

Jeep Grand Cherokee L offers rugged commute for seven

By Christopher Tan, The Straits Times



Big, strong and friendly: The 5.2m-long Jeep Grand Cherokee L will transport seven people with veritable verve. ST PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

SINGAPORE – Jeep is the latest to join the multi-seat sport utility vehicle (SUV) party, which was kicked off by Volvo with its XC90 more than 20 years ago.

The genre's line-up spans from behemoths such as the Land Rover Defender 130 and BMW X7 to relatively compact alternatives such as the Nissan X-Trail and Honda CR-V.

The Jeep Grand Cherokee L – the American brand's first seven-seater here – is sized more like the Landie and Beemer. It measures 5,202mm long, 1,979mm wide and 1,795mm tall, with a 3,092mm wheelbase.

The dimensions mean the Jeep is not so wide as to be overly unwieldy and not so tall as to make access to covered carparks a problem. Even so, it is a sizeable vehicle, which would be hugely challenging to park if not for its all-round camera system. Despite that, older carparks are best avoided because of the car's relatively wide turning circle.

Inside, the Jeep is remarkably spacious. The middle row offers plenty of legroom and headroom, while the third row is comfortable for medium-build adults. Getting to

the last row is fairly easy despite its heavier-than-usual middle-row seat, which can flip forward by lifting a flap. But returning the seat-back into position invariably slides the entire seat backwards.

Occupants in the last row get their own air-conditioning vents and USB ports. Those in the middle row have their own temperature controls.

A motorised tailgate reveals a decent-sized boot. Folding the third-row seat-backs requires some stretching, while reverting them to their upright positions is easier. With third row flattened, the car will accommodate bulkier items with ease. A button located in the boot allows for effortless tailgate lowering.



Get comfortable: Wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, an all-round camera system and adaptive cruise control are part of the package. ST PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

Jeep has reverted to its trusty 3.6-litre normally aspirated Pentastar V6 engine for this multi-seater, which weighs 2,155kg. The previous five-seater reviewed here in April 2023 was powered by the brand's first 2-litre turbo.

With 286hp and 344Nm arriving at 4,000rpm, the Grand Cherokee L is leisurely – perhaps even a little reluctant – when left in Auto drive mode. It requires a decidedly heavy foot to get it up to a gallop, with its eight-speed auto box tuned for efficiency when left to its own devices.

Switching to Sport mode livens things up, but the best way to drive is by flipping the car's steering-mounted shift paddles. This way, you can quickly summon up a fistful

of revs and a soulful growl from the engine, making each commute a truly joyous occasion.

It is only when you drive it this way that you attain acceleration commensurate with the car's stated 7.7-second century sprint. Also, you will avoid the intermittent judder when the car shifts on its own.

The Jeep is best on highways, where higher speeds seem to quell its otherwise choppy suspension. At 90kmh, the massive vehicle sheds its awkward city gait for a thoroughly graceful progress.



Off with their heads: Headrests in the third row can be lowered for better visibility via a soft key on the infotainment touchscreen. ST PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

Its weight and height become apparent once you return to inner roads, where every uneven surface – purposely designed or otherwise – is felt keenly in the cabin. While the car displays creditable roadholding, fast cornering is not something you will relish.

Being part of the large Euro-American Stellantis group, Jeep is noticeably more refined and sophisticated than before. The Grand Cherokee L's infotainment system allows wireless phone connection, although pairing is somewhat more cumbersome than unpairing.

There is no wireless phone charging. And there is seat heating, but no seat cooling. Good thing the car has a heavy-duty air-conditioner, which makes light work of a cabin left baking in the afternoon sun.



All seats up: 487 litres of stowage. ST PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

The car comes with a rudimentary head-up display, a panoramic glass roof and an Alpine hi-fi system with nine speakers and a subwoofer. Noise insulation is fairly decent, though the sounds of a wet road are transmitted clearly through the wheel wells.

Being a Jeep, the Grand Cherokee L is designed for off-road expeditions, with an all-wheel-drive system and accompanying differentials. There is a drive selection to tackle various terrains. But in Singapore, something like adaptive cruise control – which the car has – is eminently more useful.

Being a big car with a big engine has its price. The test Grand Cherokee L averages 20 litres/100km, which is much higher than Jeep's stated 12.1 litres/100km and its 2-litre five-seater sibling's tested 13.3 litres/100km.



Five seats up: 1,328 litres of stowage. ST PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

In comparison, both the aforementioned Defender 130 and X7 are decidedly more efficient. These two rivals are also more luxurious and, thus, priced significantly higher than the Jeep.

In fact, the multi-seat Grand Cherokee L – at \$383,888, inclusive of certificate of entitlement (COE) – is only slightly costlier than its five-seater was in 2023. There is a grander Grand Cherokee L Summit Reserve, which is \$433,888 including COE. But even this is less prohibitive than its British and German counterparts. Indeed, price competitiveness may well make up for Jeep being late to the party.

Jeep Grand Cherokee L (Limited)

Engine	3,604cc 24-valve V6
Power	268hp at 6400rpm
Torque	344Nm at 4000rpm
Gearbox	Eight-speed automatic with paddle shift
0-100km/h	7.7 seconds
Top Speed	210km/h
Fuel Efficiency	12.1 litres/100km
Agent	Capella Auto
Price	S\$383,888 with COE
Rating	Three out of five stars