

# CRITICAL MASS BY JOE SAGE

**W**e got to really know the bigger Range Rover in the harshest of conditions—during Mudfest, the Outdoor Activity Vehicle of the Year faceoff in the Pacific Northwest a couple of years ago—where we truly came to understand that its \$85,000, 5000-pound, tech-laden beauty runs way more than skin-deep. Not only could it handle the harshest conditions with ease, but its extensive electronic off-road features add serious and unmatched capabilities. We already knew it had advantages at the country club (and you can easily build it to over \$100k, almost as easily to over \$200k), but we were duly impressed by its dominance.

We also got to know the smaller, lighter \$38,000, 3800-pound aluminum unibody Land Rover Discovery Sport at Mudfest, last year. It may be its stylish good looks that had listed it for an easier course, but have no fear—the rep on hand insisted we take it on the hardest course, and then off that to even harsher conditions. It was truly impressive. And that, too, would look more than fine at the club.

Thus we might figure this \$65,000 Range Rover Sport to be the Goldilocks model, mid-

priced, mid-spec'ed, yet fully capable. Ours was also the new Td6 diesel model, introduced recently in Sedona (along with a Td6 version of the bigger Range Rover).

We had this Range Rover Sport for a forest-shortened time and did not get to take it anywhere extreme. Contributor Sue Mead drove the two Td6 models at launch (see our previous issue) and noted that the Sport was aimed more toward the highway, anyway, although it contains essentially the same hugely capable off-road systems of the big one.

Our sample arrived as spring temperatures first hit the 90s, and we quickly found that the a/c vents were already broken, at just 2200 miles. Some prior colleague may have been rough on things, so this may not be representative, but it got us acquainted on an off note.

Thus, our logbook went on to include beefs about overly active proximity alarms, an unintuitive shifter that left us at a standstill at times, a driver's footwell occupied by a huge instrument panel undercarriage that tripped up our big feet between pedals, and so on.

The diesel engine—which adds about \$1500 to the price of a gasoline model—pro-

vides serious grunt, 443 lb-ft, yet around town we were pleasantly oblivious to this alternative drivetrain—we practically would have needed a stethoscope to detect any clatter.

The interior has a few style low points, notably a very clunky steering wheel, as well as perfect-circle audio tweeters awkwardly eclipsed by those ill-fated a/c vents. A pair of buttons—start/stop and glovebox opener—are in an odd place for either and odd to be a pair. Overall, though, we liked the interior quite well, with an appropriate business-first, style-always premium fit and finish throughout.

From \$65,000 base price to \$72,000 base for our sample, some buyers will find enough style and capability to seal the deal. Essential add-ons took ours to \$85,000, though, and this is a very competitive segments. We can easily think of perhaps two things you could get for this price. At a minimum, while at the dealer, we'd also look at the base model larger Range Rover, and at the Discovery Sport. ■

## SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE / DRIVETRAIN.....	3.0L Turbo V6 Diesel / 4WD
HORSEPOWER/TORQUE.....	254 hp / 443 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION.....	8-spd automatic
SEATING CAPACITY.....	4 (occasional 5) passengers
TURNING CIRCLE.....	39.7 ft
WEIGHT.....	4709 lb
TOW CAPACITY.....	7716 lb
MPG.....	22/29/25 city/hwy/comb
CARGO VOLUME.....	all seats up: <i>not stated</i>
	behind 2nd row: 62.2 cu.ft.
LENGTH / WHEELBASE.....	191.0 in / 115.1 in

BASE PRICE.....	<b>\$71,450</b>
FRONT CLIMATE, COMFORT & VISIBILITY PACKAGE: 16-way power front climate seats, heated rear seats, heated steering wheel, twin blade visors, adaptive xenon headlights, auto dim mirrors, blindspot monitor, closing vehicle sensing, reverse, traffic detection, 60/40 load-thru rear seat.....	2620
DRIVER ASSISTANCE PACKAGE: lane departure, traffic sign recog, perpendicular & parallel park, park exit, 360° park distance control, heads up display, wifi prewire.....	2900
EXTRA DUTY PACKAGE: terrain response, adaptive dynamics, 2-spd transfer box, all terrain control 1750	
TOW PACKAGE: hitch receiver, elec connector, full size spare.....	900
825-WATT MERIDIAN PREMIUM AUDIO.....	1850
SLIDING PANORAMIC ROOF.....	500
ADAPTIVE CRUISE W/ QUEUE ASSIST.....	1295
SANTORINI BLACK CONTRAST ROOF.....	650
EBONY HEADLINER.....	350
DESTINATION CHARGE.....	995
<b>TOTAL.....</b>	<b>\$85,260</b>

