


WE PICK THE BEST 4X4S EVER!

ELECTRONICALLY
REPRINTED FROM

PETERSEN'S 4WHEEL & OFF-ROAD



TOP 10 RIGS
BATTLE IT OUT!

**2008 4X4 OF
THE YEAR TEST»**

READERS' RIDES BLOWOUT

40 OF YOUR
BACKYARD
BEASTS!



PETERSEN'S
4WHEEL
& OFF-ROAD

30
YEARS
1977-2007

- BUILDING YOUR FIRST TRUCK
- ROLLCAGE HOW-TO
- TRAIL RIDING IN THE SNOW

FEBRUARY 2008
WWW.4WHEELOFFROAD.COM

**PETERSEN'S
4WHEEL
& OFF-ROAD** **2008**

4x4

OF THE YEAR

Here it is, the latest and greatest exposé of the hottest new 4x4s on the market. Our 26th 4x4 of the Year test took two weeks, 800 miles, seven judges, and 10 factory-fresh rigs to the dirt and beyond, all in the quest for that one shining star that wins our test. We even made our test more difficult than past years, with more emphasis on off-road ability as opposed to creature comforts. Our rigorous trails were clawing at the underbellies and side rails of the contestants, and we came home with more dents, scratches, and answers than ever before. Whether it was the tougher trails or too much low-hanging bodywork, the rock, dirt, and obstacles helped us judge what was worthy of the crown.

But before a new 4x4 can even compete, it must meet a strict set of standards. These include that the vehicle be all-new or substantially revised to provide a different level of performance, not just a simple face lift or surgical implants. A two-speed transfer case is needed to eliminate AWD rides, there must be at least 2,500 commercially available in production, and the public has to be able to purchase them by January 15, 2008. We also have to have the rig by our test dates, and we keep the winner for a year to let our readers know about the long-term durability. While some eligible vehicles never make it, most manufacturers fight tooth and nail to be part of the most important 4x4 competition in the world.

This year our contestants were the Dodge Dakota TRX4, Jeep Grand Cherokee CRD, Nissan Pathfinder, Toyota Tundra, Jeep four-door Wrangler Rubicon, Nissan Titan Pro4X, Jeep Liberty, Toyota Land Cruiser, Hummer H2, and Hummer H3 Alpha. All of these rides were new or significantly changed from the previous year's model, and some were more changed than others. This was also the year of V-8 power, and that big power made a significant difference in the scoring as some vehicles came to the table with more than 400 lb-ft of torque, and torque can make a big difference both on and off road.

Will you agree with our findings? Maybe not, but dollar for dollar we'll bet that our test is far more real-world than any other mag's, with a well-laid-out testing procedure. That procedure isn't stuck in the mud but instead changes as vehicles change, all in the quest of the most objective performance data while giving you the finest subjective information you need to know. Read on and analyze the data, then see if you can come up with the winner before you turn the final page. Good luck, and no peeking!>>



**JEEP GRAND
CHEROKEE LIMITED DIESEL**



**JEEP WRANGLER
UNLIMITED RUBICON**



TOYOTA LAND CRUISER

**THRASHING
THE TAR OUT OF
THE TOP 10 4X4S**



HUMMER H2 SUV

BY Rick Péwé AND Fred Williams



**DODGE DAKOTA
TRX4 CREW CAB**



**NISSAN TITAN CREW
CAB PRO-4X**

PETERSEN'S
4WHEEL
& OFF-ROAD **2008**

4x4
OF THE YEAR

WINNER



TOYOTA LAND CRUISER

The '08 Land Cruiser has evolved a long way from the rugged FJ-40s of years gone by. Gone are the removable hardtop, solid axles, manual transmissions, and burly leaf-spring suspensions. In their place are the leather-lined interior, independent and coil-sprung suspension, monster V-8 power, computer-controlled transmissions, and technologically advanced traction control systems that process what every wheel is doing while on or off road and calculates a method to keep the vehicle moving in a safe, efficient way.

At first glance, the Land Cruiser doesn't reveal its off-road ability. It's missing the big aggressive tires of the Hummers and Wrangler, and while it has skidplates, it lacks the ground clearance that some competitors have. But don't let the looks fool you (or should we say bore you), because the Toyota quietly carries a big stick. That stick comes in the form of 401 lb-ft of torque under the hood from its 5.7L V-8. And more often than not, big power under the hood can allow judges to not only have fun in the high-speed, hillclimb, and sand sections, but also propel a 3-ton pig of an SUV through rocky trails and silty dirt washes.

And then there is the traction control. We loved it and

we hated it, and we hated that we sometimes loved it. The Crawl mode, where you can choose different rates of forward motion while in low range, allows you to let your foot off the gas and the rig will claw its way forward, requiring just steering advice from the driver seat. If traction ceases, the brakes activate to eliminate wheelspin, and if flexibility is needed, sway bars are released to let tires droop at will. We have long been distrustful of any of these performance nannies, but we loved that we could turn it all off if desired, and yet when left on we hated to admit that it actually worked better than we wanted it to. Damn the machine that can work so good that drivers are almost unneeded, but kudos to the engineers that actually figured out how to make it work, and work well.

This declaration of the '08 Toyota Land Cruiser as our 2008 4x4 of the Year will no doubt bring cries of contempt from some readers. We didn't expect it to win so handily, but consider that other than the Jeep, the Land Cruiser has more history in the dirt than the rest of the field has. Though many anticipated one of the American 4x4s (Hummer/Jeep) to win, the Cruiser finally had a trait the others lacked and which American four-wheelers have long cherished—seriously fun V-8 power. 🚗

HERITAGE AND TECHNOLOGY EARN LAND CRUISER THE TITLE



PETERSEN'S
4WHEEL
& OFF-ROAD

2008

4x4

OF THE YEAR

LIKES

- Cool pushbutton start
- Luxury interior
- Off-road crawl mode nearly drives itself

DISLIKES

- \$70,000—ouch!
- Looks like a mall cruiser
- Off-road crawl mode nearly drives itself

VERDICT

- We appreciate the technology, but hate that it makes driver skills obsolete



TOYOTA LAND CRUISER

The Toyota Land Cruiser was one of the first vehicles Toyota brought to the United States 50 years ago and has always been the Japanese carmaker's preeminent off-road vehicle. The 2008 model (referred to as the URJ200 or 200-Series by Cruiser-heads) has pushed electronic technology in an off-road vehicle to the nth-degree with the off-road Crawl mode that uses a mixture of brake-biasing traction control and forced sway-bar articulation, resulting in a low-speed cruiser control. Not since the Jeep Grand Cherokee, Land Rover LR3, or Volkswagen Touareg have we seen such an amazing use of computer controls for maximum off-road performance, but this makes us wonder if a vehicle that works great off road but barely requires any driver input is a better vehicle than one that has gears and lockers but still needs a driver with some skill.

Toyota, please stand to hear your offenses. First of all, this is your premier off-road vehicle, so how about a return of the selectable lockers? You offered them 10 years ago, so why not now? Yes, your off-road traction control is impressive and the Crawl mode is unique, but we wonder how all those gizmos will work after being buried in the thick mud of the Amazon or after 80,000

miles in an African desert. We know most U.S. buyers won't spend \$70,000 for an SUV to be driven into the mud and muck of the woods on purpose, but some of them will. For them, how about a mode where the driver decides which axle is locked up? Also the styling is a little boring. The lines your luxury ute in with all the soccer mom mobiles on the market.

The Land Cruiser we tested came with decent underbelly skidplates and awesome steel tubular rock sliders (we were told these would be optional), a powerful 5.7L V-8 (same engine as the Tundra), and an awesome center-console fridge that actually kept beverages cold while out in the desert. Though the Land Cruiser could have used a bit more ground clearance, and we would kill for the solid-front-axle diesel version they offer in the Middle East, it was still frighteningly capable. We even had testers who engaged one of the multiple crawl modes and, with both feet planted on the carpeted floor were able to cruise up the loose rocky hillclimb that left other 4x4s scrambling and destroying tires. Did this technology take it to the top of the test or did the judges revolt, demanding that they still get to drive? Check the winner's page.



SPECIFICATIONS

GENERAL

Manufacturer Toyota
 Model Land Cruiser
 Base Price \$63,200
 Price as Tested \$71,445
 Options as Tested Upgrade package

ENGINE

Type V-8
 Displacement (liters/cubic inches) 5.7/346
 Bore & Stroke (inches) 3.70x4.02
 Compression Ratio 10.2:1
 Induction Type Sequential, multiport fuel injection

Fuel Req. (octane)/Capacity (gal.) 87/24.6
 SAE Peak Horsepower 381 @ 5,600 rpm
 SAE Peak Torque (lb-ft) 401 @ 3,600 rpm

TRANSMISSION

Type Six-speed automatic
 Model AB60F
 Ratios First: 3.333:1; Second: 1.960:1
 Third: 1.353:1; Fourth: 1.000:1; Fifth: 0.728:1; Sixth: 0.588:1; Reverse: 3.061:1

TRANSFER CASE

Type Two-speed, full-time
 Model JF2A
 Low-range Ratio 2.618:1

AXLES

Front Type IFS, SD22A
 Rear Type Solid, BD24A
 Hubs N/A
 Ratio 3.909:1

SUSPENSION

Front Independent double wishbone with coil springs and stabilizer bar
 Rear Four-link with coil springs, stabilizer bar, solid axle, and control arms

STEERING

Type Power-assisted rack-and-pinion, variable ratio

Turns Lock-to-Lock/Ratio 3.25/NA
 Turning Circle (feet) 38.7

WHEELS

Size (inches) 18x8.0
 Material Aluminum alloy

TIRES

Size P285/60R18
 Brand Dunlop AT23 Grandtrek

BRAKES

Front Vented disc
 Rear Vented disc
 60-0 (feet) 138.97

ACCELERATION

Standing 1/4-mile (seconds @ mph) 16.61 @ 85.81

WEIGHT (pounds)

Curb Weight 6,045
 Advertised GVWR 7,275

MILEAGE

EPA Estimate (city/hwy. mpg) 13/18
 As Tested (mpg) 12.86

DIMENSIONS (inches)

Wheelbase 112.75
 Overall Length 198
 Overall Width 87.25
 Overall Height 76
 Front/Rear Track 64.75/64.25
 Front/Rear Overhang 37.5/50.25
 Min. Front Ground Clearance 8



TOYOTA TUNDRA TRD

Ever been the runt of the playground? Well that's how Toyota's Tundra felt until the redesign of 2007-'08, and now this truck will be stealing balls and making the bullies cry. The new Tundra is a motivational machine with gobs of power and rocketlike acceleration, and when it comes to payload, Toyota definitely did its homework. Not only does the Tundra come in three bed and cab configurations, but within the cab are more places to stash stuff like pens, phones, iPods, maps, books, CDs, and sunglasses. What with all the cubbies, pockets, storage bins, and gloveboxes, you would think the interior designer also developed women's purses.

Once the big Tundra got off road we were happy it was the smallest model available and not the premiere Crewmax variant with miles of wheelbase and more interior space than a cheap apartment. The 126-inch wheelbase was tight for the rock trails but still capable, and the power under the hood made it great in the loose dirt and high-speed desert runs. It has been said that lack of off-road performance can often be made up with horsepower to get a vehicle moving and let momentum do the rest, and

the Tundra proves this. Not that the truck isn't capable off road, but its automatic limited slip is just Toyota's sneaky way of saying it has brake-activated traction control—not a true differential-based traction device. (Even we fell for it, as seen in last month's Tundra axle story—whoops).

One major shortcoming is a low-hanging front bumper that exited the rockcrawling test with a new dimple, while another is the excessive frame flex during high-speed rutted off-road testing and rippled sand runs. This unwanted elasticity even resulted in a miniscule paint chip where cab and bed touched. On road this frame flex revealed itself on certain highways with regular asphalt fissures. Although the rear suspension could have used a little more control in some places, it shined in others. When carving canyons the rear leaf springs that are angled in at the front seemed to be fulfilling Toyota's claims that they assist in high-speed cornering.

The Tundra is a big burly bully of a truck that may lack some refinement, but its low price as tested and muscle-bound powertrain have a way of helping it claw ahead in the list of contenders.

SPECIFICATIONS

GENERAL

Manufacturer Toyota
 Model Tundra TRD
 Base Price \$27,440
 Price as Tested \$31,676
 Options as Tested Cold kit \$70,
 AM/FM/six-CD changer \$200, cloth bucket
 seats \$45, mud guards \$60, tow mirrors
 \$80, TRD off-road package (off-road sus-
 pension, Bilstein shocks 18-inch wheels
 with BF Goodrich tires, chrome bumpers
 and grille surround, power windows, pow-
 er locks, cruise control, remote keyless
 entry system, fog lamps, sliding rear win-
 dow with privacy glass, engine and fuel
 tank skid plates, front tow hook, variable
 intermittent wipers carpet flooring, SR5
 fabric, SR5 badging, TRD off-road graphics

ENGINE

Type V-8
 Displacement (liters/cubic inches) 5.7/346
 Bore & Stroke (inches) 3.70x4.02
 Compression Ratio 10.2:1
 Induction Type Sequential, multiport
 fuel injection
 Fuel Req. (octane)/Capacity (gal.) 87/24.6
 SAE Peak Horsepower 381 @ 5,600 rpm
 SAE Peak Torque (lb-ft) 401 @ 3,600 rpm

TRANSMISSION

Type Six-speed automatic
 Model AB60F
 Ratios First: 3.333:1; Second: 1.960:1
 Third: 1.353:1; Fourth: 1.000:1; Fifth:
 0.728:1; Sixth: 0.588:1; Reverse: 3.06:1

TRANSFER CASE

Type Two-speed, part-time
 Model JF1A
 Low-range Ratio 2.618:1

AXLES

Front Type IFS, S22NF
 Rear Type Solid, B26
 Hubs N/A
 Ratio 4.30:1

SUSPENSION

Front Independent coil spring
 high-mounted double-wishbone with
 low pressure nitrogen gas shocks and
 stabilizer bar
 Rear Live axle with leaf springs
 with staggered low-pressure nitrogen
 gas shocks

STEERING

Type Power-assisted rack-and-pinion
 Turns Lock-to-Lock/Ratio 3.5/NA
 Turning Circle (feet) 39.2

WHEELS

Size (inches) 18x8.0
 Material Aluminum alloy

TIRES

Size P275/65R18
 Brand BF Goodrich Rugged Trail TA

BRAKES

Front Vented disc
 Rear Vented disc
 60-0 (feet) 144.53

ACCELERATION

Standing 1/4-mile
 (seconds @ mph) 15.32 @ 90.90

WEIGHT (pounds)

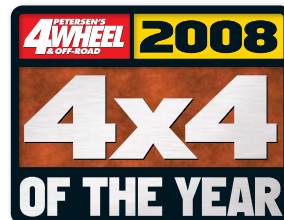
Curb Weight 5,270
 Advertised GVWR 6,800

MILEAGE

EPA Estimate (city/hwy. mpg) 13/17
 As Tested (mpg) 13.5

DIMENSIONS (inches)

Wheelbase 127.25
 Overall Length 211.75
 Overall Width 102
 Overall Height 74.5
 Front/Rear Track 68.5/67.75
 Front/Rear Overhang 37.5/49.25
 Min. Front Ground Clearance 8



LIKES

- Power, power, power
- On-road cornering
- Cavernous interior

DISLIKES

- Rough ride
- Massive doors with huge mirrors
- Odd throttle response

VERDICT

- A big brute of a truck



PETERSEN'S
4WHEEL
& OFF-ROAD **2008**
4x4
OF THE YEAR

**TOYOTA TUNDRA
TRD**



**NISSAN PATHFINDER
SE-V8**



**JEEP LIBERTY
LIMITED**



HUMMER H3 ALPHA

PETERSEN'S 4WHEEL & OFF-ROAD 2008
4x4
OF THE YEAR

SCORECARD

PREVIOUS 4X4 OF THE YEAR WINNERS

- 2007** Jeep Wrangler Rubicon JK
- 2006** Dodge Ram 1500 TRX4
- 2005** Jeep Grand Cherokee
- 2004** Volkswagen Touareg V-8
- 2003** Lexus GX 470
- 2002** Jeep Grand Cherokee (4.7 HO V-8)
- 2001** Jeep Grand Cherokee (five-speed auto transmission)
- 2000** Toyota Tundra
- 1999** Jeep Grand Cherokee (4.7 V-8 Limited)
- 1998** Jeep Grand Cherokee (5.9 V-8 Limited)
- 1997** Jeep Wrangler Sport TJ
- 1996** Jeep Grand Cherokee (with center diff lock)
- 1995** Dodge Ram (2500 V-10 longbed Club Cab)
- 1994** Dodge Ram (1500 V-8 shortbed regular cab)
- 1993** Jeep Grand Cherokee
- 1992** Chevrolet Blazer (fullsize)
- 1991** Dodge Dakota
- 1990** Nissan Pathfinder (four-door)
- 1989** Toyota pickup
- 1988** Jeep Cherokee (4.0 engine)
- 1987** Nissan Pathfinder (two-door)
- 1986** Ford Ranger
- 1985** Isuzu Trooper II
- 1984** Jeep Cherokee (2.8 engine)
- 1983** Chevrolet S-10 Blazer

TEST STRUCTURE

CATEGORY

RIDE & DRIVE (40% of total points)

- Urban
- Highway
- High Speed Dirt & Gravel
- Sand
- Rockclimbing
- Hillclimbing
- Braking Quality

Overall

EMPIRICAL (25% of total points)

- Torque/Weight Ratio
- 1/4-mile Acceleration
- 60-0 Braking
- Load-carrying Capacity
- Miles Per Gallon
- Price As Tested

Overall

RANKED HIGHEST

- Grand Cherokee
- Grand Cherokee
- Land Cruiser
- Hummer H3
- Wrangler
- Land Cruiser
- Grand Cherokee

Land Cruiser

- Tundra
- Tundra
- Titan
- Hummer H2
- Grand Cherokee
- Liberty

Tundra

MECHANICAL (25% of total points)

- Engine's Available Power
- Transmission
- 4WD/Low-range Engage
- Steering
- Fit and Finish
- Drivetrain Performance

Overall

INTERIOR (5% of total points)

- Ergonomics
- Appearance, Fit and Finish
- Appointments
- Perceived Noise Level

Overall

EXTERIOR (5% of total points)

- Body Styling
- Cargo
- Four-wheeling Attributes
- Fit and Finish

Overall

- Tundra
- Wrangler
- Wrangler
- Wrangler
- Dakota
- Land Cruiser

Wrangler

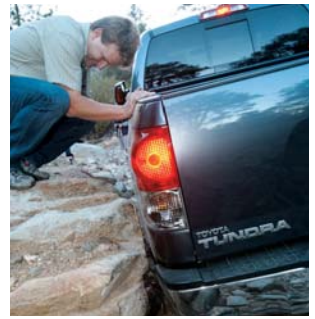
- Land Cruiser
- Land Cruiser
- Land Cruiser
- Land Cruiser

Land Cruiser

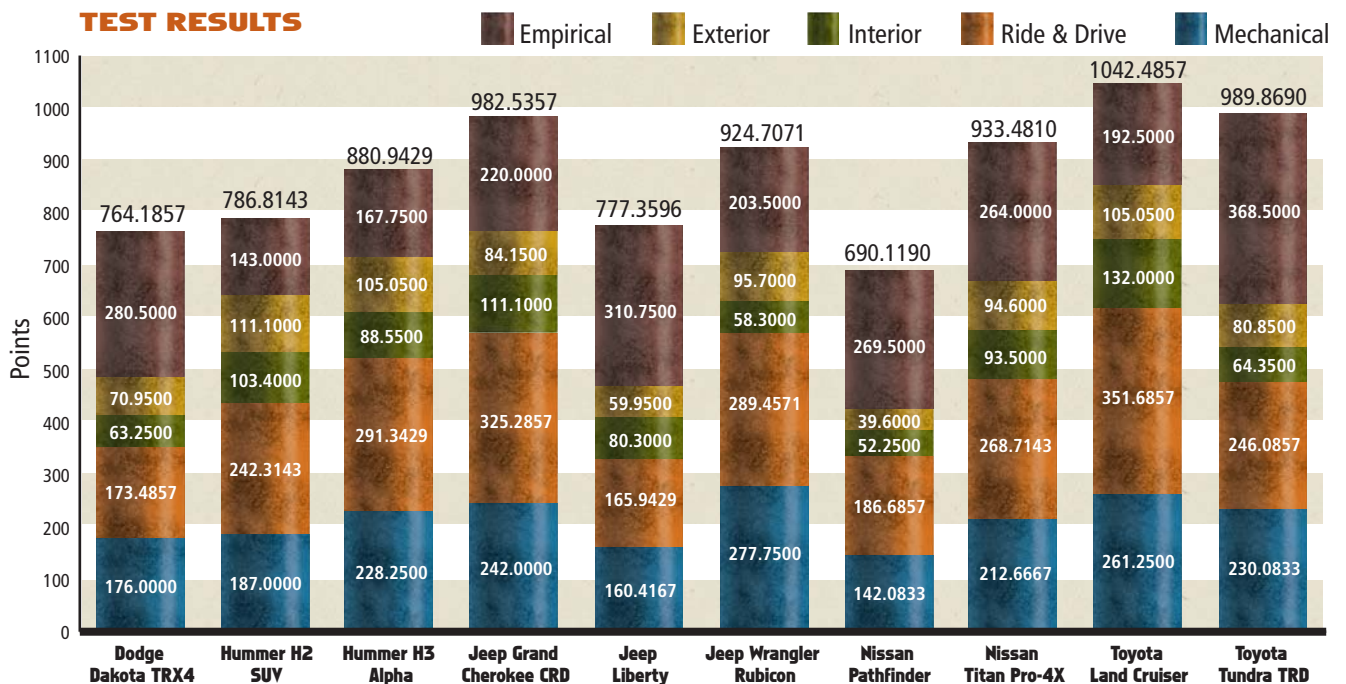
- Hummer H3
- Titan
- Wrangler
- Land Cruiser

Hummer H3





TEST RESULTS



PETERSEN'S
4WHEEL
& OFF-ROAD

2008

4x4

OF THE YEAR

LIKES

- V-8 power in a small truck
- New styling
- Cubbies and tie-downs

DISLIKES

- Carlike clearance and off-road performance
- Too much wheelbase
- Not enough skidplates

VERDICT

- Too long and low for off-road yet nice power for hauling



DODGE DAKOTA TRX4 CREW CAB

The Dodge Dakota has a new 4.7L V-8 dropping just over 300 horses and 320 lb-ft of torque, and a redesigned styling that really makes it an appealing mid-size truck. Of course it's hard to argue that a small truck with a V-8 isn't alluring, and Dodge has built a truck that on paper looks very good. The frame is fully box and hydroformed, it is available with either an extended cab or crew-cab, and it uses a 9.25-inch ring gear in the rear axle.

Since we were testing the TRX4 off-road package, it was outfitted with a rear limited-slip differential, some basic skidplates, a shift-on-the-fly part-time transfer case, and a stainproof interior with cloth seats. One of the really neat features now offered is a small tab on the inside of the tailgate bed jamb that allows you to lock the tailgate half-open so that it sits at about 45 degrees and offers more room to haul long items like lumber, yet keeps the object tilted so it will stay in the truck.

Unfortunately, staying in the truck was not a priority for our judges; most found the interior ultra basic and uncomfortable. Street and highway driving felt like the engine could easily move the truck, and having the controls on the steering wheel for items like cruise was a

bonus for one judge, but the overall appeal of the interior was low amongst our drivers. One redeeming trait of the Dakota was its useful storage room. The back seats fold to reveal little folding crates for storing items and carrying stuff from the truck. Plus interior space has cubbies and places for cell phones while the bed has a liner and tie-downs perfect for hauling tons of gear.

Once we headed off road the Dakota earned itself a solid Fair in the ratings of Poor, Fair, or Impressive. The long, low body made it hard to impossible for rockcrawling, the hillclimb required some momentum, and the trail obstacles were possible but not confidence-inspiring. The V-8 engine was capable in the high-speed sections and sand, but didn't impress as much when compared to the two fullsize trucks on the test. Plus, the suspension was rough riding and the lightweight rearend allowed it to oversteer and send the tail out sideways.

Again we found ourselves testing a fine truck, but not the most capable 4x4. If you need a truck for hauling light stuff, then you should definitely look at the Dakota. But if you are looking for a 4x4 pickup for small trails, this is not the best option.



SPECIFICATIONS

GENERAL

Manufacturer Dodge
 Model Dakota TRX4
 Base Price \$29,745
 Price as Tested \$33,050
 Options as Tested Customer Preferred Package 26T (Trailer Tow Group, Premium Sound Group, multispeed overdrive automatic transmission, 4.7L V-8, under-the-rail box bedliner)

ENGINE

Type V-8 SOHC 16-valve, Dual Plug
 Displacement (liters/cubic inches) 4.7/287
 Bore & Stroke (inches) 3.66x3.40
 Compression Ratio 9.8:1
 Induction Type Sequential, multiport fuel injection, electronic throttle control (ETC)
 Fuel Req. (octane)/Capacity (gal.) 87 or E85/22
 SAE Peak Horsepower 302 @ 5,650 rpm
 SAE Peak Torque (lb-ft) 329 @ 3,950 rpm

TRANSMISSION

Type Five-speed automatic
 Model 545 RFE

Ratios First: 3.00:1; Second: 1.67:1
 Third: 1.00:1; Fourth: 0.75:1; Fifth: 0.67:1;
 Reverse: 3.00:1

TRANSFER CASE

Type Two-speed, part-time electronic shift-on-the-fly

Model NV233
 Low-range Ratio 2.72:1

AXLES

Front Type Independent, 205 mm
 Rear Type Solid, 9.25 in, Anti-Spin
 Hubs N/A
 Ratio 3.92:1

SUSPENSION

Front Independent, coilover shock
 Rear Leaf spring

STEERING

Type Power-assisted rack-and-pinion
 Turns Lock-to-Lock/Ratio 3/17.3:1
 Turning Circle (feet) 43.3

WHEELS

Size (inches) 16x8.0
 Material Cast-aluminum

TIRES

Size P265/70R16
 Brand BFGoodrich Rugged Trail TA

BRAKES

Front Disc
 Rear Drum
 60-0 (feet) 170.76

ACCELERATION

Standing 1/4-mile (seconds @ mph) 16.79 @ 83.28

WEIGHT (pounds)

Curb Weight 4,770
 Advertised GVWR 6,010

MILEAGE

EPA Estimate (city/hwy. mpg) 14/19
 As Tested (mpg) 14.2

DIMENSIONS (inches)

Wheelbase 131.5
 Overall Length 219
 Overall Width 86.75
 Overall Height 68.5
 Front/Rear Track 63.25/63
 Front/Rear Overhang 39.5/50.5
 Min. Front Ground Clearance 7.5



HUMMER H2 SUV

For 2008 Hummer is offering both the H2 and H2 SUT (Sport Utility Truck) with the new 6.2L aluminum-block V-8. This powerhouse of the test offers more than 390 horses and 415 lb-ft of torque. Plus the Cro-Magnon brow of a roofline and the cavellike cabin make you feel both protected and famous as people glance to see who is driving such an outrageous vehicle. To make the H2 that much easier for driving and towing, there is now a 6L80 six-speed automatic behind the V-8 as well as an optional self-leveling rear airbag suspension. We're still wondering why the H2 only comes with a semifloating rear axle (9.25-inch) when it boasts a full 2,016 pounds of cargo and an 8,000-pound towing capacity. How about an AAM 10.5? And though we realize the 3.73 ring-and-pinion is there to help the fuel economy numbers, we would rather have 4.10s. When we put the H2 up on the rack to check out the underbelly, it quickly walked away with the award for Four Wheeling Attributes for its awesome system of skidplates protecting vital components as well as the massive tow hoops found front and rear and a swing-out tire carrier of epic proportions.

As with all the Hummer offerings, the H2 has a selec-

table rear locker which when activated not only helps the traction control but also indirectly helps the brakes by reducing the heating of the brakes from constant use when off road.

Once off road, the big H2 was amazingly capable as long as it could fit. However, like many of the current off-road vehicles, the H2 is extremely reliant on out-of-vehicle spotters when rockcrawling, but unlike many other offerings, the H2 (and H3) have excellent rock slider options that can truly take a beating, and near 35-inch-tall tires that keep those many underbelly skids free and clear of obstacles. It would seem that the H2 should be a clear winner in this test. However, it shares the traction control hop that its little H3 brother has and it isn't exactly nimble off road.

The H2 is definitely an American icon, like the big Cadillacs of yore. It is a vehicle that demands attention, loves fuel, and is recognized the world over. The new version offers excellent ride quality and the most powerful engine in our test. Though this burly machine dominates in the wide open like its retired H1 brethren, it is still a bit chubby for many of the tight trails.

SPECIFICATIONS

GENERAL

Manufacturer Hummer
 Model H2 SUV
 Base Price \$63,200
 Price as Tested \$71,130
 Options as Tested Upgrade package
ENGINE
 Type V-8
 Displacement (liters/cubic inches) 6.2/376
 Bore & Stroke (inches) 4.06x3.62
 Compression Ratio 10.5:1
 Induction Type Sequential, multipoint fuel injection
 Fuel Req. (octane)/Capacity (gal.) 87/32
 SAE Peak Horsepower 393 @ 5,700 rpm
 SAE Peak Torque (lb-ft) 415 @ 4,400 rpm

TRANSMISSION

Type Six-speed automatic
 Model Hydra-Matic 6L80
 Ratios First: 4.02:1; Second: 2.36:1
 Third: 1.52:1; Fourth: 1.15:1; Fifth: 0.85:1;
 Sixth: 0.66:1; Reverse: 3.064:1

TRANSFER CASE

Type Two-speed, full-time
 Model Borg-Warner 4484
 Low-range Ratio 2.64:1

AXLES

Front Type IFS
 Rear Type Solid
 Hubs N/A
 Ratio 3.73:1

SUSPENSION

Front Independent with torsion bars, 46mm monotube gas shocks, 36mm stabilizer bar
 Rear 5-link variable-rate coil spring, optional self-leveling air spring (w/RPO ZM6); 46mm monotube gas shocks, 30mm stabilizer bar (coil) or 32mm (air)

STEERING

Type Power-assisted, variable ratio, recirculating ball
 Turns Lock-to-Lock/Ratio 3/13.6-11.8:1
 Turning Circle (feet) 43.5

WHEELS

Size (inches) 17x7.0
 Material Cast-aluminum

TIRES

Size LT315/70R17
 Brand BFGoodrich All-Terrain

BRAKES

Front 12.8-inch disc w/ABS
 Rear 13-inch disc w/ABS
 60-0 (feet) 157.33

ACCELERATION

Standing 1/4-mile (seconds @ mph) 17.74 @ 80.05

WEIGHT (pounds)

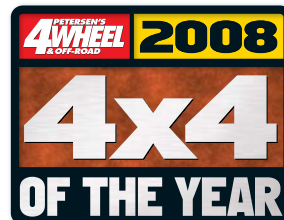
Curb Weight 6,614
 Advertised GVWR 8,600

MILEAGE

EPA Estimate (city/hwy. mpg) N/A
 As Tested (mpg) 10.2

DIMENSIONS (inches)

Wheelbase 123
 Overall Length 203.5
 Overall Width 97
 Overall Height 76
 Front/Rear Track 67.75/68
 Front/Rear Overhang 33/35.75
 Min. Front Ground Clearance 10.75



LIKES

- Big, powerful, go-anywhere feeling behind the wheel
- 6.2L V-8 is drool-worthy
- Paddle shifters are fun

DISLIKES

- Fat footprint off-road
- Heavy appetite for fuel
- Still lousy visibility

VERDICT

- Represents all that's good and bad about America



PETERSEN'S
4WHEEL
& OFF-ROAD **2008**
4x4
OF THE YEAR

LIKES

- Finally a V-8 H3!
- Classic Hummer looks
- Selectable rear locker and flexible suspension

DISLIKES

- V-8 feels like a V-6
- No front locker
- Side window openings too small

VERDICT

- It gets better every year, but we still want more capability.



HUMMER H3 ALPHA

We have had a Hummer H3 in the test for the past three years and every year it gets a little bit better. As you may know, we require a major change for a vehicle to even qualify for the event, and this year the military mini-ute finally showed up with a V-8 under the hood and was christened the H3 Alpha. We have been asking for a V-8 H3 every year since this awesome little four-by was introduced and so you can imagine the discussions in the parking lot as we prepared to leave for this test. Whispers of "finally a real engine," "I can't wait to drive it," and "winner," were heard while discussing the possible performance of the H3. Where there used to reside an inline five-cylinder that reminded us of something from an anemic tractor now lives a 5.3L V-8 from GM's famed LS small-block engine line. This power outlay was sure to impress when mixed with the selectable rear locking differentials, flexible leaf-sprung rear and independent front suspension, and 4.03:1 low-range Borg-Warner transfer case.

Oddly enough something wasn't right. Yes, the H3 has more power than before (58 more horsepower than the 3.7L I-5 to be exact), but maybe we had our hopes up expecting to have this Alpha dog pulling at the leash

every time we touched the throttle and it just wasn't there. The rugged Hummer styling is still great and the undercarriage skidplating was impressive, but we were expecting this truck to be a rocket. It felt finally adequate but not impressive.

This micro-Hummer still has the loves and hates of years gone by. The low roofline and small windows make visibility upwards toward steep climbs and downwards toward rocky trails difficult, though some judges like the protective cocoon feel that this invokes, plus the optional rearview camera and monitor help the parking impaired. The interior is comfortable, though the seat controls are still hard to reach down between the seat and the door. We feel the big tow hoops front and rear are great but the traction control still leaves a bit to be desired especially when mixed with the independent front suspension on steep climbs, where the same old bouncing-for-traction dance was replayed like the previous two years.

Even with these issues, this is still one of the most capable off-road machines in the GM line, and with a bit more tuning under the hood, we're sure you could turn this little dog with a big-dog complex into a true Alpha dog.



SPECIFICATIONS

GENERAL

Manufacturer	Hummer
Model	H3 Alpha
Base Price	\$35,295
Price as Tested	\$47,060
Options as Tested	Off-Road Suspension Package, Solar Flare Metallic Paint, Trailering Equipment, Rear Vision Camera System

ENGINE

Type	V-8
Displacement (liters/cubic inches)	5.3/325
Bore & Stroke (inches)	3.78x3.62
Compression Ratio	9.9:1
Induction Type	Sequential, multiport fuel injection
Fuel Req. (octane)/Capacity (gal.)	87/23
SAE Peak Horsepower	300 @ 5,200 rpm
SAE Peak Torque (lb-ft)	320 @ 4,000 rpm

TRANSMISSION

Type	Four-speed automatic
Model	Hydra-Matic 4L60
Ratios	First: 3.06:1; Second: 1.63:1
Third: 1.00:1; Fourth: 0.70:1; Reverse: 2.29:1	

TRANSFER CASE

Type	Two-speed, full-time
Model	Borg-Warner
Low-range Ratio	4.03:1

AXLES

Front Type	Independent
Rear Type	Solid
Hubs	N/A
Ratio	4.10:1

SUSPENSION

Front	Independent SLA torsion bar, 46mm monotube gas-charged shocks, 36mm tubular stabilizer bar
Rear	"Hotchkiss" design multileaf, semi-elliptic dual-stage leaf spring, 46mm monotube gas-charged shocks, 25mm rear solid diameter stabilizer bar

STEERING

Type	Power-assisted rack-and-pinion
Turns Lock-to-Lock/Ratio	3.25/17:1
Turning Circle (feet)	37

WHEELS

Size (inches)	16x7.5
Material	Cast-aluminum

TIRES

Size	LT285/75R16
Brand	Bridgestone Desert Dueler

BRAKES

Front	12.4-inch disc w/ABS
Rear	12.28-inch disc w/ABS
60-0 (feet)	141.43

ACCELERATION

Standing 1/4-mile (seconds @ mph)	19.42 @ 75.68
-----------------------------------	---------------

WEIGHT (pounds)

Curb Weight	4,851
Advertised GVWR	6,001

MILEAGE

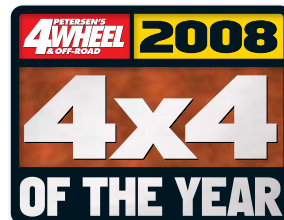
EPA Estimate (city/hwy. mpg)	13/18
As Tested (mpg)	12.4

DIMENSIONS (inches)

Wheelbase	111.75
Overall Length	187
Overall Width	85
Overall Height	73.75
Front/Rear Track	64.25/64.75
Front/Rear Overhang	31/48
Min. Front Ground Clearance	10



JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE LIMITED DIESEL



LIKES

- Small diesel in a medium-sized SUV
- Great traction control
- Excellent on-road driving

DISLIKES

- Limited ground clearance
- Needs a Rubicon package
- Tires are not aggressive

The Diesel Jeep Grand Cherokee needs more ground clearance and less front bumper. It amazes us how capable this 4x4 is, but also how dramatically short it has fallen from the undisputed coolest rig it could be. We recognize that, yes, it does have independent front suspension and we are not big fans of that at all; it has traction control, which is the longest four-letter word in this magazine; but both of these work amazingly well. The Grand's traction control is phenomenal and, before this year's Land Cruiser, had no peer as it was differential-based, where an in-axle pump pressurizes clutches to contract and limit the slip of the axleshafts and wheels. Most other traction controls are brake-based, and though some are getting better, we still fear that brake-based traction control can result in overheated brakes just as you crest a tall climb and then need to descend the other side. Bad idea in our view.

We were enthralled by the performance of the diesel in the Grand. Though it doesn't have the powerful diesel clatter found in a fullsize truck (it sounds more like a sewing machine at idle), it also has little-to-no noise while cruising. Many judges forgot it was a common-rail direct-

injection turbocharged 3.0L oil-burning engine while on our longer highway cruise testing sections. It gets better mileage than the Hemi by about 4 mpg, and it comes with almost a gallon larger fuel tank. In fact the biggest issue with the engine is that in our oddball city in Southern California, some fuel stations sell diesel for more than premium fuel so even if the Grand was available in this state (it's not available in California, New York, Maine, Vermont, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and Rhode Island), it would still be hard to justify as a price savings.

Unfortunately the low-slung package that this vehicle is delivered with makes it impossible or costly to get on the trails where it could shine. Why there isn't a trim package offered with some sleek body-color rock sliders, a 2-inch-taller ride, a front bumper that doesn't double as a snowplow, and some more aggressive all-terrain tires is beyond us. Jeep offered the Rubicon against the better judgment of its bean-counting suits and it was an instant success. We'd hate to think that a bunch of magazine motorheads need to point out that the same recipe could work for the Grand (not to mention the Liberty), but it seems they are missing the obvious.

VERDICT

- A capable 4x4 held back by a low-slung body



SPECIFICATIONS

GENERAL

Manufacturer Jeep
 Model Grand Cherokee Limited
 Base Price \$38,555
 Price as Tested \$43,380
 Options as Tested 3.0L Diesel Engine,
 Quadra-Drive II, Trailer Tow Package,
 HID headlamps, MyGIG Multimedia
 Infotainment System

ENGINE

Type Diesel V-6
 Displacement (liters/cubic inches) 3.0/182.4
 Bore & Stroke (inches) 3.27x3.62
 Compression Ratio 18:1
 Induction Type Turbocharged,
 common-rail diesel (CRD)
 Fuel Req. (octane)/Capacity (gal.) Diesel/22
 SAE Peak Horsepower 215 @ 3,800 rpm
 SAE Peak Torque (lb-ft) 376 @ 1,600 rpm

TRANSMISSION

Type Five-speed automatic
 Model W5J400

Ratios First: 3.59:1; Second: 2.19:1
 Third: 1.41:1; Fourth: 1.00:1; Fifth: 0.83:1;
 Reverse: 2.29:1

TRANSFER CASE

Type Two-speed, full-time
 Model NV245
 Low-range Ratio 2.32:1

AXLES

Front Type IFS, electronically controlled
 limited slip differential (ELSD)
 Rear Type Solid, electronically controlled
 limited slip differential (ELSD)

Hubs N/A
 Ratio 3.73:1

SUSPENSION

Front Independent SLA
 Rear Five-link, live axle

STEERING

Type Power-assisted rack-and-pinion
 variable ratio
 Turns Lock-to-Lock/Ratio 2.75/16.5:1
 Turning Circle (feet) 37.4

WHEELS

Size (inches) 17x7.5
 Material Aluminum

TIRES

Size P245/65R17
 Brand Goodyear Fortera HL

BRAKES

Front Disc, twin 48mm pistons
 Rear Disc, single 48mm piston
 60-0 (feet) 146.43

ACCELERATION

Standing 1/4-mile
 (seconds @ mph) 17.17 @ 79.05

WEIGHT (pounds)

Curb Weight 4,851
 Advertised GVWR 6,150

MILEAGE

EPA Estimate (city/hwy. mpg) 18/23
 As Tested (mpg) 18.04

DIMENSIONS (inches)

Wheelbase 109.5
 Overall Length 190.5
 Overall Width 86.25
 Overall Height 70
 Front/Rear Track 62/61.75
 Front/Rear Overhang 36.125/46
 Min. Front Ground Clearance 7.5

PETERSEN'S 4WHEEL & OFF-ROAD 2008
4x4
OF THE YEAR

LIKES

- Clean, simple interior
- Sky-Slider fabric roof
- Short maneuverable wheelbase

DISLIKES

- Needs more power
- We miss the diesel option
- Give it the Grand's traction control or a locker

VERDICT

- Changed a lot but stayed basically the same



JEEP LIBERTY LIMITED

The Jeep Liberty has a terrible reputation amongst Jeep purists as a lame "soft-roader" 4x4, but after the introduction of the less-than-trail-rated Jeep Compass and Patriot, all of a sudden the Liberty doesn't look so bad. There has been a complete redesign of the Liberty, making it not only more attractive to some (imagine a little Commander), but more enjoyable as both a trail and asphalt wheeler. The major changes are styling, which takes the squarish cues from Wagoneers and Cherokees of years gone by, a new front and rear suspension, and the full canvas sunroof that slides back to uncover both the front and rear seats.

Since there's a Jeep logo on the hood, we had high hopes that the new Liberty would excel in the dirt, but unfortunately there is still a Liberty logo on the side. The Liberty would spank most of the contenders in its class off road (the Honda CR-V, Toyota Rav4, and so on) since most don't even come with a low range, but when compared to the higher caliber (and more expensive) 4x4s in our test, the Liberty didn't stand out.

The Liberty does have traction control and a short wheelbase, not to mention fairly good visibility and some semblance of ground clearance, so it wasn't completely

pathetic. But no matter what terrain we headed to—sand, high-speed desert, rocks, or hillclimbs—the Liberty wasn't really putting up a good fight. Many judges complained about the stiff suspension, bouncy high-speed ride, and the general lack of power from the V-6. And even though it has traction control, it is an inferior brake-activated version, where we would have appreciated the active limited-slip version found in the Grand Cherokee and Commanders. Our Liberty (referred to as the KK, maybe short for Kan't Keep up) was pretty economical with an average 14.6 mpg, but we miss the performance and mileage of the previous diesel-optional Liberty we tested back in 2005.

The Liberty is a fine little car. It has good room, is easy to drive in the city, and has a nicer interior than some of its more expensive opponents (Pathfinder, learn from Liberty's simplicity). Plus if we were looking for a safe little ride for our mom to drive, whether she lives in the snowy north or down a gravel road, we'd feel good recommending the Liberty as it is better than many options in its price range. However in the end we feel that it's still a soft-roader that could benefit greatly from some of Jeep's other off-road options, or those of the 4x4 aftermarket.

SPECIFICATIONS

GENERAL

Manufacturer Jeep
 Model Liberty Limited
 Base Price \$26,785
 Price as Tested \$30,270
 Options as Tested Customer Preferred Package, trailer tow, skidplates, Premium Equipment Group, Selec-Trac II transfer case, Sky-Slider roof

ENGINE

Type 90-degree V-6 w/balance shaft
 Displacement (liters/cubic inches) 3.7/226
 Bore & Stroke (inches) 3.66x3.57
 Compression Ratio 9.7:1
 Induction Type Sequential, electronic, returnless, multiport fuel injection
 Fuel Req. (octane)/Capacity (gal.) 87/19.5
 SAE Peak Horsepower 210 @ 5,200 rpm
 SAE Peak Torque (lb-ft) 235 @ 4,000 rpm

TRANSMISSION

Type Four-speed automatic
 Model 42RLE
 Ratios First: 2.84:1; Second: 1.57:1
 Third: 1.00:1; Fourth: 0.69:1; Reverse: 2.21:1

TRANSFER CASE

Type Two-speed, full-time
 Model Selec-Trac MP3022
 Low-range Ratio 2.72:1

AXLES

Front Type Independent/Dana 30
 Rear Type Solid/DAP 8.25
 Hubs N/A
 Ratio 3.73:1

SUSPENSION

Front Upper and lower A-arms, coil springs, low-pressure gas-charged shock absorbers, stabilizer bar
 Rear Live axle, upper and lower trailing arms, coil springs, stabilizer bar, low-pressure gas-charged shock absorbers

STEERING

Type Power-assisted rack-and-pinion
 Turns Lock-to-Lock/Ratio 3.5/17.36:1
 Turning Circle (feet) 35.5

WHEELS

Size (inches) 17x7.0
 Material Aluminum

TIRES

Size P235/65R17
 Brand Goodyear Wrangler HP

BRAKES

Front 11.9-inch vented disc
 Rear 12.4-inch disc
 60-0 (feet) 138.93

ACCELERATION

Standing ¼-mile (seconds @ mph) 18.19 @ 77.30

WEIGHT (pounds)

Curb Weight 4,525
 Advertised GVWR 5,675

MILEAGE

EPA Estimate (city/hwy. mpg) 15/21
 As Tested (mpg) 14.6

DIMENSIONS (inches)

Wheelbase 106.25
 Overall Length 178
 Overall Width 82.75
 Overall Height 71.25
 Front/Rear Track 61.75/60.75
 Front/Rear Overhang 29.5/45.75
 Min. Front Ground Clearance 6.75





JEEP WRANGLER UNLIMITED RUBICON

The Jeep name is built entirely upon the shoulders of one iconic vehicle. A true Jeep has a removable top or no top whatsoever, a rugged go-anywhere attitude, and offers its occupants 60+ years of fun and adventure. With the new four-door Wrangler, it can now offer that adventure to more occupants, with more gear, more comfortably. What can we tell you about the new four-door Jeep Wrangler Unlimited Rubicon JK? It's a lot like the winning two-door Jeep Wrangler from last year, but a little bit longer. It still has the great selectable lockers and solid axles that we feel make it one of the last true off-road 4x4s on the market, and like the two-door, it is available with either a hard or soft top, manual or automatic transmission, and a front sway bar that can be disconnected with the flip of a switch. Unfortunately the four-door Wrangler also has the same 3.8L V-6 as the two-door, which isn't bad in the short version, but less than great in the long one.

Let's get the lashings over with; Jeep, your four-door Wrangler needs a bigger engine. How about a V-8? Do you not remember that they once put a 304 V-8 in a CJ-5 with a 90-inch wheelbase?! Please give us a 50-state legal diesel. We promise you'll sell even more Wranglers,

especially if it has V-8 performance with V-6 economy.

The soft top is amazingly quiet compared to the TJs, YJs, and CJs of years gone by, and nothing beats driving a JK with just half-doors or no doors at all. The NV241 OR transfer case with 4:1 low range is still one of the best in the market (the H3 case is right there with it), but at least the Wrangler still has a lever to engage four-wheel drive. The interior is simple with only what you would need for a true top-down adventure, and the backseat is spacious enough. Techno-geeks will love the new MyGig 20 gigabyte hard drive stereo system. This in-dash unit has GPS, a satellite radio receiver, a USB and inline jack for downloading data like music and maps, and the basic AM/FM radio and CD and DVD player all surrounding a 6½-inch LCD screen.

Off road the Wrangler is hard to beat. It has gearing, lockers, visibility, and the most aggressive tires in the trial, and wherever big horsepower wasn't required, it did awesome. Rocks? Owned. Trails? Walked them, often without lockers or the sway bar disconnected. Hillclimb? Yawn. High-speed desert running and sand? Well... all in all this is still the 4x4 that most judges would ask for when all-around four-wheeling, but the question is will its prowess outweigh its powerlessness?

SPECIFICATIONS

GENERAL

Manufacturer Jeep
Model Wrangler Unlimited Rubicon
Base Price \$29,535
Price as Tested \$32,480
Options as Tested MyGIG Multimedia Infotainment System, Detonator Yellow Paint, Trailer Tow Group, Metal Half Doors

ENGINE

Type 60-degree V-6
Displacement (liters/cubic inches) 3.8/230.5
Bore & Stroke (inches) 3.78x3.43
Compression Ratio 9.6:1
Induction Type Sequential, multipoint fuel injection
Fuel Req. (octane)/Capacity (gal.) 87/21
SAE Peak Horsepower 203 @ 5,200 rpm
SAE Peak Torque (lb-ft) 232 @ 4,000 rpm

TRANSMISSION

Type Six-speed manual
Model NSG370
Ratios First: 4.46:1; Second: 2.61:1
Third: 1.72:1; Fourth: 1.25:1; Fifth: 1.00:1; Sixth: 0.84:1; Reverse: 4.06:1

TRANSFER CASE

Type Two-speed, part-time
Model NV241 OR
Low-range Ratio 4.00:1

AXLES

Front Type Solid/Dana 44
Rear Type Solid/Dana 44
Hubs N/A
Ratio 4.10:1

SUSPENSION

Front Live axle, coil springs, monotube high-pressure gas shocks, sway bar disconnect, leading arms, trackbar
Rear Live axle, trailing arms, track bar, coil springs, stabilizer bar, monotube high-pressure shocks

STEERING

Type Power-assisted recirculating ball
Turns Lock-to-Lock/Ratio 3/16.7:1
Turning Circle (feet) 41

WHEELS

Size (inches) 17x7.5
Material Cast-aluminum

TIRES

Size LT255/75R17
Brand BFGoodrich Mud-Terrain TA

BRAKES

Front 11.9-inch disc w/ABS
Rear 12.4-inch disc w/ABS
60-0 (feet) 147.03

ACCELERATION

Standing ¼-mile (seconds @ mph) 18.70 @ 73.92

WEIGHT (pounds)

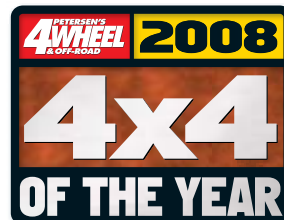
Curb Weight 4,650
Advertised GVWR 5,500

MILEAGE

EPA Estimate (city/hwy. mpg) 15/19
As Tested (mpg) 13.26

DIMENSIONS (inches)

Wheelbase 116.5
Overall Length 186
Overall Width 76.25
Overall Height 73.5
Front/Rear Track 60.75/60.825
Front/Rear Overhang 29.75/39.75
Min. Front Ground Clearance 9.5



LIKES

- Solid axles, off-road tires
- Locking differentials
- Room like a minivan

DISLIKES

- Engine like a minivan
- Too spartan for some people
- Too soft and plasticity for some others

VERDICT

- The iconic adventure vehicle matures



PETERSEN'S
4WHEEL
& OFF-ROAD

2008

4x4

OF THE YEAR

LIKES

- Fun, responsive V-8
- Good for high-speed roads and sand
- At home in the city

DISLIKES

- Confusing dash center stack
- Traction control requires excessive tire spin
- Running boards

VERDICT

- Nissan loses the Path



NISSAN PATHFINDER SE-V8

Nissan has a great reputation across the globe for its 4x4s and in the United States its history of 4x4s has long been the responsibility of the Pathfinder. Unfortunately, while the rest of the world gets the awesome Patrol, we started with the rugged Pathfinder which seems to have wained recently and let the Xterra take its place off road. The Nissan Pathfinder has been reintroduced for 2008 with a 5.6L 310hp V-8 engine and plenty of interior and exterior upgrades. For those of you looking for a mid-sized SUV with a healthy powerplant, we would recommend this 4x4. From the moment we pulled out of the parking lot for our weeklong test, the judges noticed the newfound power of the Pathfinder, and in the types of terrain that power is needed, such as sand and high-speed desert tracks, the Pathfinder was a reputable machine. Unfortunately our 4x4 of the Year must also excel in other terrains.

The interior was redesigned for '08, and though it has plenty of amenities such as navigation, heated seats, a backup camera, and a 7-inch color "multi-information" display screen, to actually use all of this stuff was excru-

ciatingly difficult. Knobs and dials aren't in logical positions, and it took judges a long time just to find the radio controls because they weren't near the radio display!

During the road testing we found the steering to be heavy and the wind noise noticeable, which is tolerable. But when we headed toward the dirt for some hillclimbing and rockcrawling, the Pathfinder found its way to the bottom of the pack. In fact this grocery-getter was referred to as the penalty box by judges trying to get it up the loose rockclimbs and rocky trails. The lack of ground clearance and skidplates made trail riding more like work than fun. But even more annoying and dangerous was the horrible traction-control system that had tires spinning on every corner while none found traction. In fact, the velocity of tire spin required to even begin activating the traction control resulted in the 265/60/R18 tires being shredded to bits.

The Pathfinder has a good engine and comfortable interior with remarkable storage for such a small vehicle, but when it comes to off-road prowess, Nissan seems to have lost the path and found the pavement.



SPECIFICATIONS

GENERAL

Manufacturer Nissan
 Model Pathfinder SE-V8
 Base Price \$32,850
 Price as Tested \$38,260
 Options as Tested XM SAT Radio (\$150), floor mats (\$155), SE Premium Package (\$1,850), Air Bag Package (\$700), SE Leather Package (\$1,850)

ENGINE

Type V-8 (VK56DE)
 Displacement (liters/cubic inches) 5.6/339
 Bore & Stroke (inches) 3.86x3.62
 Compression Ratio 9.8:1
 Induction Type Sequential, multiport fuel injection
 Fuel Req. (octane)/Capacity (gal.) 87/21
 SAE Peak Horsepower 310 @ 5,200 rpm
 SAE Peak Torque (lb-ft) 388 @ 3,400 rpm

TRANSMISSION

Type Five-speed automatic
 Model NA

Ratios First: 3.841:1; Second: 2.352:1
 Third: 1.529:1; Fourth: 1.000:1;
 Fifth: 0.839:1; Reverse: 2.764:1

TRANSFER CASE

Type Two-speed, part-time
 Model N/A
 Low-range Ratio 2.63:1

AXLES

Front Type Independent
 Rear Type Independent
 Hubs N/A
 Ratio 3.133:1

SUSPENSION

Front Independent, double wishbone
 Rear Independent, double wishbone

STEERING

Type Power-assisted rack-and-pinion
 Turns Lock-to-Lock/Ratio 3.25/17:1
 Turning Circle (feet) 39.5

WHEELS

Size (inches) 18x8.0
 Material Aluminum alloy

TIRES

Size P265/60R18
 Brand BFGoodrich Long Trail TA

BRAKES

Front Vented disc
 Rear Vented disc
 60-0 (feet) 148.17

ACCELERATION

Standing 1/4-mile (seconds @ mph) 16.74 @ 85.30

WEIGHT (pounds)

Curb Weight 5,313
 Advertised GVWR 6,500

MILEAGE

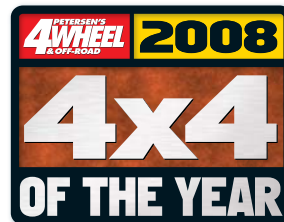
EPA Estimate (city/hwy. mpg) 12/18
 As Tested (mpg) 13.97

DIMENSIONS (inches)

Wheelbase 112
 Overall Length 193
 Overall Width 83.5
 Overall Height 72
 Front/Rear Track 62.125/62.5
 Front/Rear Overhang 33.5/46.5
 Min. Front Ground Clearance 8



NISSAN TITAN CREW CAB PRO-4X



LIKES

- Selectable rear locker
- Great V-8
- Fun high-speed prunner

DISLIKES

- Needs rock sliders
- Average looks and performance
- Tires not aggressive

VERDICT

- A good 1/2-ton truck, nothing more, nothing less

The 2008 Nissan Titan is still one of the most overlooked trucks in the fullsize market, and the crew-cab Pro-4X off-road package we tested is a great all-around truck in our view. It has a healthy 5.6L V-8 engine and an even more appealing interior than previous versions, and the storage ability of both cab and bed makes it a truck any of the judges could live with. This truck, though lacking in power compared to the Tundra and H2, has enough guts to get up and move. It has an excellent ride and the interior felt extremely well laid out, especially compared to the Tundra, where the interior felt big just for the sake of being big.

Once off road we found the Titan a contender. Its selectable rear locker and long wheelbase helped push it up the hillclimb and kept it steady on the high-speed sections. In fact the high-speed test across a rutted desert two track was really where the Titan shined; it soaked up the abuse and was steady and solid even up to 60-65 mph. However it's unfortunate that the wheelbase of any crew-cab full-size pickup on the market offers less than stellar rock-crawling, and since there was a lack of skidplates under vital organs like the transmission pan, we felt less than courageous to explore difficult lines. In fact, even with

multiple spotters, a rear locking differential, and a skilled driver, the Titan still exited the rockcrawling experiment with a healthy scar on the rocker panel, something a basic set of rock sliders could have prevented.

The Nissan Titan would make a great work truck at a farm, up a dirt road, or on the construction site. Plus the Pro-4x off-road package includes items like the Rancho shocks, lockable bedside storage, and the aforementioned selectable rear locker, which definitely makes it the Titan to have. In fact it may be interesting to see a full-blown 1/2-ton truck shootout some day.

The Titan earned a lot of comments from the judges like "a good truck, a peppy truck, very solid, and very well controlled ride for a pickup," but oddly enough this truck that worked great just didn't stand out from its peers. It seemed to offer everything most of us would want, but it never felt exceptional amongst some of the more capable off-roaders. If the Titan is overlooked we can understand why. We don't feel that anything about the truck is really bad, it's just that nothing about it was really that amazing either. Maybe the fact that we didn't have any real complaints actually makes this truck exceptional.

SPECIFICATIONS

GENERAL

Manufacturer Nissan
 Model Titan Crew Cab Pro-4X
 Base Price \$33,950
 Price as Tested \$38,620
 Options as Tested Popular Package (\$1350), floor mats (\$125), Side-Air Bag Package with VDC (\$1,200), Tow Package (\$450), Pro-4X High Utility Bed Package (\$800)

ENGINE

Type V-8 (VK56DE)
 Displacement (liters/cubic inches) 5.6/339
 Bore & Stroke (inches) 3.86x3.62
 Compression Ratio 9.8:1
 Induction Type Sequential, multiport fuel injection
 Fuel Req. (octane)/Capacity (gal.) 87/28
 SAE Peak Horsepower 317 @ 5,200 rpm
 SAE Peak Torque (lb-ft) 385 @ 3,400 rpm

TRANSMISSION

Type Five-speed automatic
 Model IK

Ratios First: 3.827:1; Second: 2.368:1
 Third: 1.520:1; Fourth: 1.000:1; Fifth: 0.834:1; Reverse: 2.613:1

TRANSFER CASE

Type Two-speed, part-time
 Model XI
 Low-range Ratio 2.596:1

AXLES

Front Type IFS
 Rear Type Solid/Dana 44
 Hubs N/A
 Ratio 3.357:1

SUSPENSION

Front Independent double wishbone
 Rear Multileaf with solid Dana 44 axle

STEERING

Type Power-assisted rack-and-pinion
 Turns Lock-to-Lock/Ratio 3.5/20:1
 Turning Circle (feet) 45.4

WHEELS

Size (inches) 18x8.0
 Material Aluminum alloy

TIRES

Size P275/70R18
 Brand BFGoodrich Rugged Trail TA

BRAKES

Front Vented disc
 Rear Vented disc
 60-0 (feet) 136.93

ACCELERATION

Standing 1/4-mile (seconds @ mph) 16.94 @ 85.77

WEIGHT (pounds)

Curb Weight 5,602
 Advertised GVWR 7,200

MILEAGE

EPA Estimate (city/hwy. mpg) 12/17
 As Tested (mpg) 11.8

DIMENSIONS (inches)

Wheelbase 140.25
 Overall Length 224
 Overall Width 97
 Overall Height 76
 Front/Rear Track 68/68.25
 Front/Rear Overhang 35.5/49.75
 Min. Front Ground Clearance 9.125

