



2007 Jeep Wrangler Unlimited Sahara 4x4

The Good ☺ Unique ride. Fun to drive. Good amount of people and cargo space.

The Bad L Needs a more freeflowing engine and drivetrain.

Engine	V6, 3.8 Liters
Output	202 hp / 237 lb-ft
Ground Clearance	10 inches
Weight	5337 lbs
Price As Tested	\$30,295

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Everyone knows that the Wrangler is the king on back country roads. For as long as we can remember, the Wrangler has won awards and distinctions from every 4WD or off-road magazine that exists. Many of you may have also experienced the Wrangler's off-road prowess during the various auto shows, where Camp Jeep makes an showing with an artificial track and displays all the extreme uphill and downhill climbs and water wading abilities of the Wrangler. We agree that its' quite capable off-road, however we are more interested in how it handles in day-to-day living, on both local roads and highways, in a way most owners will use their vehicles. We recently tested the Sahara 4x4 model and came across with a surprisingly pleasant experience.

The Jeep Wrangler Unlimited four-door is available in three versions: X, Sahara, and the Rubicon. Both the X and Sahara models are available in 4x2 or 4x4 versions while the Rubicon model is only available in 4x4 drive trains. For the first time in Wrangler's history, it now comes with power windows and door locks with models that have full frame doors. This is quite an achievement considering that the doors can be easily removed as well. This along with a

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host of changes both inside and out has made the 2007 Wrangler one heck of a vehicle to drive. Forget all those issues with the old Wrangler such as a rough suspension, lousy steering, poor acceleration and tons of wind noise. The new Wrangler is smooth, quite, comfortable and a joy to drive both on and off road.

The people at Jeep finally got the proportion and design right with the 2007 Jeep Wrangler 4-Door, the so called Unlimited Jeep. For only about \$2000 more than the standard 2-door Jeep, you can have a four door version that's big enough to hold friends while looking great too. Previously, Jeep had tried to stretch the good old Wrangler, but we felt, as did many other consumers, that this made the Wrangler just look plain ugly. I wish Jeep would have called us before putting that version into production; they could have saved a lot of money.

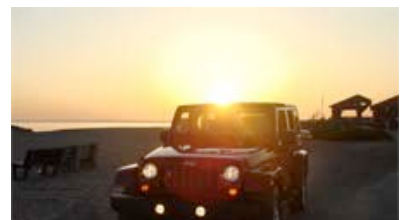
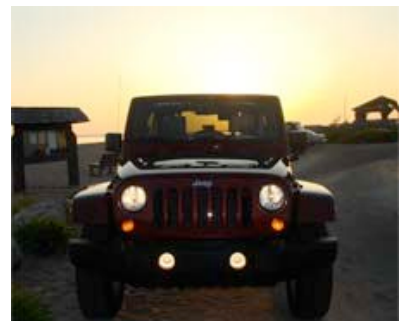
From the outside, the Wrangler Unlimited looks strong and powerful, yet isn't very high like a Dodge Durango or Ford Expedition. It's actually a comfortable entry and ride height. The Unlimited has an overall length of 183.4 inches versus 163.5 inches for the standard Wrangler. Wheelbase is 116 inches on the Unlimited versus 95.4 inches on the standard Wrangler. As you can see, the Unlimited is both longer and wider, offering greater comfort for interior passengers, more cargo room and better on road handling with a wider wheelbase. Overall height is the same on both versions at 72.1 inches.

The Unlimited rides on large 255/70R18 Bridgestone Dueler on-/off-road tires mounted on what Jeep calls "Gladiator" 18-inch 5-spoke cast-aluminum wheels that simply look wonderfully strong and muscular. Viewing the Unlimited from the side you notice the black molded side steps that blend in perfectly with the body colored large fender flares. The Unlimited has large black thumb button door handles in a retro style with exposed door hinges that are body colored. This gives the Unlimited a touch of old-style charm and sets it apart from every other car on the road today. The large rear view mirrors are also black molded plastic but match well with the door handles and the side steps, all in black.

The second row and trunk compartments have dark tinted glass giving the Unlimited a high end look. A cool feature is that all the sides and roof as well as the doors can be removed, giving you a dune buggy like vehicle. The new removable hardtop is called the Freedom Top, with individual sections that can easily come off. The two panels that are easiest to remove are the ones directly above the front driver and passenger seats. Just turn a few screws and pop off the panels for a convertible like feeling.

The front of the Jeep has a large seven-hole grill design that looks great with the large oval clear headlights. Below this are orange colored side blinkers that are fitted directly into the front grills. The Sahara model comes with a large black bumper with integrated fog lights in line with the center grills and two-tow hooks penetration out of the bumper upward. This gives the Jeep a somewhat warrior look, even if you never plan on going off-road.

The front hood slopes more than in previous Wrangler models which is nice improvement since the driver doesn't see the hood in his line-of-sight. The



hood has exposed hinges just below the wipers and black connectors toward the front to fasten it closed. Again this gives this modern day Jeep a more retro and classic design while being very convertible as well.

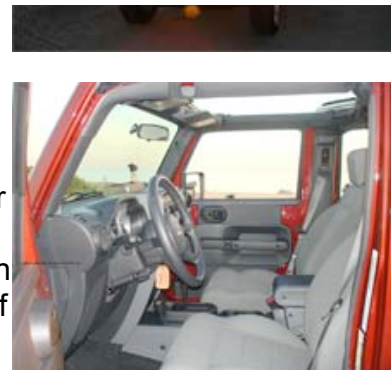
The rear has a large full size spare tire covered in a black vinyl tire cover. The side brake lights and turn signals are integrated into one rectangular light located on each side of the corner. Above the tire is a brake light mounted on the tire frame. The rear opens in a two-step process. First the lower section swings out and then the glass swings up. However the downside is that none of the doors stay in their open position, Jeep forgot a good locking hinge, so it's a pain try and hold open the door and unload cargo.

The interior of the jeep is a pleasant redesign that keeps the Wrangler heritage but modernizes it for the next generation. The first thing you notice is the bucket seats with side and bottom bolster for support. The seat has a nice design with plain grey on the outside and rigid dark grey/light grey dotted centers. Jeeps calls this new fabric the "Yes Essentials Fabric." This is a stain-, odor-, and static-resistant material that keeps seats fresh and clean longer than other fabrics. It also withstands spot cleaning so you don't have to worry about vigorously rubbing those stains out and ruining the fabric the next time you spill your drink.

We are happy to report that the seats are very comfortable, even on long 4-5 hour drives. We had adequate back and leg support and the seats were just the right amount of firmness to make long trips effortless. They are manual adjustable for and aft and also manually recline. Interior head room and leg room in the front is 41.3 and 41 inches, respectively. There is 56.8 inches of shoulder room and 55.6 inches of hip room. While you do sit close to the passenger next to you, a great vehicle for a date by the way, there is plenty of head room and leg room for the front seat passengers to feel quite comfortable.

The second most notable feature inside is the steering wheel and instrument cluster. The handle is wrapped in fine leather and has a perfect circumference. It's not very large and not too small. The instrument cluster is straight from an Xbox video game or concept car design. It's nice and compact with four dials surrounded in silver color. The two center large dials are for speed and RPM, with digital information display located a quarter of the way down showing trip computer with temperature, direction, average mpg and miles-till-empty. It also displays the gear you are in and if any doors are open. The left small dial shows fuel and the right side shows engine temperature.

The layout of the dash is quite nice with a small 10-inch wide top dash that gives the Wrangler a compact and straightforward feel putting you up close to the action. The center console has a radio with CD and integrated satellite radio and an auxiliary jack. Below this are two large round vent holes with the power window switch located between them, a place that takes getting used to but is quite novel. Three dials for climate control, with air direction on the left, AC and fan speed in the center and temperature hot/cold dial to the right lie just below. Two 12 volt power outlet plugs and ESP on/off controls round out the central console. We didn't like the step effect of the center console with the lowest panel being recessed deeper in the dash, which makes using some



things a bit harder. Regular power outlets would also have been better than the old 12 volt outlets.

Between the seats is a console that has the automatic gear shift knob, the low gear knob, emergency brake handle and two cup holders. The gearshift knob is a pretty standard design molded in all black plastic. There is a large armrest but it doesn't move forward or adjust upward, so we seldom used it during driving as it was too far away from our arm. It opens up to a large storage compartment which is lockable and good for when you open the Wrangler into its convertible mode. On the passenger side is a built in grab handle just above the glove compartment. This is good for getting in and out and for off-roading. The glove compartment can fit small items such as an aftermarket navigation unit and cell phone. It is also lockable. We specially like the green army color bag that holds the owner manuals, a very retro touch.

The rear seats are not as comfortable as the front seats. The back rest is too upright for our tastes and doesn't recline enough to give the passenger enough comfort. There are only 37.2 inches of legroom in the rear and 40.4 inches of headroom, thanks to the large padded roll bar. However a plus is that with a touch of a lever the entire seat moves forward and folds down with even the headrest inverting backwards when it hits the back of the front seat. The entire process is very quick making cargo space easily extendable. The Wrangler Unlimited has 46.4 cubic feet of room behind the 2nd row seats and with that folded, you have a total of 82 cubic feet of storage room. That's big enough to fit a refrigerator or even a 50 inch TV set the next time you go shopping at your local Costco.

The roof is colored white on the inside as opposed to its exterior black color and Jeep calls this the Freedom Top thanks to its easy on/off capabilities. There are two clamps that secure the roof to the windshield frame, and then four L-shaped levers to release the two-piece front roof. The last step is turning two dials located just behind your head in the center roll bar. These screws are very long and take a few minutes turning and turning. Finally you can pick up the passenger side roof and then the driver side roof. The process for removing the rear one-piece roof that covers the second row and trunk is similar. However you need two people to remove this larger once-piece section.

The driving experience is much improved over previous Wrangler models. The cabin is quiet and comfortable when everything is closed and you don't really feel much wind noise until going over 75 mph. The engine feels adequate and has power until you get to those left lane highway driving speeds. The new 3.8 liter 6-cylinder powerplant produces 202 hp and 237 lb-ft of torque.

It somehow feels like gearing on the transmission isn't really set to handle high speeds. When traveling over 75 mph, you really have to press down hard on the gas pedal, which feels like it's pushing against your foot with a lot of resistance. Also it is located so deep and not properly reachable unless you move your seat up close to the steering wheel. This is not the most ergonomic position for the driver to be in who is not over 6 feet tall, but you get used to it



after a while. The good thing is that you have cruise control so that you can engage that during highway driving and rest your foot.

The 4-speed automatic transmission simply doesn't have enough gears to keep the Unlimited moving as smooth as possible. We are quite surprised that Jeep would use a 4-speed transmission, especially considering that their friends at Mercedes-Benz are starting to use a 7-speed automatic transmission in their cars now. Even Lexus is using a 8-speed transmission now. Having more gears means you can have more control over the power band. Jeep engineers must have had to make a cost/performance compromise here. However, considering that you need very low gears for off-roading only, it would have been ideal if Jeep fitted the Wrangler with at least a 6-speed automatic transmission.

The Unlimited has a weight distribution of 49/51 percent front to rear and a gross weight of 5337 lbs. The suspension also was very well tuned for street driving. It was perfect in that it absorbed most small bumps on the road but also stiff enough to give you feedback on unpaved back roads. The steering response was quite nice and nimble.

We averaged around 16 mpg during city driving and around 19 mpg on highway driving. This is pretty low and should be improved. The Toyota FJ gets slightly better mileage with 17 city and 21 highway for the 4wd automatic transmission version. The FJ is a direct competitor to the Wrangler Unlimited. The Unlimited Sahara model we tested also is fitted with a trailer hitch and has a maximum towing capacity of 3500 lbs. The basic warranty is for 36 months or 36,000 miles.

The 2007 Wrangler models feature a host of safety items that rival any high end luxury sedan. Standard features include advanced multi-stage driver and front-passenger air bags. Also included is the Electronic Stability Control system that assists drivers in maintaining control during extreme steering action such during accident avoidance. The Wrangler also comes with Anti-Lock Brakes and Traction Control. Other great features in the Wrangler which are usually found in Mercedes-Benz vehicles are Brake Assist and Electronic Roll Mitigation (ERM). Brake Assist helps you apply 100% braking power in emergency situations and ERM uses sensors to determine when a rollover may occur and applies braking force to the wheels to reduce the likelihood of an incident. The Wrangler earned a five-star rating for frontal-impact crash by the US Department of Transportation.

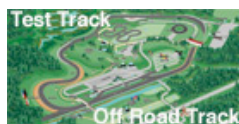
Overall the Jeep was a blast to drive because of the way it makes you feel while behind the wheel. Its very unique and unlike anything on the road today. It has a sense of style and a sense of history. Small touches such as the exposed door hinges and the folding front windshield remind you of the past when people drove for fun rather than necessity. The ability to turn the Jeep into a full out convertible is another strong plus that applies to anyone who has an ounce of adventure in their blood. The feeling of the wind in your hair and being connected to your surroundings is unlike any other motoring experience. Now with the Unlimited model, you can share these experiences with your friends and family comfortably. If there is only one drawback it would be the

high price with our vehicle coming to a MSRP of \$30,295. This is indeed steep for a vehicle that appeals to the young generation, specially the 20 something crowd. Perhaps Jeep can justify this by saying that the young people prefer the 2-door version anyway, and that that 4-door Unlimited model is purchased by the older 30 to 50 crowd. I would disagree, if the price was lower on the Unlimited model, I would be the first one to go to the Jeep dealer to get one. This is coming from someone who has never owned a Jeep before. Perhaps some incentives will help drive more sales to this truly unique vehicle. Just make it a clean electric vehicle and you have the best of all worlds and a world to look forward to.



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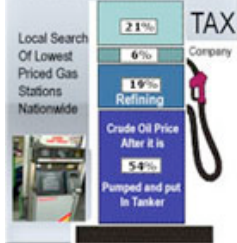
COMPARISONS	2007 Jeep Wrangler Unlimited Sahara 4dr SUV 4WD (3.8L 6cyl 6M)	2007 Ford Escape Limited 4dr SUV AWD (3.0L 6cyl 4A)	2007 Kia Sorento EX 4dr SUV 4WD (3.8L 6cyl 5A)	2007 Nissan Xterra SE 4dr SUV 4WD (4.0L 6cyl 5A)	2007 Toyota FJ Cruiser 4dr SUV 4WD (4.0L 6cyl 6M)
MSRP	\$26,605	\$26,380	\$26,195	\$27,950	\$23,290
Invoice	\$24,313	\$24,794	\$24,370	\$26,190	\$21,191

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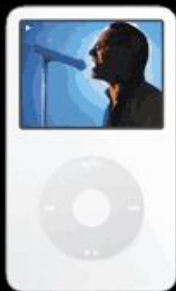
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Base Engine Type & Cylinders	V6	V6	V6	V6	V6
Base Engine Displacement	3.8 liters	3.0 liters	3.8 liters	4.0 liters	4.0 liters
Valvetrain	12 Valves overhead valves (OHV)	24 Valves double overhead cam (DOHC)	24 Valves double overhead cam (DOHC)	24 Valves double overhead cam (DOHC)	24 Valves double overhead cam (DOHC)
Horsepower	205 hp @ 5200 rpm	200 hp @ 6000 rpm	262 hp @ 6000 rpm	261 hp @ 5600 rpm	239 hp @ 5200 rpm
Torque	240 ft.-lbs. @ 4000 rpm	193 ft.-lbs. @ 4850 rpm	260 ft.-lbs. @ 4500 rpm	281 ft.-lbs. @ 4000 rpm	278 ft.-lbs. @ 3700 rpm
Independent Suspension	Not Available	four-wheel	four-wheel	front	four-wheel
Tires	P255/75R17 all terrain	P235/70R16 all season	P245/70R16 H all season	P265/65R17 all season	P265/70R17 all terrain
Wheels	painted alloy 17 x 7.5 in.	polished alloy 16 x 7.0 in.	alloy 16 x 7.0 in.	alloy 17 x 7.5 in.	steel 17 x 7.5 in.
One-Touch Power Windows	2	1	1	4	Not Available
Premium Steering Wheel Trim	leather-wrapped	leather-wrapped	leather-wrapped	leather-wrapped	Not Available
Headlight Dusk Sensor	Not Available	Standard	Optional	Not Available	Not Available
Navigation System	hard drive navigation system - Optional	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available
Max. Towing Capacity	3500 lbs.	3500 lbs.	5000 lbs.	5000 lbs.	5000 lbs.
City	17 mpg.	19 mpg.	17 mpg.	16 mpg.	16 mpg.
Highway	19 mpg.	23 mpg.	22 mpg.	21 mpg.	19 mpg.
Length	173.4 in.	174.9 in.	180.7 in.	178.7 in.	183.9 in.
Width	73.9 in.	70.1 in.	74.2 in.	72.8 in.	74.6 in.

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Height	70.9 in.	67.6 in.	71.3 in.	74.9 in.	71.6 in.
Weight	4269 lbs.	3464 lbs.	4462 lbs.	4402 lbs.	4290 lbs.
Wheel Base	116 in.	103.1 in.	106.7 in.	106.3 in.	105.9 in.
Ground Clearance	10 in.	8.2 in.	8.2 in.	8.3 in.	9.6 in.
Interior	Wrangler	Escape	Sorento	Xterra	FJ Cruiser
Front Headroom	41.3 in.	40.4 in.	38.3 in.	39.9 in.	41.3 in.
Rear Headroom	40.4 in.	39.2 in.	38 in.	39.3 in.	40.3 in.
Front Shoulder Room	55.8 in.	56.3 in.	58.9 in.	58.3 in.	58.4 in.
Rear Shoulder Room	56.8 in.	55.9 in.	58.4 in.	58.3 in.	53.9 in.
Front Hip Room	55.6 in.	53.4 in.	55.3 in.	55.9 in.	55.4 in.
Rear Hip Room	56.7 in.	49.1 in.	58 in.	46.1 in.	51 in.
Front Leg Room	41 in.	41.6 in.	42.6 in.	42.4 in.	41.9 in.
Rear Leg Room	37.2 in.	35.6 in.	36.1 in.	34.4 in.	31.3 in.
Maximum Luggage Capacity	46.4 cu.ft.	29.3 cu.ft.	31.7 cu.ft.	35.2 cu.ft.	27.9 cu.ft.



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