

Portland Observer Auto Review

News and reviews on new motor vehicles

2008 Jeep Liberty Sport 4x4

BY KATHLEEN CARR

The Jeep Liberty is all-new for 2008. For 2008, Jeep is giving the Liberty an all-new look inside and out. It's slightly bigger and has a smoother ride, but respectfully maintains the rugged Jeep heritage. The 2008 Liberty is quite capable off road, one of the best in its class.

With heavily revised styling, the 2008 Liberty is taller and more angular, reminiscent of the much-loved, rugged but crude 1990s Jeep Cherokee. The all-new 2008 Liberty is more of a true Jeep, with off-road prowess and bold, upright styling.

The 2008 Jeep Liberty is offered in two trim levels - Sport and Limited, both with front- or four-wheel drive. Sport models come standard with a six-speed manual transmission; a four-speed automatic is optional for Sport and standard on Limited.

The base four-wheel-drive system is Jeep's Command Trac, a part-time system designed for off-road use. Also offered is Selec-Trac II, a full-time system that allows use of four-wheel drive on dry pavement. Both systems have low-range gearing.

The most noticeable aspect of the front end is Jeep's character-

istic seven-slot grille, which is taller on this model. The front air dam is removable to provide more ground clearance for off-roading.

A notable feature of the rear is the lack of an exterior spare tire. Jeep has moved it under the floor for 2008. The tailgate also changes from a swing gate to a liftgate design, and separate opening rear glass is newly standard.

The only engine for 2008 is a carryover 3.7-liter, 210-horsepower V-6; a little slow getting up to cruising speed but has no trouble passing once it's there. At 15 m.p.g. city/21 m.p.g. highway, fuel economy is modest for a small SUV.

When they redesigned it, Jeep engineers set out to give the 2008 Liberty pleasant road manners and, when it comes to ride quality, they succeeded. The Liberty rides firmly, but irons out most bumps quite well and is stable on the highway. The Liberty sacrifices handling for off-road prowess, however. The Liberty leans in turns and has a floppy feeling in quick changes of direction.

Inside, the Liberty has plenty of room for five. Though not luxurious, the new interior of the 2008 Liberty is functional. Most driv-



The All-New Rough and Rugged Liberty

Specifications: 3.7-Liter 210-hp @ 235 lb-ft. torque V-6 engine; 4-Speed automatic transmission; 15-City 21-Highway MPG; \$ 23,575. MSRP

ers will like the high seating position. Head room in the front seat is plentiful.

The side mirrors are large and the cabin has a lot of glass, making for fine rear visibility. The gauges are easy to spot and the controls are simple to use. We

don't think the interior feels like an upgrade from the previous generation, however.

Cargo room is a plus. The Liberty's second row seats fold flat, as does the front passenger seat, to provide plenty of room for hauling boxes, bikes and life's

other accessories.

Sadly, the test vehicle didn't come with the Sky Slider roof option, a sheet of canvas over front and back seats for open-air motoring -- over front or rear seats or both -- at the push of a button.

Sport options include Class III

towing package with trailer sway control; the Premium Sound Group with 6-disc CD changer, six speakers and Sirius satellite radio with one-year subscription; all-terrain tires; skid plates for the 4x4 model; and the Popular Equipment Group with 115-volt auxiliary power outlet, six speakers, cargo compartment cover, fog lamps, front passenger fold-flat seat, roof rails, cruise control, external temperature display and compass.

Safety features include dual front airbags, plus head-protecting side-curtain airbags with rollover sensors and front side airbags for torso protection. Active safety features include anti-lock brakes with brake assist, hill start assist, traction control, and electronic stability control with rollover mitigation. The antilock brakes have rough road detection; when rough conditions are detected, the system holds the brake pulses longer to better slow the vehicle.

With a maximum towing capacity of 5000 pounds, rugged off-road capability and plenty of cargo space, the 2008 Jeep Liberty is a good choice for small families or couples that tow boats or go camping. If your travels don't often take you off-road, the other small SUVs will deliver better fuel economy and better handling, but none will offer a more pleasant ride.

Health Department Tackles Disparities

continued ▲ from Metro

of testing and treatment, as well as delaying sexual initiation, so that youth and young adults can make informed choices about their sexual health. The campaign also encourages the people youth most want to hear from - parents, teachers, healthcare providers and faith leaders - to learn how to support youth in making healthy choices about sex.

Posters and postcards will disseminate messages about delaying sexual involvement, risky behavior, condom use, talking about sex, as well as testing and treatment. This social marketing effort was developed by department staff with cultural ties to the African-American community along with youth and community members to aggressively promote safer sex among youth and young adults.

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