at just 1,750 rpm or so in top gear – good for fuel consumption and engine life.

Fuel consumption?

The WLTP official ‘Combined’ fuel consumption figure for our test vehicle is 35.8 mpg. I was pleased that my overall test figure over a week of normal road use mixed driving, including town, country and long-distance driving, and totalling 317 miles, was in fact far better, at 41.6 mpg; very good I feel for the size, power and four wheel drive capability of the vehicle.



Bright Eyes

A fair bit of my driving time with the car was at night and in wet/windy conditions. I was impressed by the good spread of light provided by the LED headlamps, on both dipped and main beams, by the clarity of the instruments (day or night), and by the excellent screen washers and wipers.

I was also thankful for the effective power steering which was sensibly-weighted at all speeds, and when driving in side winds I found that the vehicle was not badly affected by strong gusts.

I liked the high driving position, giving excellent levels of vision forwards and to each side of the car.

Reversing was greatly aided by the clear reverse camera system, and the Renegade proved to be easy to park and manoeuvre.



VERDICT

My opinion is that the Trailhawk version of the Renegade is a very effective SUV, providing the best of all worlds in terms of everyday use versatility, and with the added benefit and reassurance for owners of a sophisticated yet easy-to-operate four wheel drive system, there whenever needed.

While, at nearly £32,000, it is not a cheap vehicle, it is technically advanced and well-equipped, and certainly offers a great deal for the money.



WHEELS-ALIVE TECH. SPEC IN BRIEF:

Jeep Renegade Trailhawk 2.0 Multijet-II Auto9 4x4LOW.

Engine: Four cylinder, twin overhead camshaft 16 valve 2.0 litre (1956cc) Multijet diesel.

Transmission: Nine speed automatic gearbox; four wheel drive and with low ratio.

Power: 170 hp @ 3,750 rpm.

Max. Torque: 350 Nm (258 lb.ft) from 1,750 rpm.

Performance:

0-62 mph: 8.9 seconds.

Top speed: 122 mph.

Fuel consumption:

Official WLTP figure: Combined, 35.3 to 35.8 mpg.

Achieved during our Wheels-Alive test, over 317 miles, average 41.6 mpg.

Estimated mileage range on a full tank (55 litres or 12.10 Imperial gallons), at our actual achieved mpg: Approximately 500+ miles.

CO2 Emissions: 173 g/km.

Warranty: Five years/75,000 miles, plus three years servicing and five years roadside assistance.

Insurance Group: 18.

Euro NCAP rating: 5*.

Dimensions (Trailhawk versions):

Length 4,257 mm (13.97 ft), Width 2,023 mm (6.64 ft), Height 1,688 mm (5.54 ft).

Luggage capacity: 351 to 1,297 litres (12.40 to 45.80 cu.ft).

Five doors, five seats.

Unladen weight: 1,660 kg (3,660 lb).

Max. towing weight, braked trailer: 1,500 kg (3,307 lb).

‘Off road’ useful data:

Minimum ground clearance: 201 mm (0.66 ft).

Approach angle: 21 degrees.

Departure angle: 34.3 degrees.

‘Breakover’ angle: 25.7 degrees.

Wheels and tyres (Trailhawk version): 6.5Jx17 ET40 aluminium ‘off road’ wheels, shod with 215/60 R17 ‘Mud and Snow’ tyres. No spare wheel but tyre repair kit supplied.

Price (‘On the Road’): From £31,665.