

## Little Jeep, Big Upgrade

### Compass Moves Upscale, Feels More Like Baby Grand Cherokee

By Derek Price

CARGAZING.COM

After its 2017 redesign, I thought the new Jeep Compass looked and drove like a scaled-down version of its big brother, the Grand Cherokee.

Now that it was updated again last year as a thoroughly refreshed 2023 model, that's even more true. The Compass mixes off-road prowess, including a standard 4x4 system, with on-road softness much like the bigger, pricier Grand Cherokee.

It also offers more high-end features, including Highway Assist that makes the Compass feel like it's driving itself on freeways, a 360-degree camera system that helps when parking, and traffic sign recognition.

Better yet, it remains affordable with a starting price of \$25,900, a good value for a four-wheel-drive vehicle in this class. Options, though, can quickly drive the price over \$40,000 where it no longer seems like a bargain.

Every new Compass comes with the same powertrain: a 2.0-liter turbocharged four-cylinder engine coupled to an eight-speed automatic transmission. It's a good one in numeric terms, making 200 horsepower and 221 pound-feet of torque while delivering 32 mpg on the highway,



The Jeep Compass was redesigned last year to make it more upscale, including a more expansive list of standard and optional equipment.

an impressive combo.

In subjective terms, it's not as splendid. The transmission occasionally seems to shift unexpectedly, leading to a slight herky-jerky sensation. It's not as smooth as some competitors, but acceleration is better than average.

Soft, supple front seats help to mask the fact that the Compass is definitely still designed with off-road capability in mind. The cushy padding, coupled with a compliant suspension at highway speed, keeps bumps and vibrations from

transmitting to the driver's body.

Every version comes with the Jeep Active Drive 4x4 system with Auto, Snow and Sand/Mud modes.

Serious off-roaders will find a lot to love in the Trailhawk model, which adds a rock-driving mode, hill descent control and a whole lot of hardware.

The Compass Trailhawk comes with a one-inch suspension lift, skid plates and aggressive off-road tires. It also gets Jeep's signature red tow hooks that catch the eye on their most assertive mod-

els.

That results in some impressive performance numbers for a small SUV. It has an approach angle of 30 degrees, breakover angle of 24 degrees and a 34-degree departure angle. It can ford up to 19 inches of water and tow up to 2,000 pounds with the right equipment, Jeep claims.

Most buyers will be more interested in the vehicle's on-road tech and infotainment features, and the Compass doesn't disappoint. It runs the Uconnect 5 system on a standard 10.1-inch

touchscreen that operates five times faster than before, Jeep says. It also comes standard with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto smartphone connectivity.

Pricier trims offer a digital gauge cluster that replaces the old-style analog gauges. It lets drivers customize the display and access some of the vehicle's settings, although a lot more options are accessible only through the center touchscreen.

At a time when small crossovers and SUVs are the hottest sellers for nearly every car company on the planet — not just off-road brands like Jeep — buyers can be picky. There are a lot of great products to choose from in 2024, so the subtle things set them apart.

In the Compass' case, I think the Jeep-engineered 4x4 system is its biggest selling point, followed closely by the classic Jeep face with its seven-slot grille.

For people who want a pinch of real off-road performance without sacrificing gas mileage or on-road comfort, this one makes sense.

If you exclude the Trailhawk, pricing starts at \$25,900 for the Sport model and tops out at \$33,745 for the feature-packed Limited grade. Enthusiasts will have to pay a little more for the Trailhawk and all its off-road goodies, starting at \$33,895.

#### AT A GLANCE

##### What was tested?

2024 Jeep Compass Altitude 4x4 (\$32,670). Options: Premium paint (\$595), Customer Preferred Package 29B (\$1,895), driver assistance group (\$2,475), convenience group (\$2,675). Price as tested (including \$1,595 destination charge): \$41,905

##### By The Numbers

Wheelbase: 103.8 in.  
Length: 173.4 in.  
Width: 80 in.  
Height: 64.6 in.  
Engine: 2.0-liter turbocharged four cylinder (xxx hp, xxx lbs.-ft.)  
Transmission: Eight-speed automatic  
Fuel economy: 24 city, 32 highway

##### RATINGS

Style: 8  
Performance: 7  
Price: 6  
Handling: 4  
Ride: 8  
Comfort: 8  
Quality: 7  
Overall: 7

**Why buy it?** Standard 4x4 capability and handsome Jeep looks make the latest Compass comfortable and competent.



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The recent redesign gives the Compass better soft-touch materials and more storage spaces in the cabin.

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#### A CLOSER LOOK



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FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

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