Latest Toyota Land Cruiser – Road Test

Published: June 25, 2018

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Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/latest-toyota-land-cruiser-road-test/

Global 4×4 SUV Workhors[illegible] Updated – Toyota Land Cruiser ...

...tried and tested by David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

Sold in over 190 countries around the World, the latest Land Cruiser and Toyota's all wheel drive technology has 65 years of history behind them.

The hard-core Land Cruiser has a legendary reputation for toughness, reliability, durability and go-anywhere capabilities whether its jungle, desert, mountain, war zones, peace keeping and humanitarian aid, holiday tour operators taxi service, farming or even coping with the demanding requirements of the fashionable SUV image loved by sporting families.

SUV sales are booming and as we know cater for a third of all new cars sold in the UK and Europe. It's their styling that is fashionable rather than any pretentions of being hard-core off-roaders. But the Land Cruiser is different, it remains one of those diminishing number of tough and uncompromising large 4x4s.

The current generation model was introduced in 2009 and has been regularly updated since then and now the 2018 model range for the UK market has arrived. The range gains a new entry level Utility grade in three and five door body styles, in addition to Active, Icon and the high technology Invincible grade. The Utility versions have five seats, the Active five or

seven seat options whilst Icon and Invincible are seven seater models. Prices range from £33,435 up to £52,855.

Whilst the specification differs considerably between grades, core to all models is the engine and drivetrain. They all use a 2.8 litre D-4D turbodiesel DOHC 16-valve unit which develops 174 bhp at 3,400 rpm with 450 Nm (332 lb.ft) of torque available from 1,600 to 2,400 rpm with the six speed automatic gearbox. In this configuration it will accelerate from zero to 62 mph in 12.7 seconds, and on to a maximum 108 mph.

Official combined cycle fuel consumption is 38.1 mpg with 194 g/km CO2 emissions. The engine is also available in the Utility version with a six-speed manual gearbox where the maximum torque of 420 Nm (310 lb.ft) is available from 1,400 to 2,600 rpm. Acceleration to 62 mph takes 12.0 seconds, while the benchmark figures for fuel economy and CO2

emissions are unchanged for the five-door and marginally lower for the three-door at 39.2 mpg and 190 g/km respectively.

Catering for a wider range of potential customers with the expanded 2018 Land Cruiser range, the new Utility grade three and five door models have 17-inch steel wheels, roof rails, front fog lights, air conditioning, dusk-sensing headlights, cruise control, smart entry and a six-speaker audio system with CD player, Bluetooth, Aux-in and USB Port. A six-speed manual transmission can be specified for the five-door version and is standard on the three-door model.

The Active grade is a five door model available with a five or seven-seat interior and has 17-inch alloy wheels and adds rear parking sensors, dual-zone automatic air conditioning, leather steering wheel trim and the Toyota Touch 2 infotainment system with eight-inch touchscreen and nine-speaker audio system.

The five door, seven-seat Icon version adds a number of new features including Toyota Safety Sense active safety systems, 19-inch alloys, leather upholstery and front seats

with heating and ventilation functions. As previously it comes equipped with LED headlights and front fog lights, an entry lighting system, rear privacy glass, rain-sensing wipers and the Toyota Touch 2 with Go package with navigation and enhanced connectivity options.

The top of the range Invincible five door, seven seat, version is equipped with advanced technology features as standard to improve handling and stability both on-road and off. These include a locking Torsen rear differential, Kinetic Dynamic Suspension System, Multi-Terrain Select, Multi-terrain Monitor, Crawl control and a 360-degree Panoramic View Monitor with an under vehicle terrain view. The safety specification is boosted by the addition of a Blind Spot Monitor and Rear Cross Traffic Alert.

All versions are covered by Toyota’s five-year/100,000 mile warranty.

With the first official Land Cruiser, known as Colorado, sales began in the UK in 1975 and 81,526 have been sold since then. In 2003 the model became Land Cruiser and has sold 25,157 units since launch but despite the SUV market growing the vehicle is a minority player with just 566 sales in 2017.

Whilst the majority of SUVs these days are of monocoque construction, the Land Cruiser – for toughness and durability – retains its body on a ladder frame chassis design. The downside to that of course is its 2,125 kg (4,685 lb) kerb weight and it doesn’t have the same on-road handling agility and nimbleness of its similar sized Audi Q7, Range Rover, Land Rover Discovery or BMW X5 competitors. But with improved sound insulation and the rear electric suspension and adaptive variable suspension specification fitted to the £52,855

Invincible version I tried ride comfort was first class.

Even with its large 19-inch wheels it was the most accomplished vehicle I've driven for a long time in terms of absorbing impacts from even the deepest of potholes. The downside was that the adjustable suspension in Comfort mode dulled the handling qualities on winding country roads but it's not a vehicle for speed so I was happy to enjoy the comfort and the view over the hedgerows, and with Eco driving mode selected the vehicle returned an impressive 30.4 mpg overall for a extended period of test driving.

On higher speed motorways it was easy to maintain an effortless 70 mph cruising speed with little engine or road noise entering the very roomy cabin. Matched with the six-speed automatic gearbox with manual mode and with permanent four wheel drive, it was an accomplished performer and despite its size and bulk, easy to live with. The only downside was the side hinged rear door which needs lots of parking space to be fully opened.

The overall length without the rear door open is 4,840 mm (15.88 ft) with a width of 1,885 (6.18 ft) mm and it is high at 1,835 mm (6.02 ft).

The drivetrain has lots of settings, most push-button types to select the high and low ratios and the other various settings that turn the Land Cruiser into a serious off-road vehicle when needed. Perhaps not as intuitive as say the Range/Land Rover dial operated system but once it became familiar it worked easily enough, let's just hope all these electronics remain durable and reliable in years to come in less sophisticated operating environments. Using the electronic height adjustable suspension system raises the 215 mm (8.46 in) ground clearance enough to provide a 700 mm (27.56in) wading depth for those adventurous off-roaders.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

Inside this top spec model the fit and finish and quality of upholstery and the layout of controls was good; not as posh as a Range Rover but not as expensive either. Storage spaces are numerous and there is lots of room throughout, and the seating felt comfortable

and supporting. The middle row of seats is divided 40-20-40 and these can be individually folded flat, as can the rear two seats. With all the middle and rear rows of seat backs folded down there is a huge load carrying area providing up to 1,934 litres (68.30 cu.ft) of space or with the seats raised its still 621 litres (21.93 cu.ft). For those who need a heavyweight towing vehicle the braked towing capacity is 3,000 kg (6,614 lb).

VERDICT

Overall in the UK the latest Toyota Land Cruiser is not going to be the large SUV to meet the needs of most customers – it's too capable unless you need a hard-core, go anywhere 4×4 for serious off-road work (but in this use it excels) and are willing to pay the high tax costs.

For: Proven durability and longevity in the harshest of motoring environments, hugely capable off-road, high specification, advanced road safety driving support technologies, imposing exterior styling, very roomy interior, very comfortable ride.

Against: High running and tax costs, sluggish engine for acceleration, off-road performance capabilities restrict its on-road handling performance.

Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

2018 Toyota Land Cruiser Invincible 2.8 litre, 4WD, seven seat SUV.

Price: £52,855.

Engine/transmission: 2.8 litre, four cylinder D-4D turbodiesel, 174 bhp, 450 Nm (332

lb.ft) of torque from 1,600 rpm, six speed automatic, 4WD with high/low ratio and locking rear differential.

Performance: 108 mph, 0–62 mph 12.7 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 38.1 mpg (30.4 mpg on test), CO2 194 g/km, VED road tax Diesel First Year rate £1,760, Standard rate £140 + £310 supplement for five years as the vehicle costs over £40k, BiK company car tax 37%.

Insurance Group: 41A.

Warranty: Three years/100,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,840 mm (15.88 ft), W 1,885 mm (6.18 ft), H 1,835 mm (6.02 ft), load area 621 to 1,934 litres (21.93 to 68.30 cu.ft), braked towing capacity 3,000 kg (6,614 lb).