

Practical Perfection Achieved

Toyota's Grand Highlander Fills a Crucial Gap in Brand's Lineup

By Derek Price

CARGAZING.COM

The Grand Highlander represents something surprising: Toyota's first serious attempt at a three-row crossover that doesn't require you to sacrifice fuel economy or maneuverability for family hauling duties.

After years of steering three-row SUV buyers toward the truck-based Sequoia, Toyota finally offers something that makes sense for most families.

Behind the wheel, the Grand Highlander delivers exactly what you'd expect from Toyota: competent, confidence-inspiring driving dynamics without any unpleasant surprises.

The build quality feels solid throughout, suggesting this vehicle will live up to the brand's reputation for longevity.

The Hybrid Max powertrain combines a 2.4-liter turbocharged four-cylinder with electric motors for 362 horsepower, though the acceleration doesn't feel particularly urgent. The engine can sound slightly coarse under hard acceleration, but most driving happens in a refined, whisper-quiet manner.

What truly impresses is the thoughtful cabin design. Toyota engineers clearly prioritized usability over flashy styling, resulting in seats that adjust and fold with



The 2025 Toyota Grand Highlander combines contemporary styling with practical proportions, offering families a more efficient alternative to traditional truck-based SUVs.

minimal effort.

The second-row captain's chairs slide and tilt forward easily, making third-row access genuinely practical rather than an emergency-only proposition.

Cargo space measures a respectable 20.6 cubic feet behind the third row but expands to a cavernous 97.5 cubic feet with the rear seats folded.

The driving experience emphasizes comfort over sportiness, which makes perfect sense for a vehicle designed around family travel.

The suspension soaks up road imperfections without drama.

The overall character suggests this is a vehicle built for covering long distances rather than carving canyon roads.

Standard equipment proves generous across the lineup. Even base LE models include Toyota Safety Sense 3.0, a 12.3-inch touchscreen, wireless smartphone charging and blind-spot monitoring.

The Platinum Hybrid Max tested here adds premium

touches like a head-up display, panoramic moonroof and JBL premium audio.

The fuel economy deserves particular praise. EPA estimates of 27 mpg combined from a 362-horsepower three-row vehicle would have seemed impossible just a few years ago.

The 17.8-gallon fuel tank feels slightly small for a vehicle designed for road trips, but the excellent efficiency helps offset range concerns.

Some compromises are evident. The acceleration,

while adequate, doesn't match the impressive power figures on paper.

And interior materials, while well-assembled, lack the premium feel of luxury competitors.

Toyota has finally filled a glaring gap in its lineup with a vehicle that balances practicality, efficiency and the brand's reputation for reliability.

The Grand Highlander offers families a compelling alternative to both larger truck-based SUVs and smaller two-row crossovers.

AT A GLANCE

WHAT WAS TESTED?

2025 Toyota Grand Highlander Platinum Hybrid Max (\$58,775). Options: Tow hitch (\$930), illuminated door sills (\$345), illuminated cargo sill (\$345), mudguards (\$155), wheel locks (\$105), cross bars (\$325), carpet floor mats (\$378). Price as tested (including \$1,450 destination charge): \$62,808

BY THE NUMBERS

Wheelbase: 116.1 in.
Length: 201.4 in.
Width: 78.3 in.
Height: 70.1 in.
Power: 2.5-liter four cylinder plus electric motor (combined 362 hp)
Transmission: Continuously variable
MPG: 26 city, 27 highway

RATINGS

Style: 8
Performance: 7
Price: 8
Handling: 6
Ride: 9
Comfort: 9
Quality: 9
Overall: 8

WHY BUY IT?

The Grand Highlander delivers exceptional space, impressive fuel economy and Toyota's proven reliability in a package that actually makes sense for most families.



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What truly impresses is the thoughtful cabin design. Toyota engineers clearly prioritized usability over flashy styling, resulting in seats that adjust and fold with minimal effort.



The Grand Highlander’s cabin prioritizes functionality with easy-folding seats, generous storage compartments and intuitive controls throughout the spacious three-row layout.

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A CLOSER LOOK



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FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

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