

Adventure Truck Evolution

Toyota's Rugged 4Runner Modernizes Without Compromise

By Derek Price

CARGAZING.COM

The 2025 Toyota 4Runner represents something rare in today's automotive landscape: a complete redesign that actually improves upon an icon without neutering its soul.

After driving this \$69,893 adventure machine for a week, it's clear Toyota understood the assignment: make the 4Runner better without making it soft.

Let's address the obvious first. Yes, this is a hybrid 4Runner.

If that sentence makes you wince, relax. Toyota didn't stuff a Prius powertrain into America's favorite rock crawler.

The i-FORCE MAX hybrid system combines a 2.4-liter turbocharged four-cylinder with electric motors to produce 326 horsepower and a massive 465 pound-feet of torque. That's substantially more grunt than the old naturally aspirated V6, and the extra torque arrives instantly thanks to the electric assistance.

The hybrid system feels right at home in this application. Where economy cars use electric motors to sip fuel delicately, the 4Runner deploys them like a sledgehammer, providing immediate low-end torque that makes crawling over obstacles feel effortless.

The EPA-estimated 24 mpg highway rating represents a meaningful improvement over the previous generation's thirst, though don't expect Camry-like efficiency from this brick-shaped behemoth.

Behind the wheel, the new 4Runner still drives like a real truck, and that's entirely the point.

The body-on-frame construction creates a distinctly different driving



The 2025 4Runner Trailhunter's bronze accents and aggressive stance signal serious off-road intent while maintaining the boxy proportions that define the 4Runner aesthetic.

experience than the unibody crossovers that dominate driveways. It feels substantial, even ponderous at times, with a slight bounce that reminds you there's serious hardware underneath.

After driving crossovers that feel like appliances, the 4Runner's honest truck character proves refreshingly authentic.

The Trailhunter trim takes the adventure theme seriously. Old Man Emu suspension components, 33-inch Toyo tires, an onboard air compressor, and bronze-finished wheels signal serious off-road intent.

The distinctive exterior graphics and color-selectable LED fog lights from RIGID Industries add visual drama without crossing into car-

toonish territory.

Inside, the transformation is dramatic. Where the previous 4Runner felt stuck in the early 2000s, this generation offers a thoroughly modern experience. The available 14-inch touchscreen runs Toyota's latest multimedia system with wireless smartphone integration.

The cabin technology represents the most significant upgrade. Previous 4Runner interiors felt like time capsules, with infotainment systems that belonged in rental cars. The new setup responds quickly, looks contemporary and integrates features like the JBL premium audio system seamlessly.

Toyota finally dragged the 4Runner into the smartphone era without compromising its tool-like

character.

Space proves generous up front and adequate in the second row, though the optional third row feels like an afterthought designed for emergency use only.

Cargo capacity remains impressive with the rear seats folded, and the various storage cubbies show thoughtful attention to outdoor gear organization.

Some compromises remain. The turbocharged four-cylinder, while torquier than the old V6, could use more outright power for highway passing. The higher trim levels require the hybrid system, limiting powertrain choice. And despite the improvements, this remains a specialized tool rather than a mainstream family hauler.

AT A GLANCE

WHAT WAS TESTED?

2025 Toyota 4Runner Hybrid AWD Trailhunter (\$66,900). Options: Digital key (\$275), towing hitch (\$65), LED lantern (\$160), D-pillar cargo lights (\$375), cargo cover (\$135), cargo mat (\$130), floor mats (\$199), trailer ball (\$24), tow hooks upgrade (\$180). Price as tested (including \$1,450 destination charge): \$69,893

BY THE NUMBERS

Wheelbase: 112.2 in.
Length: 194.9 in.
Width: 79.9 in.
Height: 74 in.
Power: 2.4-liter turbocharged four cylinder and electric motors (326 hp, 465 lbs. ft.)
Transmission: Eight-speed automatic
MPG equivalent: 23 city, 24 highway

RATINGS

Style: 9
Performance: 9
Price: 5
Handling: 4
Ride: 6
Comfort: 6
Quality: 9
Overall: 9

WHY BUY IT?

The new 4Runner delivers authentic off-road capability with thoroughly modern technology while preserving the rugged character that made the original special.



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The redesigned cabin features contemporary technology and premium materials while maintaining the functional, tool-like character that 4Runner buyers expect.

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The 4Runner Trailhunter succeeds because Toyota recognized what needed changing and what didn’t.

For buyers seeking genuine off-road capability without crossover compromises, the redesigned 4Runner offers the complete package.

A CLOSER LOOK



AT A GLANCE

FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

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