

Eternal.

BY JOE SAGE

Before SUVs were SUVs, there were a few tough guys: the Jeep CJ, Ford Bronco, big Chevy Blazer, Land Rover Series I and II, and Toyota Land Cruiser J40. Toyota today has six crossover and SUV vehicles, from the low-\$20s C-HR to the mid-\$80s, with Land Cruiser now a luxury model. At lower middle cost is the 4Runner, today's tough guy. Its popularity exploded when it came on the scene in the mid-'80s. Now in generation five (since 2010), its same general aura and dedicated following have lasted for the duration, and why not? The 4Runner itself also seems to last seemingly forever. It's also known for holding its value, which is where we tuned in.

A recent social media post of someone's kid's math problem had the parents buying a new 4Runner for X number of dollars. It would depreciate some stated amount per year, and the vehicle would pass to the kid when it hit a certain threshold. Car people responded saying, "What, are you nuts? It's a 4Runner! They never depreciate!" We soon received this sample and figured we'd find out why.

The 4Runner formula includes a solid frame and suspension that are equally suited to off-roading and highway comfort. Its controls are classic, with burly knobs for heat/AC and audio, easy to use without taking your eyes off the road or your gloves off your hands. Ours had leather-like, lightweight, easily cleaned SofTex upholstery. 4Runner is surely one of the most trucklike SUVs you are going to find.

We drove it up into the snows around Flagstaff; the automatic hunted for gears at times on the I-17 climb, but speed stayed consistent.

We'd wish for an available manual on at least some trims, as on Tacoma. We'd like more device connectivity moved into the console box (secure from both off-road thrashing and from thieves' eyes) and a better rear camera, which seems to attract any and all dust, mud, rain and ice in its current position.

There are six trims of 4Runner, from \$34,610 to \$44,980. Three of the six are available as 4x2 rear-drivers, making nine. All have the same V6 and 5-speed automatic. Fuel mileage is not particularly a bragging point, though it did seem to deliver what it promised. Fancy Limited trim and max-off-road TRD Pro are over \$40 grand, with two other TRD off-road-ers (including this) not far behind. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

SEATING CAPACITY	five (seven opt)
ENGINE	4.0L DOHC 24v V6 w dual indep VVT-i
DRIVETRAIN	part-time 4WD w Active TRAC
HP/TORQUE	270 hp / 278 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	5-speed ECT automatic
SUSPENSION ..F:	coil indep dbl-wishbone w stblzr bar
.....R:	coil 4-link rigid type w stblzr bar
STEERING	power assist var gear rack & pinion
BRAKES	vented discs: F 13.3" / R 12.3"
WHEELS/TIRES	7.5x17 alloy / P285/70 R17 M/S
LENGTH/WHEELBASE	191.3 / 109.8 in
TURNING CIRCLE	37.4 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	9.6 in
APPROACH/DEPARTURE	33 / 26 degrees
CARGO VOLUME	46.3 / 88.8 cu.ft
WEIGHT	4750 lb
TOW CAPACITY	5000 lb
FUEL / FUEL CAPACITY	87-oct reg unl / 23.0 gal
MPG	17/20/18 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	\$39,295
SLIDING REAR CARGO DECK W STORAGE	350
POWER TILT/SLIDE MOONROOF W SUNSHADE	850
(KEEP IT WILD SAVINGS)	750
FIRST AID KIT	30
HITCH BALL MOUNT	60
EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE KIT	59
UNIVERSAL TABLET HOLDER	99
PAINT PROTECTION FILM	395
REMOTE ENGINE START	499
CONVENIENCE PKG:	
Exhaust tip, wheel locks, roof rack cross bars	355
DESTINATION CHARGE	960
TOTAL	\$42,202

4Runner's persona is burly. Tough. Not graceful. Not supposed to be. It looks and feels purpose-built and sturdy inside and out.

