

A Serious Drive

Ian Lamming test drives the latest incarnation of the legendary Toyota Land Cruiser

EVERY other car seems to be an SUV nowadays but if you want to be taken seriously there are only three. One carries a green oval badge, the next a Yankee doodle dandy heritage and the third is Toyota's Land Cruiser. In recent years the big mud-plugger has lurked in the background while young pretenders stole the glory. But it is back with a vengeance reminding the driving public just why the big Cruiser is so good.

If you want to travel around the globe, or venture into war zones sporting white paint and UN livery then the behemoth Toyota has been the weapon of choice for decades. That's because it's no gimmick, totally reliable and immensely capable. Where these things are driven most vehicles fear to tread and rightly so. New Land Cruiser builds on that bedrock reputation with a bewildering array of technology so advanced it's hard to know where to begin.

The Toyota is like a huge computer which

you can programme for virtually any terrain. Assess conditions and dial in the right settings to cope with anything from snow to sand, rocks to mud, asphalt to water. It is a go anywhere vehicle to be reckoned with.

Sensors galore let you speed, avoid speeding, sweep and crawl, altering the engine, traction, steering, suspension, braking, cruising, to give you optimum forward motion whether you are on a super smooth motorway or an Afghan track. It does so in a way that makes driving easy, stress-free and enjoyable. New looks are striking, recognisably Land Cruiser for the stalwarts, but also bold, contemporary, functional and timeless.

It remains gargantuan but is easy to drive and manoeuvre. The new 2.8 litre diesel makes the big Cruiser surprisingly sprightly and has plenty of power for pulling itself clear or heavy loads.

It will wade through 700mm of water, which makes it ideal for country dwellers trying to

make their way around this increasingly wet rock. You can traverse slopes of up to 42 degrees and tackle slopes of equally steep gradient. Sophisticated electronics come together like a small army sorting the traction of each corner with four-wheel drive working hand in hand with stability control, anti-lock brakes and traction control. There are even readouts on the dash to tell you your speed, angle and direction of travel and cameras to show you what the eye can't see.

On normal roads the ride is peerless and traction and handling extremely impressive. Driver and six passengers are also cossetted in wonderful surroundings with clean dash and instruments, tasteful wood and leather. The JBL sound system is excellent and the infotainment centre, including satnav, state of the art. SUV customers could be forgiven for their confusion with a market saturated with 4x4s. But those who genuinely need a go-anywhere vehicle need look no further than the new Land Cruiser.



Fact File

- Model: Toyota Land Cruiser
- Engine: 2.8 litre, diesel
- Drivetrain: auto-matic
- Power: 177PS
- Top speed: 109mph
- 0-62mph: 12.7 secs
- Towing max braked: 3000KG
- Miles per gallon (combined): 38.2
- CO2 (g/km): 194