

## Capable Comfort

### Land Rover Defender Mixes Extreme Ability, Sublime Smoothness

By Derek Price

CARGAZING.COM

For a vehicle designed to do extreme off-roading, the Land Rover Defender may be even more remarkable for what it does in the suburbs.

It turns heads and wafts kids to soccer practice in sublime comfort.

The latest Defender, which was launched in the United States around the start of the pandemic, has the classic boxy shape of Land Rovers that have been roaming African safari preserves since the early 1980s, yet it still gives off a modern, almost space-age vibe.

That's true of how it drives and how it looks.

Lots of vehicles try to mimic their ancestors, including some of the Defender's brawny off-road competitors, the Jeep Wrangler and Ford Bronco. None of them mix futurism with nostalgia as well as this one, though.

The new Defender has lots of nods to functionality, including exposed screws and easy-to-wash cabin materials. But its soul is more about high technology and couture style than its continent-crossing credentials, which are considerable.

It has 11.5 inches of ground clearance and the ability to wade 35 inches of standing water, both of which beat the Wrangler. And much of its technologi-



The Land Rover Defender mixes modern style with heritage looks like no other off-roader for sale today. Its quiet cabin and stout but supple suspension system make it incredibly comfortable, too.

cal wizardry is centered around things that are useful in the wilderness, including sensors to tell you how deep the water is and cameras that show exactly what's underneath the vehicle.

It can tow up to 8,000 pounds with the right equipment.

What's truly amazing about the Defender, though, is that it drives in a way that makes you forget what a

capable machine it is.

It's dramatically quieter than the Bronco and the Wrangler, for starters. It moves in near silence at highway speeds with a floating, supple sensation as it soaks up bumps. The feeling mimics luxury cars more than it does off-road trucks.

A big reason for that is the Defender's spectacular air suspension, which I think is the No. 1 reason to consider

it. Land Rover makes the most comfortable and capable suspension systems on the planet, and this latest Defender is some of their engineers' best work. Much like the famous — and more expensive — Range Rover, it feels like magic, turning speed bumps and potholes into buttery smoothness.

My V8-powered tester was absolutely sumptuous, as it should be with a starting

price over six figures.

The 5.0-liter, supercharged engine makes 518 horsepower, enough to make the portly Defender accelerate from zero to 60 mph in 4.9 seconds. It sounds like a performance car, too, with a deep, soul-stirring rumble.

You can get a Defender outfitted in a wide range of layouts, powertrains and trim levels. The Defender

#### WHAT WAS TESTED?

**2023 Land Rover Defender 110 V8 (\$107,700)**

**Wheelbase:** 119 in.

**Length:** 197.6 in.

**Width:** 82.9 in.

**Height:** 77.4 in.

**Engine:** 5.0-liter V8 (518 hp, 461 lbs. ft.)

**Transmission:** Eight-speed automatic

**Fuel economy:**

14 city, 19 highway

#### Why buy it?

It has more capability than a Jeep Wrangler and a smoother driving feel than many luxury sedans. For people willing to splurge, it's a brilliantly designed off-roader.

110, with a family-friendly, four-door layout, is sure to be the most popular, starting at \$53,000 with a 2.0-liter turbo engine in the S grade. The SE comes with a V6 engine starting at \$69,300, while the V8 tops the lineup at \$111,300.

The two-door Defender 90 is slightly less practical but looks cool with its coupe-like layout, starting at \$55,100.

New for 2023 is the Defender 130, which is stretched in length to make extra room for a third-row seat and cargo, starting at \$68,000.

# CARGAZING



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It has 11.5 inches of ground clearance and the ability to wade 35 inches of standing water, both



The Defender's cabin mixes luxury with utility. The 90 and 110 can be configured with five or six seats, while the extended-length Defender 130 seats eight.

of which beat the Wrangler. And much of its technological wizardry is centered around things that are useful in the wilderness, including sensors to tell you how deep the water is and cameras that show exactly what's underneath the vehicle.

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You can get a Defender outfitted in a wide range of layouts, power-trains and trim levels. The Defender 110, with a family-friendly, four-door layout, is sure to be the most popular, starting at \$53,000 with a 2.0-liter turbo engine in the S grade. The SE comes with a V6 engine starting at \$69,300, while the V8 tops the lineup at \$111,300.

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#### A CLOSER LOOK



#### AT A GLANCE

FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

**What was tested?** 2023 Land Rover Defender 110 V8 (\$107,700).

**Options:** Wi-Fi capability (\$360), basic interior protection (\$560). Price as tested (including \$1,350 destination charge): \$111,020.

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**Length:** 197.6 in.  
**Width:** 82.9 in.  
**Height:** 77.4 in.  
**Engine:** 5.0-liter V8 (518 hp, 461 lbs. ft.)  
**Transmission:** Eight-speed automatic  
**Fuel economy:** 14 city, 19 highway

**RATINGS**  
Style: 10  
Performance: 10  
Price: 5  
Handling: 6  
Ride: 9  
Comfort: 9  
Quality: 8  
Overall: 9

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