

Jeep® Grand Cherokee for our trip to Tacoma, to tour the LeMay Museum under construction, we jumped on it. We needed something that had style, capacity and capability, as we were going to potentially be carrying some VIPs, plus we had plans to take a side trip to at least one of the islands, regardless of mud, rain, snow, sleet or high water.

The last Grand Cherokee we had tested was the SRT8, which, though bearing the current model year, was based on the prior version. We had seen the all-new Grand Cherokee up close and personal, with a tour at the hands of its engineers and stylists a couple of months ago (see JanFeb 2011

hen we had a chance to receive a new Jeep® Grand Cherokee for our trip to Tacoma, to tour the LeMay Museum onstruction, we jumped on it. We needed issue). This would put us behind the wheel of the new one (which Chrysler put a great deal of work into, concluding it is their "best ever"). What's more, it would let us try out the V6.

our Arizona launch that the Grand Cherokee is all new—"every bit." As always, it has to be completely off-road-ready—and they say this is their most capable Jeep ever—but on top of that, they are aware that customers part with a fair amount of cash for a Grand Cherokee, the top of the Jeep lineup. The job, then, was to push it upscale, while keeping it all Jeep, "at a glance." Put it all together, and they are proud of a vehicle they say makes zero compromise, on- or off-road.

Electronics are all new, as are the drive systems and the structure itself. The Grand Cherokee comes with a 5.7-liter V8 or an all-new 3.6-liter Pentastar V6 (the first application of this engine). The V6 has a rated fuel economy of 16 mpg city, 22 mpg highway, and boasts a range of about 500 miles between fill-ups—a plus for a vehicle you can take anywhere whatsoever.

There are three available four-wheel-drive systems: Quadra-Trac I (a one-speed transfer case), Quadra-Trac II (a two-speed transfer case), and Quadra-Drive II (a fully-automatic full-time system with locks for both the front and rear axles). Selecterrain adjusts suspension and tractive capability for rock, sand/mud, snow, sport—or auto. Active air suspension provides additional ground clearance of 2.6 inches on demand—10.7 inches total—

The Jeep Grand Cherokee takes in the sights of

Anderson Island, accessible by Pierce County ferry.







Three trips to the Pacific Northwest and three Jeep Grand Cherokee V6 Laredos; a red one with Michigan plates, a black one with Oregon plates and a white one with Washington plates. All three looked good wet.

and automatically lowers at highway speeds. Everyday ingress and egress are great, with wider doors and door angles front and rear, plus keyless entry and start. Knee room, legroom and cargo volume are all increased significantly, and its combination of full gate and flip-glass rear window are the only such offering still in this class.

We did no towing on our trip, but with the V6, the Grand Cherokee is rated for 5000 pounds (the same as the all-new Ford Explorer); with the V8, it can tow 7400 pounds.

Options and interior appointments are thorough, with models including stitched leather armrests and instrument panel and a new steering wheel with more controls, so you can keep your hands on the wheel. Base prices run from the Laredo at \$30,215 to the Overland at \$41,910.

Using all of the above—other than towing—for a combination of airport runs with luggage, executive chauffeuring and island hopping by Pierce County Ferry was all comfortable, rugged, stylish and flawless—and we know we barely scratched the surface of what this machine can do over the long haul. Despite all its electronic advances, we appreciated very straightforward controls—technology adapted to simplicity and elegance of function instead of overkill is always preferable.

Backing into parking spots at our hotel, we

found the proximity sensors to be a bit oversensitive, getting increasingly alarmed until we figured we dared go no farther, only to find three more feet available back there.

The audio system was well above average, easy to calibrate on the go, with simple equalizers and a CD slot that resides behind a primary video screen that pivots up and out of the way for this seemingly simple need.

We may need to spend more time with the 5-speed automatic. Climbing a steep hill in Tacoma, stuck behind a small pickup traveling below the speed limit, we found the range struggling a bit—not just shifting down but stalling, lugging, hunting down for the sweet spot. Using the manumatic was a mixed solution, as we never did find a way to get it back into D, other than to pass through N. We suspect there's another way.

All in all, we liked the new Jeep Grand Cherokee a lot. We liked it so well, in fact, that we went ahead and rented one on our own dime on each of two subsequent trips to the same area. We didn't so much need the VIP style on those trips, nor the four-adults capacity. We didn't scratch the surface on the Grand Cherokee's overall capabilities on any of the trips. But all three times, we had a comfortable, solid vehicle that suited our needs perfectly. We'd do it all again.

TACOMA SCRAPBOOK











