

Trail-Ready Titan

Jeep Gladiator Combines Open-Air Freedom With Pickup Practicality

By Derek Price

CARGAZING.COM

The 2025 Jeep Gladiator stands as a fascinating anomaly in today's truck market, a vehicle that refuses to compromise its off-road heritage while offering genuine pickup utility.

After spending a week with the top-tier Rubicon X model, it's clear this isn't just a Wrangler with a cargo bed bolted on. It's a purpose-built adventure machine with capabilities few competitors can match.

For 2025, the Gladiator lineup sees subtle but meaningful refinements, most notably the standardization of the eight-speed automatic transmission across all models. Power lock windows, a new military-inspired '41 exterior paint color and available cabin pre-conditioning through the Jeep Connect mobile app round out the year's enhancements.

The Gladiator's 3.6-liter Pentastar V6 remains unchanged, delivering 285 horsepower and 260 lb-ft of torque — adequate but not overwhelming figures for a vehicle of this size and mission. The power delivery is smooth and predictable, though you'll want to plan your highway passing maneuvers carefully.

On pavement, the Gladiator exhibits the expected compromises of a



The 2025 Gladiator Rubicon X showcases Jeep's off-road heritage with standard 33-inch all-terrain tires, high-clearance fender flares and signature seven-slot grille.

vehicle optimized for off-road performance. The steering feels disconnected and requires constant small corrections at highway speeds, a common trait among solid-axle 4x4s.

The ride quality, particularly in Rubicon trim with its specialized suspension and chunky 33-inch all-terrain tires, can be jarring over broken pavement. This isn't the vehicle for drivers seeking crossover-like comfort.

But criticizing the Gladiator's on-road manners misses the point entirely. Take this truck to a rutted forest service road, a rocky

trail or a sandy wash, and it transforms from awkward to exceptional.

The Rubicon X's electronic sway bar disconnect, locking front and rear differentials, and 4:1 low-range Rock-Trac transfer case make short work of obstacles that would stop lesser trucks in their tracks. The 11.1 inches of ground clearance and impressive approach, breakover and departure angles — 43.4, 20.3 and 26 degrees respectively — provide genuine go-anywhere capability that isn't just marketing hyperbole.

Inside, the Gladiator

offers a surprisingly refined cabin for a vehicle with such rugged pretensions. The 12.3-inch Uconnect 5 touchscreen now comes standard across the lineup, bringing crisp graphics and responsive controls.

Wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto integration work seamlessly, and the available 12-way power adjustable seats in our tester provided all-day comfort despite the truck's sometimes unsettled ride.

The Gladiator's 5-foot cargo bed may not match full-size trucks for capacity, but its 1,725-pound maximum payload rating leads

the midsize 4x4 segment. Likewise, the 7,700-pound maximum towing capacity outmuscles most competitors.

The bed includes thoughtful touches like under-rail lighting and an available 115-volt power outlet, though the optional Trail Rail system is essential for securing gear on bumpy trails.

The Gladiator's unique selling proposition — being the only pickup truck offering true open-air freedom with a folding windshield, removable doors and three different removable roof configurations — remains unchallenged in the market. This feature alone will sway many buyers who crave the wind-in-your-hair experience typically reserved for convertibles, combined with truck utility.

At \$67,335 as tested, our fully loaded Rubicon X model represents a significant investment, but the Gladiator lineup starts at a more accessible price point under \$39,000. The sweet spot may be the standard Rubicon at around \$52,000, which delivers the core off-road capabilities without some of the luxury add-ons.

The 2025 Jeep Gladiator isn't trying to be all things to all people. It's a purpose-built tool for outdoor enthusiasts who need genuine capability matched with pickup practicality.

AT A GLANCE

WHAT WAS TESTED?

2025 Jeep Gladiator Rubicon X 4x4 (\$51,100). Options: Customer preferred package 24Y (\$10,000), Cargo Group with Trail Rail system (\$2,095), 17-inch machined wheels (\$1,095), spray-in bedliner (\$555). Price as tested (including \$1,895 destination charge): \$67,335

BY THE NUMBERS

Wheelbase: 137.3 in.
Length: 218 in.
Width: 73.8 in.
Height: 75 in.
Engine: 3.6-liter V6 (285 hp, 260 lbs. ft.)
Transmission: Eight-speed automatic
Fuel Economy: 17 city, 22 highway

RATINGS

Style: 9
Performance: 9
Price: 4
Handling: 4
Ride: 7
Comfort: 4
Quality: 7
Overall: 7

WHY BUY IT?

The Gladiator offers an unmatched combination of open-air freedom, pickup utility and go-anywhere capability in one distinctive package.



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The Gladiator’s cabin blends rugged utility with modern tech, featuring a standard 12.3-inch touchscreen and controls designed to be operated even with gloved hands.

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A CLOSER LOOK



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FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

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