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**2008 Jeep Wrangler Unlimited Rubicon**

The Good :) Unique and stylish looks. Solidly built. Fun to drive.

The Bad :( More versatile engine needed. A power operated soft top would be great.

Engine	6Cyl 3.8 Liter
Output	202 hp / 237 lb-ft
Top Speed	100 mph
0-60 mph	9 sec (est.)
Weight	4,129 lbs

Videos: A Video of this vehicle can be found at the bottom of this page. For higher quality click on the links below.



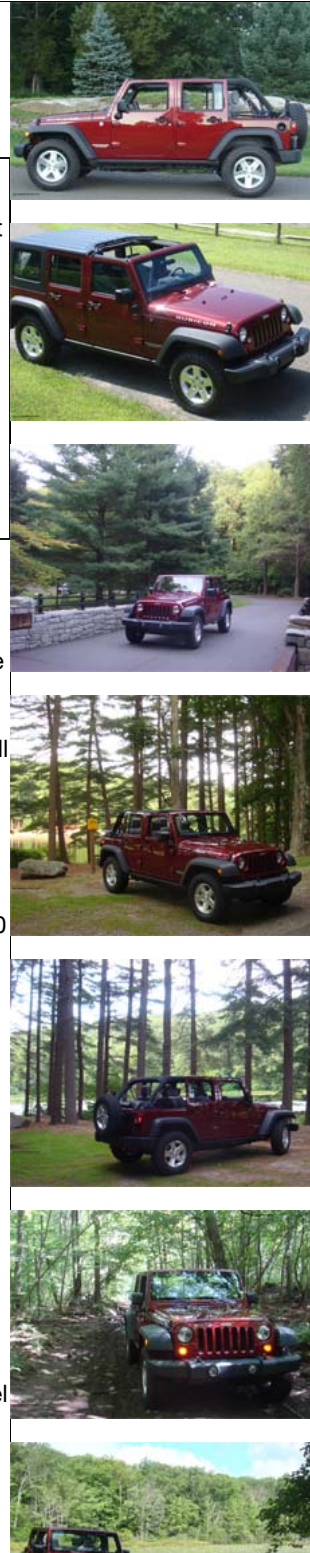
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Price As Tested \$34,905

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The 2008 Wrangler Rubicon Unlimited is quite an impressive vehicle, not only for its legendary off-road prowess, but also for its chameleon like ability to transform itself in so many ways. We recently tested the Rubicon Unlimited and were amazed at its ability to be all things in one; from the summer open-air topless beach cruiser, to the family hauler SUV with its hard roof installed, to the go-anywhere 4-wheel drive off-road beast. The Rubicon Unlimited can do it all and with the host of modern day improvements such as the touch-screen navigation system and room for your friends to sit comfortably, this may be the best Wrangler ever.

The current Wrangler styling was first introduced in 2007 and has been quite popular for its improved on-road handling as well as the upgraded interior. Most buyers will not know that the bulk of the improvements are hidden beneath the bodywork. For instance, the frame is 100 percent stiffer than the previous generation Wrangler. The body is now 50 percent stiffer and both the length and the width have been increased. There are three models of the Wrangler from the X to the Sahara to the ultimate in off-roading, the Rubicon. There are also two body styles from the classic two-door to the new four-door which is called the Unlimited. Unfortunately, all models now come with the same engine, whereas in the past you could opt for a 4-cylinder if you were a city dweller and wanted to save on gas, now the only choice is the more powerful 3.8-liter V6 engine producing 202 horsepower and 237 lb.-ft. of torque.

While the engine numbers sound low specially considering that most V6's today produce upwards of 300 horses, the Jeep Wrangler seems to handle daily life pretty well. If you find yourself doing mostly highway commuting, then the Wrangler is not the ideal vehicle. The engine simply doesn't have the ability to move this 4400 pound vehicle up to speed fast enough. The Wrangler's horsepower rating comes in at 5000 rpm while the torque rating is quoted at 4000 rpm. This means that you really have to press on the gas pedal to get the wrangler moving. What makes it worse is that the gas pedal is located so deep in the footwell, much more so than the brake pedal. So either you have to sit really close to the steering wheel NASCAR style, or you have to be really tall with long legs. However, living with the Wrangler on a daily basis with lots of driving around rural towns, on back country roads, and even in cities is a pretty good experience. The engine is smooth and very quiet as long as you stay below highway speeds. The automatic four-speed transmission works well, but it's not the best gearbox we have seen. The feeling of slowly yet powerfully moving forward from a stop

could be greatly improved with a six-speed transmission. The steering response is good with very little vibration; however, the turning radius is very poor. The Wrangler's suspension is stiff so in daily driving there is little squat or dive. The Wrangler's enhanced rigidity is evident in the way it feels driving around town. Overall the Wrangler feels smooth and solidly built. With the hardtop installed, wind noise is not a issue at all. Only at highway speeds do you hear road noise from the large mud tires coming into the cabin, however, it was not very intrusive or annoying.

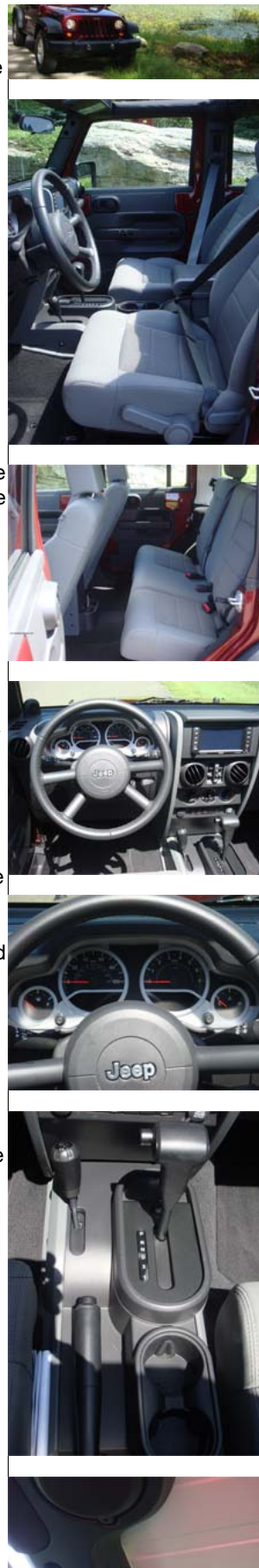
With a speedometer only going up to 100 mph, it's quite apparent the Wrangler is not really meant for fast speeds; it has an entirely different purpose in life. While we didn't get an opportunity to take the Rubicon over some really tough trails, we did go off the beaten path on back country dirt roads where there were some challenging terrain with boulders, uneven surfaces and lots of water. The Rubicon inspires you to go over things you wouldn't dare in any other vehicle. Its massive 255/75R 17 BF Goodrich mud tires easily handled all the terrain. The Rubicon has heavy-duty front and rear Dana 44 axles and also has an electronic-disconnecting front stabilizer bar, called the Active Sway Bar System, which delivers additional wheel travel for challenging terrain, such as when you're climbing boulders. What also makes the Wrangler an appealing rock climber are its short front and rear overhangs. The Rubicon has an approach angle of 44.3 degrees, a breakover angle of 25.4 degrees and departure angle of 40.4 degrees. There are also three skid plates underneath coving the fuel tank, transfer case and the gearbox oil pan.

The Rubicon model is also equipped with an Off-Road Rock-Trac two-speed transfer case with a 4.0:1 low-range gear ratio, as well as electric front and rear axle lockers, all of which aid in the quest to uncover undiscovered territories.

The exterior of the Rubicon Unlimited is classic Jeep. Going back for decades, the Wrangler still retains the old classic look which is still quite stylish today. Here the Unlimited model sports 4-doors while the Rubicon trim gives it huge 32 inch off-road tires and a host of other goodies. The front has classic round headlamps with a seven-slot grille. There is a large black steel bumper with integrated fog lamps and two large hooks, which are useful in pulling you out of messy situations. The side profile is classic with exposed door hinges. Noticeably lacking are step rails which would make it easier to get in, however they also would take away from the classic look. Rear doors blend nicely into the profile of the Wrangler. They are much smaller than the front doors, but they don't cause too much of a problem getting in and out. The Rubicon also has large fender flares made of plastic that do a very good job containing the flying mud when you're off-roading. Very attractive five spoke 17-inch machined aluminum wheels offer an upscale appearance with the large off-road tires. The Wrangler's very large ground clearance also makes it appear larger than it is from the exterior. The roofline is flat and appears low from the exterior, however once inside there is ample headroom. The rear cargo door has a classic spare tire attached to it and a glass rear window opens upward once the door is open.

We think that the new Wrangler Unlimited's styling is quite good with a great mix of original Jeep looks extended to serve the family. We suspect more and more people will find the four-door Wrangler well suited for their lifestyles and growing families. The problem seems to be that people who buy a Jeep Wrangler tend to keep it for a very long time and so we do not see many of these four door models on the road today. If you buy a Wrangler Unlimited model while you are in your twenties, you can enjoy the active lifestyle and still find use for it when you're a middle-aged manager with a wife and three kids. It is a unique car that makes you feel good as you drive it, which is very hard to do for most cars and trucks.

Interior styling is a mix of rugged looks with a blend of modern conveniences. The exterior paint scheme is brought inside with doors having metals panels showing. Ribbed checkered plastic trim is used in combination with with smooth plastic in other areas. There is plenty of headroom and legroom. The Wrangler is wide so you sit nicely spread out from other passengers. There is a wide central console in between the front two seats where the four wheel drive transfer shift lever is located. Large cup holders are located here as well. A arm rest houses a deep storage area which is lockable for when there is no roof on your Jeep and you are out shopping. Sitting in the driver's seat you have a very nice leather wrapped four-spoke steering wheel which has a large circular center with the Jeep logo. The steering wheel looks and feels great in the Wrangler, something we think is essential to any vehicle. The instrument cluster is exceptionally nice and compact, with two large dials for speed and



tachometer, flanked by smaller dials for fuel and oil temperature. There is also a digital section that shows various readouts like trip computer, average fuel economy, clock and temperature.

What we especially liked was the narrow upper dash, bringing you very close to the windshield, and the road. The distance from the edge of the dash to the windshield must be only eight inches and this is so unlike other vehicles where you have one or two feet of upper dash space. The short dash give you the feeling of being closer to the road and makes the whole Jeep experience that much more fun.

The Wrangler's interior looks very modern with the addition of a touch screen Navigation system which is being placed in all Chrysler products. The stereo system consists of a SIRIUS Satellite Radio and the MyGIG Multimedia Infotainment system that has touch screen controls with integrated navigation system. This system allows you to store your own music via an USB port in the built-in 30 gig hard drive. You can also put pictures and set your own screen saver. It's very easy to use and going from AM/FM/SAT to CD and then to Navigation happens flawlessly with a few clicks. Sirius satellite radio also provides real time traffic information and so while driving you can see accidents pop up with warnings on your route path. Sound quality from the many speakers in the Jeep was quite good, great for a party at the beach.

Window switches and the climate control system which is a manual one are located in the central console below the navigation screen. Two 12volt dc outlets and buttons for sway bar release, axle lock, emergency blinkers and ESP off are located at the very bottom of the central dash. On the passenger seat side, the lockable glove compartment storage area is nice but the owner's manuals take up most of the room. The horizontal grab handle for the passenger is very convenient when off-roading especially when there is not a ergonomically placed grab handle on the door.

The rear seats have nice legroom but the sitting angle is a bit too upright. That's not too much of a pain considering that we should all be happy the Wrangler finally has rear seat in the first place. They also fold down very easily with just one pull of a release with the headrest automatically folding into position. Having a large flat cargo area is very useful making the Wrangler much like a large SUV any soccer mom would have. Here your mom would be quite famous driving you around in a Wrangler everyday.

The trunk is spacious but it's hindered by the mechanism of the folding soft-top. The entire soft-top when closed is right in the way of putting things in the trunk. You either have to put bags by sliding them underneath the soft-top or by carrying it over the top of the unit and into the trunk area. It's too bad that there isn't a lever that allows you to raise it so you can easily take things in and out. This is specially a problem when the hardtop is on since there is no way to raise the soft-top assembly. We would like to see a power roof as on the recently tested Smart Fortwo.

The interior in the Wrangler is spacious with 54.8 cubic feet of volume with 48.3 cubic feet in the second row. Cargo volume in the trunk area is listed at 17.1 cubic feet but if you use the fold-and-tumble feature of the second row seats, cargo volume dramatically increases to 56.5 cubic feet.

All the doors on the Wrangler feel light weight and make a weak clanging sound when closing. Sometimes you have to close the door more than once just to confirm that it closed. Perhaps the door was intentionally made to be lightweight since you can remove them so easily. Removing the doors requires you to unscrew the two bolts in the door hinges and then disconnect the wiring harness. Quite fun to be able to remove so many parts of the vehicle, if only we all lived near the sand dunes of california.

The hardtop also has special feature which is called the Freedom Top. This means the two front panels above the driver and passenger seats come off very easily with a turn of a few latches to give you a semi-convertible look. The two light weight pieces can then be stored in the trunk area. But as we all know, the Wrangler is not truly a Wrangler unless it's completely topless. Figuring out how to get the rest of the hardtop off is a little challenging. In fact it's so challenging that you have to open up the owner's manual which has pages and pages of information on how to remove almost every part of the exterior, from complete doors to front windshield. Of course the section on how to play around with the soft and hard top is a bit confusing. To remove the hardtop fully, you have to pull out a wrench with #40 Torx bit. Then



you have to remove six screws located throughout the rear trunk area, and then two more that are in the top of the hardtop, which you get to by jumping on the side door frames. There are also two large knobs that you have to unscrew inside the car that are located on the b-section roll bar. You also have to unplug the wiring harness in the rear that has a built in plug for the rear glass windshield wiper fluid.

After you finally get everything unscrewed you will probably be dripping in sweat. With temperatures near 85 and humidity at 90 percent during our test, even 15 minutes of this can be pretty painful. The next step requires you find a partner to help you lift the top. It's really heavy and since there are no grab handles, the sharp plastic edges will eat into your hand like a sharp knife going through butter. Luckily for us we didn't spill any blood, but the process was still painful nonetheless. In short, it's not easy removing the hardtop or finding a place to store it. We didn't feel good about just resting in on the lawn; it needs its own parking space in your garage. When its finally off, the Wrangler is truly looking like the dune buggy it was meant to be. It looks very nice with a full open top and beckons for adventure. If only we could jump in and drive off on a wild safari. Unfortunately, there isn't much to do here in the northeast; we can't even take it on the beach.

Most owners will find that the hardtop is totally unnecessary, at least until winter rolls around. The built-in soft top is nicely stored in the trunk area and also has a vinyl cover to keep it wrapped up tightly. Folding it up is simple but a little tricky. It's much easier with two people, one on each side, since the Unlimited is so large. The top manually folds up and towards the front where the two latches connect to the front windshield. That's basically it with the only thing remaining to do is to stretch and fold the rear trunk apron into the metal frame. There are plastic windows that you can zipper on to cover the rear cargo area. Living with the softtop with the ability to lower and raise the roof in minutes is what makes the Wrangler so special. Who would use a hardtop in the spring, summer and fall, especially when it makes the Wrangler look like a Hummer H3?

Don't think the classic shape of the Wrangler means that it doesn't have modern day safety features. In fact, the 2008 Rubicon Unlimited is packed with almost every conceivable technology to aid the driver in case of an accident. Safety features include front air bags, anti-lock brakes, brake assist, electronic roll mitigation, electronic stability control, side-impact door beams and tire pressure monitoring system.

Our test vehicle started off at a base price of \$29,535. Optional items were the red rock crystal pearl coat of exterior paint for \$225, the Customer Preferred Package 24R for \$1,585, which included the freedom top. The power convenience group costs \$800 and includes all power windows, locks and remote keyless entry system. The automatic transmission is \$825. The MyGIG Infotainment system with navigation cost s\$1,275. A destination charge of \$660 bring our total to \$34,905. This included a 3 year basic warranty with towing assistance and a lifetime powertrain warranty. The window sticker shows a city rating of 15 miles per gallon and 19 on the highway, our mixed results averaged only 16.5 mpg.

The Wrangler is a special vehicle with over 65 years of heritage. While most buyers today are male and looking for an outdoor lifestyle, the Jeep is well suited for anyone looking to have a good time. Its ability to go from closed roof to fully open convertible in minutes allows one to fully enjoy the wind-in-the-hair experience. Other features like removable doors and a folding windshield means that the Jeep is well suited for anyone looking for some adventure and a connection with nature. There is also a strong bond among Wrangler owners, we routinely got waves or headlight flashes when passing by other Jeeps on the road. This doesn't happen with many other vehicles, we can think of only Porsche owners and Harley riders who wave at each other when driving by. The 2008 Wrangler Unlimited Rubicon is perhaps the best Jeep ever made; it simply looks incredible and has a pleasant and comfortable interior for modern day use. Combine this with its ability to go anywhere and you have a compelling vehicle that may do just about anything you ask of it.

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PRICING	INVOICE	RETAIL
Base Pricing	\$27,569	\$30,240
MyGIG Multimedia Infotainment w/Navigation	\$1,122	\$1,275
Dual Top Group	\$1,395	\$1,585
Power Convenience Group	\$704	\$800

COMPARISONS	2008 Jeep Wrangler Unlimited Rubicon 4dr SUV 4WD (3.8L 6cyl 6M)	2008 Toyota FJ Cruiser 4dr SUV 4WD (4.0L 6cyl 5A)	2009 Volkswagen Tiguan S 4dr SUV (2.0L 4cyl Turbo 6M)	2008 Nissan Xterra Off-Road 4dr SUV 4WD (4.0L 6cyl 6M)	2008 Dodge Nitro SXT 4dr SUV 4WD (3.7L 6cyl 6M)
					
					
					
					
					
<b>MSRP</b>	\$30,240	\$24,635	\$23,200	\$27,260	\$21,980
<b>Invoice</b>	\$27,569	\$22,416	\$21,455	Being Researched	\$20,627
<b>Destination Charge</b>	\$700	\$745	\$690	\$780	\$695
<b>Basic</b>	3 yr. / 36000 mi.	3 yr. / 36000 mi.	3 yr. / 36000 mi.	3 yr. / 36000 mi.	3 yr. / 36000 mi.
<b>Drivetrain</b>	Unlimited yr. / Unlimited mi.	5 yr. / 60000 mi.	5 yr. / 60000 mi.	5 yr. / 60000 mi.	Unlimited yr. / Unlimited mi.
<b>Roadside</b>	3 yr. / 36000 mi.	Being Researched / Being Researched	3 yr. / 36000 mi.	3 yr. / 36000 mi.	3 yr. / 36000 mi.
<b>Rust</b>	5 yr. / 100000 mi.	5 yr. / Unlimited mi.	12 yr. / Unlimited mi.	5 yr. / Unlimited mi.	5 yr. / 100000 mi.
<b>Base Engine Type &amp; Cylinders</b>	V6	V6	inline 4	V6	V6
<b>Base Engine</b>	3.8 liters	4.0 liters	2.0 liters	4.0 liters	3.7 liters



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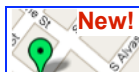
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	2.0 liters	2.4 liters	2.8 liters	3.6 liters	3.7 liters
<b>Displacement</b>					
<b>Valvetrain</b>	12 Valves overhead valves (OHV)	24 Valves double overhead cam (DOHC)	16 Valves double overhead cam (DOHC) turbocharged	24 Valves double overhead cam (DOHC)	12 Valves single overhead cam (SOHC)
<b>Horsepower</b>	202 hp @ 5000 rpm	239 hp @ 5200 rpm	200 hp @ 5100 rpm	261 hp @ 5600 rpm	210 hp @ 5200 rpm
<b>Torque</b>	237 ft-lbs. @ 4000 rpm	278 ft-lbs. @ 3700 rpm	206 ft-lbs. @ 1700 rpm	281 ft-lbs. @ 4000 rpm	235 ft-lbs. @ 4000 rpm
<b>Limited Slip Differential - Rear</b>	Standard	Not Available	Not Available	Standard	Not Available
<b>Locking Differential - Front</b>	Standard	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available
<b>Locking Differential - Rear</b>	Standard	Optional	Not Available	Standard	Not Available
<b>Stabilizer Bars</b>	front and rear	front and rear	front and rear	front and rear	front and rear
<b>Tires</b>	LT255/75R17 all terrain	P265/70R17 all terrain	215/65R16 H all season	P265/75R16 all season	P225/75R16 all season
<b>Wheels</b>	alloy 17 x 7.5 in.	steel 17 x 7.5 in.	alloy 16 x 6.5 in.	alloy 16 x 7.0 in.	steel 16 x 7.0 in.
<b>One-Touch Power Windows</b>	2 - Optional	Not Available	4	4	1
<b>Premium Steering Wheel Trim</b>	leather and alloy	leather - Optional	Not Available	leather-wrapped	Not Available
<b>Traction Control</b>	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard
<b>Stability Control</b>	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard
<b>De-powered Air Bags</b>	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard
<b>Head Air Bag</b>	Not Available	front and rear	front and rear	front and rear	front and rear

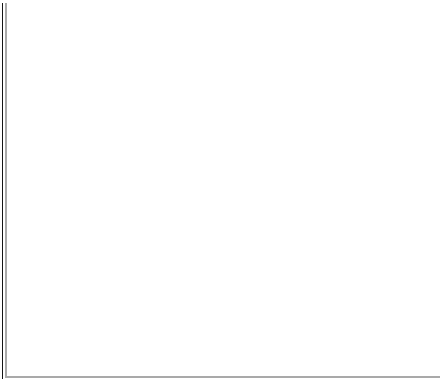
	-	rear	rear	Optional	rear
<b>Turning Circle</b>	41.3 ft.	41.8 ft.	39.4 ft.	37.3 ft.	36.3 ft.
<b>Max. Cargo Capacity</b>	82 cu. ft.	67 cu. ft.	Being Researched	66 cu. ft.	76 cu. ft.
<b>Max. Payload Capacity</b>	1081 lbs.	1275 lbs.	1352 lbs.	1061 lbs.	1150 lbs.
<b>City</b>	15 mpg.	16 mpg.	19 mpg.	16 mpg.	16 mpg.
<b>Highway</b>	19 mpg.	20 mpg.	26 mpg.	20 mpg.	22 mpg.
<b>Length</b>	184.4 in.	183.9 in.	174.3 in.	178.7 in.	178.9 in.
<b>Width</b>	73.9 in.	74.6 in.	71.2 in.	72.8 in.	73.1 in.
<b>Height</b>	Not Published	72 in.	66.3 in.	74.9 in.	69.9 in.
<b>Weight</b>	4419 lbs.	4295 lbs.	Being Researched	4387 lbs.	4105 lbs.
<b>Wheel Base</b>	116 in.	105.9 in.	102.5 in.	106.3 in.	108.8 in.
<b>Ground Clearance</b>	10.1 in.	9.6 in.	6.9 in.	8.3 in.	8.1 in.
<b>Interior</b>	Wrangler	FJ Cruiser	Tiguan	Xterra	Nitro
<b>Front Headroom</b>	41.3 in.	41.3 in.	39.1 in.	39.9 in.	40.6 in.
<b>Rear Headroom</b>	40.4 in.	40.3 in.	39 in.	39.3 in.	40.8 in.
<b>Front Shoulder Room</b>	55.8 in.	58.4 in.	56.2 in.	58.3 in.	57.2 in.
<b>Rear Shoulder Room</b>	56.8 in.	53.9 in.	54.8 in.	58.3 in.	56.4 in.
<b>Front Leg Room</b>	41 in.	41.9 in.	40.1 in.	42.4 in.	40.8 in.
<b>Rear Leg Room</b>	37.2 in.	31.3 in.	35.8 in.	34.4 in.	37.7 in.
<b>Maximum Luggage Capacity</b>	46.4 cu. ft.	27.9 cu. ft.	23.8 cu. ft.	35.2 cu. ft.	32.1 cu. ft.

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