

Jeep Grand Cherokee L review: What the L is this?

By Leow Ju-len, Business Times



Jeep has elongated its posh off-roader to create the three-row Grand Cherokee L. But is that idea that it's at home on Singapore roads a stretch?

JEEP drivers apparently like to hang out in the jungle, but the Grand Cherokee L is more for the country club set. Especially if they're inclined to take the whole family along with them.

The Grand Cherokee L probably looks dainty in the good ole US of A, where it hails from, but by our standards it's downright enormous. At just over just over 5.2 metres from nose to tail, it's 29 centimetres longer than the Grand Cherokee (no L), and a smidgen longer than the BMW X7, the German brand's flagship Sport Utility Vehicle (SUV).

That comparison is pertinent, because just like the BMW, the Jeep has three rows of seats, so it can haul seven people around or, if you opt for individual armchairs in the middle row, six.



A number of SUVs can make the same claim, but it's clear that Jeep's engineers didn't just shove two extra seats into the Grand Cherokee and flee the office for burgers and brewskis. If anything, it's evident that they thought hard about how to make the car properly useful for a family.

Start with the boot, where much of the extra length has gone. It's wide and deep, so much so that with all the seats upright the Jeep still has 473 litres of capacity. That's something, because lots of seven-seaters have little room for stuff if you fill them with people.

Besides being huge, the Jeep's boot is nicely shaped. Its loading floor is flat so you can slide things in and out without fuss, and there's space underneath it to stow the luggage cover, another thing that some SUVs don't get right.

Need more room? Folding a third row seat is only a matter of tugging a lever and shoving the backrest forward. In fact, the tug-and-shove manoeuvre is something you can repeat until you have all the boot space you want: 1,328 litres if you have five seats up, a whopping 2,396 litres if you want to raid Ikea with a single accomplice.



Chances are most people will want their Grand Cherokee L to be more bus than van, however, and in that respect it's just as good. Even for an adult, being sent to the rearmost seats isn't exactly medieval torture. Apart from a slight knees-up posture, it's comfortable back there, not least because there are air-con vents, plus USB charging ports in case you're there for the long haul.

The same goes for the middle row. The Jeep is just spacious and accommodating there, with a separate climate zone, four air-con vents, four USB ports and even a 230-volt power outlet to sweeten the journey.

If the Jeep is as roomy as a bus, at least it doesn't drive like one. I wouldn't call the Grand Cherokee L sharp, but it isn't sloppy, and anyway, only a chucklehead would buy a massive SUV with seven seats and want it to feel like a sporty thing.



Far more relevant is that the Jeep is easy to handle and easy to manage, thanks to a good view out from the driver's seat, and a 360-degree camera system for when things get tight. Speaking of cameras, the cabin has an overhead one with a fisheye lens so you can see what your miscreant kids are up to from the front of the car.

It's not all dreary family stuff, of course. The Jeep's engine is a characterful thing because it sings a six-cylinder tune, which has become all too rare these days. It does a decent job of shoving the hefty Jeep around, but really comes alive when you rev it hard. Keep driving it that way, though, and the fuel bills are bound to make you wince.

Then again, it's a big, well-equipped and reasonably posh SUV, and cars like that always come with a monstrous thirst. What's more interesting about the Grand Cherokee L is that it's nearly as good as the BMW X7, but only two-thirds the price. It's far more likely to stand out, as well. You can't hurl a stone in any direction without hitting a German car, but you'll have no problems spotting your Jeep in the country club carpark.

Jeep Grand Cherokee L Limited Engine 3,604cc cc, 24-valve, V6 Power 268 hp at 6,400 rpm Torque 344 Nm Gearbox 8-speed automatic 0-100 kmh 7.7 seconds Top speed 210 kmh Fuel efficiency 12.1 L/100 km