

REDISCOVERING DISCOVERY

by Sue Mead

Land Rover says its all-new 5th-generation Discovery is its best yet. The Brits who make it should know, but I should know, too. I have tested every model that has come to America. The nameplate's lineage began in 1989; but it didn't come to the US until 1994; models have included the Discovery Series I, Discovery Series II and the LR3 and LR4 versions that kept the boxy looks, body-on-frame platform, clamshell hood, stepped roof and asymmetrical rear door design. The reinterpretation of the 27-year heritage of the Disco family has been reengineered to bring higher levels of capability and technology.

New is a monocoque aluminum body and steel subframe that is inherited from its bigger stablemates, the Range Rover and Range Rover Sport. Like its siblings, it's penned with more curvaceous lines; keeps a softened version of the hood, rooftop and back end; and yet still bears a strong resemblance to its iconic looks. It can seat five or up to seven, in three rows of seats that can be raised and lowered, even using an app on your phone.

Optimized headroom for rear riders comes from the slightly raised roofline, while good visibility is enhanced by the cabin's stadium-seating design.

The exterior now has distinctive sculpted surfaces and a more raked windshield. Jewel-like headlamps and new daytime running lights create a striking light signature. At the back, new horizontal LED lamps add a sportier appearance, along with the one-piece tailgate that has a larger opening for loading/unloading and a full hatch that provides shelter from the elements when open; a new rear spoiler brings improved aerodynamics.

The lux-laden, tech-savvy interior is available in a wide selection of materials and finishes that include Windsor Leather and Natural Oak veneers in five interior color palettes: Nimbus, Acorn, Ebony, Vintage Tan and Glacier. Inside is an impressive collection of premium features and options. Many are the price-of-entry for a vehicle of this class; some go above and beyond. Of note are the center console that can hold five laptops or iPads; the center power cooler to keep beverages

and other goods cold; the largest panoramic sunroof ever in a "Landie," with both powered and fixed panels to let light in, along with configurable ambient lighting for night; and a world-first Intelligent Seat Fold technology that reconfigures second- and third-row seats using controls in the rear, on the touchscreen or remotely; three rows of seats that are available with heat, plus cooling in rows one and two—and massaging for the driver and front passenger. There are up to six 12V charging points and nine USB sockets available across the three rows for connectivity and the powering of smartphones and tablets simultaneously. Unique and clever is a waterproof Activity Key wristband that lets owners enjoy sports and active pursuits without having to carry a standard key fob. The device locks the vehicle and disables the traditional key that can be left safely inside.

The list of smart technology features that enhance convenience and connectivity is long. Of note is the InControl Touch Pro infotainment system with a 10-inch touchscreen positioned high on the center console, with easy-to-navigate menus for NAV and entertainment technologies including door-to-door navigation that can share directions to a paired smartphone, to help owners complete a journey on foot; iOS and Android connectivity com-

bined with a 17-speaker Meridian digital surround system; and 3G WiFi that streams songs online or plays music directly from a connected device.

Safety features include Autonomous Emergency Braking with Pedestrian Detection, Adaptive Cruise Control with Intelligent Emergency Braking, Hill Start Assist, Park Assist with Parallel Park, Parking Exit and Perpendicular Park functions, Blind Spot Monitoring with Closing Vehicle Sensing and Blind Spot Assist. Other driver assistance programs include Traffic Sign Recognition and Intelligent Speed Limiter, Driver Condition Monitor, Surround Camera System and Lane Departure and Lane Keep Assist.

The 2017 Land Rover Discovery starts at \$49,990 and comes in three trims (SE, HSE and HSE Luxury); two powertrains (gas or diesel—a \$2,000 upcharge); and a First Edition uniquely-trimmed, up-level version is available. Discovery is available in 18 exterior colors, with 12 unique wheel designs ranging from 19 to 22 inches, plus off-road and towing accessories, roof racks and add-ons and upgrades. Competitors include the BMW X5 and Audi Q7.

UNDER THE HOOD

The Discovery's gasoline or diesel powertrain is connected to an eight-speed automatic gearbox, with steering wheel-mounted shift paddles. The 3.0L supercharged V6 gas engine gets 340 horse-

power with 332 lb-ft of torque, while the 3.0L turbocharged V6 diesel produces 254/ 443 lb-ft. Fuel economy is 16/21/18 mpg city/highway/combined for the gasoline, with a range of 423 miles, and 21/26/23 for the diesel, with a range of 518 miles.

Two systems provide traction. A two-speed transfer case brings high and low range gears; the "intelligent" system allows a standard 50/50 torque split between the front and rear wheels, with sensors that distribute torque between the wheels depending on the conditions. The fully synchronized "shift on the move" system allows the change of gear ratios without having to stop, at speeds up to 37mph. A full-time 4WD system provides a torque split of 42/58 and automatically redistributes torque to the axle with the most grip, up to 62/38 and 22/78 respectively. The All-Terrain Progress Control (ATPC) can be programmed to maintain a crawl speed selected by the driver and also enhances starting from a standstill on slippery or low traction terrain. Other on/off-road technologies include Hill Descent Control, Electronic Traction Control, Roll Stability Control and Gradient Release Control.

The new ute has a maximum towing capacity of 8,201 pounds (gas) and 7,716 lbs (diesel). Towing aids include Advanced Tow Assist that helps manage backing up trailers, with the rotary Ter-



SPECIFICATIONS

SEATING CAPACITY.....	5- or 7-passenger
ENGINE: Td6 TURBO DIESEL ...	254 hp / 443 lb-ft
3.0L 24v V6 common rail turbo diesel	
ENGINE: GASOLINE.....	340 hp / 332 lb-ft
3.0L 24v quad-cam supercharged V6	
TRANSMISSION	ZF 8-speed auto
DRIVE.....	permanent 4WD; opt. locking rear
ZERO-TO-60 MPH	diesel 7.7 / gas 6.9 sec
TOP SPEED	diesel 130 / gas 133 mph
SUSPENSION	F: SLA w/twin lower links, air or coil springs, passive dampers, passive anti-roll bar; R: integral link, air or coil springs, passive dampers/anti-roll bar
STEERING	elec power rack & pinion
BRAKES	F: 14.17" vented; R: 13.78" vented
WHEELS	twelve alloy wheel options: 19"-22"
LENGTH / WB	195.67 / 115.04-115.08 in
TURNING CIRCLE	40.4 ft
APPR/BRKV/DEPART	coil: 24.4 / 25 / 20.1°
.....	air: 29.5 / 28 / 25.5°
GROUND CLEARANCE.....	coil 8.66", air 11.14"
WADING DEPTH	coil 33.46", air 35.43"
MIN ASCENT/DESCENT / SIDE SLOPE ...	45° / 35°
LEGROOM.....	5p/(7p): 39.41 / 39.02 / (37.87) in
CARGO CAPACITY	5p/(7p): 82.7 / 45 / (tbd) cu.ft
WEIGHT.....	diesel 4916 lb / gasoline 4751 lb
FUEL CAPACITY.....	diesel 22.5 / gas 23.5 gal
.....	diesel AdBlue (urea) tank 38 pints
TOW CAPACITY.....	gas 8201 lb / diesel 7716 lb
MPG	diesel: 21/26/23 (city/hwy/comb)
.....	gasoline: 16/21/18 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE.....	SE: \$49,990
.....	HSE: \$56,950
.....	HSE Td6 diesel: \$58,950
.....	HSE Luxury: \$63,950
.....	HSE Luxury Td6 diesel: \$65,950
.....	First Edition: \$73,950

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rain Response 2 controller and guidelines that are overlaid on the rear-facing camera and center touchscreen, while Hitch Assist uses surround cameras and the touchscreen display for easy hookup, and Rear Height Assist matches the height of the vehicle and trailer tongue. Trailer Stability Assist manages trailer sway with the aid of engine and brake adjustment.

UNDER THE BELLY

Discovery's fully independent suspension comprises a wide-spaced double-wishbone in front and an advanced multi-link layout with an integral link at the back. New architecture optimizes the mounting points on the steel front and rear subframes that boosts stiffness and improves steering and chassis performance.

Available Four-Corner Air Suspension enhances the ride both on-road and off; it brings 11.4 inches of ground clearance. A two-stage off-road mode lets the automatic system switch between two ride heights: +1.57 inches (31-50 mph) and +2.95 inches (under 31 mph). A new Speed Lowering function cuts drag and enhances fuel economy by automatically reducing the ride height by .51-inch at cruising speeds above 65 mph. With Auto Access Height, Discovery lowers 1.6 inches from its automatic road stance to aid getting in and out.

OUR DRIVE AND TAKEAWAYS

We drove the 2017 Discovery over a course of approximately 450 miles in northwestern Arizona and southwestern Utah, motoring through some of the country's most dramatic landscapes; taking in the breathtaking vistas and natural beauty of Zion National Park, Grand Canyon's Canyon Point and the Coral Pink Sand Dune; and bunking at Amangiri, a remote luxury resort in an oasis surrounded by spectacular rock plateaus and sandstone buttes.

The route and overnight venue were selected to replicate the type of road trip that a Discovery owner might take—although our route included an assortment of backcountry tracks ranging from dirt trails and sand washes to highly-technical four-wheeling, staged to highlight the SUV's upgrades. (Note to owners: we also had a team of Land Rover's international driving experts to guide and direct us in the dune's playground and in each of the technical areas.)

The new model drives lighter and tighter—and it should. The Discovery's diet of 85 percent high-strength aluminum and other light-weighting tricks have reduced its weight by more than 1,000 pounds over the outgoing LR4. Lighter chassis components, a simplified exhaust and driveline system, more efficient seat designs, and revised wheel and tire sizes make the new model more

lithe and stronger, with an improved crash structure and structural integrity.

We were impressed with both powerplants. We enjoyed the peppiness of the gas engine, the quietness of the diesel that only made us aware of its presence at startup and under quick hard acceleration, the smooth-shifting transmission, and the "sport" mode for more spirited driving.

The Discovery's urbanized looks bely its exceptional off-road competency that carried us over hill and dale, and across extreme terrains—all the while passing the white glove test for those who want to stay clean and unperturbed while simply pushing buttons and toggling knobs and levers to call upon the high-tech suite of motoring parameters programmed within the vehicle's computer code.

Of interest to the "unwashed," the multi-mode Terrain Response 2 system will even select the optimum setting automatically for inexperienced drivers. The Disco's numbers are laudable: 11.14 inches of ground clearance; 34-degree approach, 30-degree departure and 27.5-degree breakover angles; 19.7-inches of wheel articulation; and 35.4 inches of wading depth.

Land Rover says the new Discovery is the most all-terrain capable ever, thanks to a combination of excellent off-road drivetrain mechanics, available air suspension, vehicle geometry and advanced driver assistance technologies. We agree. ■

