

# ***JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE – DOWNSIZED DETROIT FIGHTER***

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*The Jeep Grand Cherokee is a smorgasbord of American engineering, resulting in a premium SUV that fits surprisingly well on our roads.*

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SUVs have seen a huge market shift in recent years. What was once a tool that can traverse harsh terrains without breaking a sweat has now transformed into city-dwelling ‘Chelsea Tractors’ that disintegrate at the first sign of anything other than tarmac.

There is still a rare bunch of SUVs that can scale a rock face at your earliest convenience, but most of the crop have since become jacked-up people carriers festooned with new tech and creature comforts. They might not be good offroad, but consumers are opening their wallets in droves to drive off the lot in the latest and greatest in tall luxury. So what if you wanted both?

Well, the obvious choice would be to get something like a Range Rover or G-Wagon, but what if you wanted something patriotic?

Well my friends, let me introduce you to Jeep’s all-new Grand Cherokee.

**Go big or go home**



It's no secret that everything in America is bigger, and this saying is exemplified when you first lay eyes on the Grand Cherokee.

This new generation continues the boxy facade the Cherokee is known for, but adds chiselled looks to give it added musculature appeal. Jeep has chosen to take the more conservative route, instead of going all out with a futuristic design that may inadvertently spoil the looks of the car.



The car sits tall and proud, imposing others with its large array of LED lights – headlights, fog lamps, DRLs, tail lights, its got them all. Jeep's iconic grille sits front and centre, rocking up with a new modern aesthetic that gives the Cherokee some added opulent appeal.

Large wheel arches make the 20-inch wheels tiny in comparison, and the rear is a little more subdued, with a relatively clean facade that tapers off the roofline nicely.

Overall, the designers really pulled this one off well, managing to marry sophistication with dashes of all-American heritage. If you wanted a discreet enough SUV, yet want to surprise others each time you pull up next to them at a set of lights, the Grand Cherokee is a prime candidate.



## Space for days



Space is not just great in this, it's lavish.

All that bulk on the outside translates to copious amounts of room on the inside. Climb up into the cockpit, and you'll find yourself sitting in a smorgasbord of leather and wood.

The large and commanding steering wheel feels good in the hands, and you also get nice tactile buttons for toggling various multi-media settings. The only thing tiny in the cabin are the paddle shifters, almost looking as if they're attempting to stay out of sight.

Jeep's previous generation UConnect infotainment was lacklustre at best, giving you tons of functionality in a less-than-ideal setup. This new iteration of UConnect irons out a lot of the former issues, and the car's entertainment is now much more refined than its predecessors.





The 10.1-inch touchscreen works a treat, and quick menu buttons are located underneath to cycle between certain menus easily. These do eat into your screen real estate a little, but for the sake of added convenience, I really don't mind them. You can toggle entertainment and HVAC controls via this screen too, or use physical controls located beneath it. Good job Jeep.

A lone rotary gear dial sits smack in the middle of the centre console, pairing up with the drive mode switch. Gears are selected easily enough, but I do get the inclination that the gears are a little too easy to switch. If you're not attentive, you might rock into the wrong gear by accident.

It isn't entirely polished, but the Grand Cherokee is a big step forward in Jeep's book, epitomising flaws found in older models.

## **Easy as Sunday brunch**

Despite its heft, the Jeep Grand Cherokee is actually a doddle to manoeuvre on our local roads. Side mirrors on this thing are massive, making it an absolute breeze to glance at other road users in your immediate surroundings.

The relatively thin body pillars all-round help minimise blind spots too, and there are even blind-spot sensors for those ninja motorcycle riders.



The lack of a tapered roofline and abundant legroom bestows rear passengers with tons of space, allowing 3, even 4 Asian adults, to hang out in the back with sufficient comfort. I mean, the generous space offerings are probably due to the plus-sized nature of this car's original demographic.

Rear cameras are crisp, with a myriad of sensors that detect your every move. The 360-degree camera also makes it easy to weasel all 2.1 tonnes of Cherokee into tricky parking spaces.



No wireless charger is included, but front runners get a pair of USB A and C ports alongside a 12V outlet. Rear occupants are even better treated, with a similar pair of ports each plus an actual 120V US-spec outlet for plugging in devices.

Jeep does provide other safety features like lane keep assist (LKA), but due to the narrower widths of our local roads, this system doesn't

work as well as hoped. Detections are hit-and-miss, and a major bit of frustration comes from changing lanes.

In other cars, as soon as you start signalling the LKA system temporarily disables itself, but in the Grand Cherokee half the time it remains active. What ensues is a battle between you and the car to switch lanes, and it is extremely frustrating at times.

## Jeep-Lite

No V8, not even a V6 in this rendition of the Jeep Grand Cherokee. Some blue-blooded Americans might call it sacrilegious, but this 2-litre specced variant is



intentionally chosen for our local car climate.

Despite its comparatively tiny stature, this 2-litre 4-pot still churns out a respectable 268bhp and 400Nm of torque. This torque is available at just 3000rpm too, or in Jeep terms whenever you step on the gas in this thing.

Don't be fooled by its size, as the Grand Cherokee still has the potency to move off in a

jiffy. As long as you are locked and loaded in the right gear, the low-end grunt and turbo assistance enables the car to briskly dominate any available space on the roads, and keep up with most other vehicles, albeit with high revs and dwindling fuel

economy.

Of course, you cannot ask for an infinite amount of power from the peppy little 4-pot. At full chat, the Grand Cherokee can rock the century sprint in 8.2 seconds, and go on to clinch a top speed of 210km/h. Although, I don't think you would want to do those speeds anyway. I'll even throw in a pint if you do.



Speeding fines and jail time aside, the Cherokee has pretty soft and plush suspension, which is ideal should you want to traverse any sort of terrain that isn't smooth tarmac. The springs neutralise any unsuspecting undulations in your path, presenting you with ride comfort that's equivalent to riding on a cloud.

Off-road, it's terrific. And as with most proper 4x4s, you will probably run out of bravery before it runs out of ability.

But, this same setup isn't as ideal should you wish to wring the car into a corner at less-than-ideal speeds. Subjecting the car to this will result in bouts of body roll, and the car needs a considerable amount of effort to be settled again. Maintaining excessive highway speeds is also a unique experience in itself. Any little twitch in the steering or bump in the road will cause the Cherokee to bounce, and that really isn't the most fun when you are other road users all around you.



Taking the Cherokee offroad? By all means. Taking it to the track or a nice curvy b-road? This is better off as a support vehicle.

## A taste of freedom



Though it might not be entirely squared away, the Jeep Grand Cherokee is arguably the most polished Jeep model to date, and presents yet another interesting proposition into the luxury SUV raffle.

But faced with stiff competition from famed European automakers, why would someone consider this American brute then? Well, it is a generous size-up from what you can walk away with for similar money from the German luxury collective, so you do get a lot of car for your hard-earned dollar.



Or perhaps you want to own a Jeep precisely so you don't have to pander to the social norms anchoring you from experiencing true freedom. Why follow the masses and jump on the bandwagon, when you could be different?

If that's what you're after, then the Jeep Grand Cherokee is something that should be on your radar.

## Jeep Grand Cherokee

Engine: 1,955cc Turbocharged In-line 4

Power: 264bhp

Torque: 400Nm

**Gearbox: 8-Speed Automatic, Selectable All-Wheel Drive**

**0-100km/h: 8.2 seconds (claimed)**

**Top Speed: 210km/h**

**Fuel Economy: 10.3km/L (claimed)**

**Price: S\$368,888 with COE (accurate at the time of this article)**

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**Photo Credits: Sean Loo (@auto.driven)**