

Highly adaptable by Joe Sage

Being equally able to take your rig to the country club or a South American off-road rally is a familiar Range Rover refrain. Always a key part of the vehicle's versatility, it remains so—in diesel form (as on our example here) able to do either with a prodigious 443 lb-ft of torque applied to either free-way ramp or rugged off-road hillclimb.

Similar in appearance and stance to the bigger Range Rover, with a touch of streamlining evocative of the smaller Evoque, Range Rover Sport can seat either five or seven—basically a five-seater, with two additional seats optional (and intended for limited use). Large three-row SUVs can be very appealing even if you don't need seven seats, or seven seats can be very appealing occasionally even if you don't want that size, so this creates an especially handy niche.

When you get in, the seat is down low (and the start button up high), so even at over six feet tall, you feel like a kindergarten kid again. Finding the fix was quite a treasure hunt, during which you'll find a few other Easter eggs.

Range Rover's electronic shift took a bit of extra care or mastery typical of such systems, while its electronic transfer case delivers strength and capability with white glove ease.

Digital instruments in the form of analog

dials offer a variety of styles, with and without additional features wrapped in the lower area, a neat trick with lots of possibilities.

An audiophile will find much to like in this vehicle. Three Meridian systems range from 250 to 825 to 1700 watts; ours had the middle unit (\$1100), with four versions of stereo and four-part equalizer with separate subwoofer. We modified settings frequently by source but would expect that to stabilize. And of course we want to hear that 1700-watt unit.

As a style point, the steering wheel could use a redesign, looking like a game controller from 30 years ago, while the rest is so chic.

We drove the vehicle on spirited two-lane country highways and pure 4WD dirt trails. Elegant as the Range Rovers are, they're sort of the James Bond of off-roaders, charming in a tuxedo, but ready to strip down for combat at the slightest provocation.

On pavement, we were happiest in the sport setting, noticeable at launch though not essential through the full power band. This is a sporty machine, considering it weighs some two and a half tons, is about as wide as a full-size pickup, can tow 7716 lb and can conquer off-roading with the best of them. It's not a sports car, but it's telling that we found ourselves looking at it from that point of view. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

SEATING	5+2
ENGINE	3.0L turbocharged V6 diesel
HP/TORQUE	254 hp / 443 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	8-speed automatic
DRIVETRAIN	full-time 4WD
TRANSFER CASE	single-spd electronic, Torsen diff
BRAKES	power-assisted 4-wheel disc
0-TO-60 MPH	7.1 sec
STEERING	electrical power assisted
SUSPENSION	4-wheel indep electronic air sus pension w auto load leveling & driver-selectable modes incl access, standard, off-road, extended height; terrain-sensing, cross-link valving. F: dbl-wishbone, air, adap damp, anti-roll bar R: multi-link, air, adap damp, anti-roll bar
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	191 in / 115.1 in
TURNING CIRCLE	39.7 ft
CARGO CAPACITY	62.2 / 27.7 / 17.3 cu.ft
FUEL / FUEL CAPACITY	diesel / 27.7 gal
MPG	22/28/24 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	\$72,650
INCLUDES: power seats, power tilt/tele wheel, Oxford perforated leather seats, Bluetooth, USB, InControl apps, 250w audio, touchscreen, handsfree power tailgate, solar reflective windshield, rear privacy glass, cruise, Homelink, ambient interior lighting, 60/40 rear seats w load-through, passive entry, front/rear park aides, more	
LUX CLIMATE & VISIBILITY PKG: 16-way power front seats, twin blade visors, heated/cooled front/rear seats, 4-zone climate, heated wheel, adaptive xenon heads w auto high beam, auto-dim ext mirrors.....	2700
VISION & CONVENIENCE PKG: soft door close, surround cameras, configurable interior mood lighting (and on HSE, also TFT virtual instrument panel).....	1900
DRIVE PRO PKG: driver condition monitor, intelligent speed limiter, traffic sign recog, adaptive cruise w queue assist & intelligent braking, lane keep assist, blind spot assist w/ rear traffic detect	2500
EXTRA DUTY PKG: terrain response 2 auto; adaptive dynamics, two-speed transfer case (hi/low), all terrain progress control.....	1750
INDIV OPTIONS: ebony headliner (350); 825w Meridian premium audio (1100); tow package receiver/elec (650); 360° parking aid (300); heads-up display (1300); sliding pano roof (500); advanced tow assist (400); Narvik black contrast roof (650); park assist (900); Scotia Gray (695); RR Sport protection package (537).....	7382
CALIFORNIA EMISSIONS	100
DESTINATION CHARGE	995
TOTAL	\$89,977

