

Fully loaded



Ian Lamming enjoys one of Uncle Sam's finest

Fact File

Jeep Grand
Cherokee
Engine: 3.0 V6
diesel
Power: 247BHP
0-62mph: 8.2
Top speed: 126
Combined miles per
gallon: 37.7
Transmission: eight
speed auto plus
overdrive
Insurance: 43
CO2 g/km: 198

THE Japanese SUV is dithering. If a car can exhibit body language then this one certainly is.

My driver's sixth sense, a mystical power that has kept me alive for so long despite countless years motorcycling, is tingling, waving a red flag and telling me 'BEWARE'.

He thinks he has gone the wrong way at the roundabout turning left instead of driving straight across.

Watch this; he is going to throw a U-ey. I lift off and cover the brakes and, sure enough, without signalling, he whacks the 4x4 round a small traffic island to head back towards the roundabout. No problem, no sweat...

Suddenly the Jeep leaps into action slamming the Cherokee's brakes on so hard that the anti-lock activates grating through the pedal in characteristic fashion. "BRAKE" lights up in red on the dash and for a second I'm startled.

Then, glancing down, I realize what is happening. The "Since 1941" on the steering wheel explains much. That's how long one of Uncle Sam's finest has been protecting the free-thinking world.

It's a million miles from Afghanistan and Iraq, in fact it's Yorkshire, but this star spangled motorcar is quick to step in to protect me from harm.

Like all good fellows from across the pond this American stalwart comes all guns blazing, fully-loaded with every device going. So there's collision avoidance – which also steps in when I approach a bend seemingly too fast (well they don't have many curves in America) – along with nylon stockings, chocolate bars and cigarettes.

It may have been plying roads, jungles and deserts for more than 70 years but the latest Jeep looks every bit as modern as the automotive enemy. The sleek new lights and grille really work in freshening up a timeless classic. One of my neighbours has just swapped his X5 for one so it must be good.

It's a good old American boy. Powered by a lusty 3.0 V6 turbo diesel the Jeep has tank-loads of power yet will return an amazingly frugal 33mpg – most un-Yank-like.

The motor is refined and the automatic box peerless. The steering is splendid and the ride absolutely spot on – can't fault any of it.

Given its payload of heavy equipment – that includes every toy going plus the serious stuff that will help you negotiate mud, snow, gravel, rocks, sand, landmines(?), it sub-£60K price tag also makes it a bit of a bargain, given the cost of similarly specified 4x4s from Blighty. It is a lot of car for the dollar.

It is big in every direction so there is space aplenty of people and packages. It is also nice and high for excellent ground clearance making it more landing craft than car; just the thing for our regular flash floody-type weather.

Finally, in true US fashion, the Jeep is endearing with its howdy dos, how are yous and have a nice days. It really does get under your skin with its pleasant personality and willing nature and if it could I'm sure it would happily slap you on the back, shake your hand and invite you home for a rib.