

Rocket Man

The new Tesla Roadster heads into space with a special driver.
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Mixing trucks, religion and ads

PAGE 2



Bullitt's back

Where has the movies' most famous car been all this time?
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What's the best car, truck and SUV of the year?

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TEST DRIVE

Centrist, Redefined

First Drive: 2019 Jeep Cherokee

DAN LYONS | text and photos
Special to the Times Union

While all Jeeps enjoy getting their tires dirty, the lineup has evolved over the years to include models with variety of personalities. Wrangler was and is the one with the most passion for off-roading.

If cars were children, Wrangler would be the one who, dressed in his Sunday best, jumps into the nearest mud puddle. Grand Cherokee, by contrast, is the most luxury leaning Jeep. Cherokee is the centrist, with one foot in a hiking boot and the other in a dress shoe.



Jeep recently unveiled the redesigned, 2019 Cherokee, which rolls into dealer showrooms in the first quarter of 2018.

Cherokee's redesign includes weight savings. The midsize SUV added an aluminum hood and composite tailgate, and subtracted 150 pounds. The four-door ute is offered in five trim levels: Latitude, Latitude Plus, Limited, Overland and Trail-

First Drive: 2019 Jeep Cherokee

MSRP: \$23,995-\$36,275
(plus \$1,195 destination charge)

hawk. The LED headlights in Cherokee's new front fascia are positioned higher than previously, and their design mirrors those found on Grand Cherokee. Five new wheel designs freshen the side view. The tailgate houses LED lighting, along with a higher plate position.

Trailhawk and Overland get the 3.2L Pentastar V-6 as standard equipment (271 h.p., 239 lb.-ft. of torque). All other trims run the 2.4L Tigershark four-cylinder (180



THE 2019 CHEROKEE is Jeep's most luxury leaning model, but the four-door, midsize SUV is available in trail-ready trims. The new 2.0L turbocharged four-cylinder engine (left) is the quickest option, with the best towing capability.

h.p., 170 lb.-ft. of torque). Optional on all models is a new, 2.0L turbocharged four-cylinder (270 h.p., 295 lb.-ft. of torque). All engines are matched with a nine-speed automatic transmission. The 2.4 has runabout speed.

There's enough on tap for normal driving needs, but you need to pick your spots for passing or merging.

The 3.2 has the traditional, V-6 sound and feel that many associate with Jeeps. It's the top choice in terms of towing capacity (4,500 lb. max, with the tow package; 500 more than the 2/0). The new 2.0 is the quickest motor, with a torque rating that belies its size. While this is the best engine in terms of responsiveness, it's not the quietest. It cruises calmly, but is vocal when throttled hard or wound out in lower gears. And while the EPA hasn't

weighed in at this writing with the official numbers, the 2.0 is expected to be the most fuel efficient engine of the current crop of Cherokee choices.

My test route covered the driving gamut. Big city freeways, a generous helping of twisty roads and some interesting and varied off-road trails. On pavement, Cherokee rides comfortably and handles well for the breed. And it's a very willing, very capable off-roader. While all trim levels are offered in either 4x2 (FWD) or 4x4 versions, Jeep expects about 65% of Cherokee buyers to opt for the latter. Three such systems are available (add \$1,500). Active Drive I (available on all models except Trailhawk) is a new, fully automatic system that switches between two- and four-wheel-drive

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Cherokee's strongest asset continues to be its best in class off-road capability.

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