

road test

2002 Jeep Grand Cherokee Overland Program #2144



In today's fast paced world, many consumers are always clamoring for the latest, greatest thing to keep them on the cutting edge. And if you want to stay competitive, you better give it to them. But in the auto industry, all-new cutting edge designs are very expensive. So how do you stay at the front, without breaking the bank? Well, if you're Jeep and the vehicle in question is the hallmark Grand Cherokee, you keep it current by giving it more.

In the case of the Grand Cherokee, more not only means more content, it also means a longer title. As for 2002 the latest member to join the Grand Cherokee family is known as the Jeep Grand Cherokee Overland. Despite being in its fourth model year, the Grand Cherokee still looks distinctive and fresh, with the Overland adding detail changes to the front and rear fascias, metallic painted side rocker panels, and machined-rim 17 inch alloy wheels with this optional chrome treatment.

What's under the hood allows Overland to distance itself from other Grand Cherokees in a very real sense. A new High-Output version of the Grand Cherokee's proven 4.7 liter, single- cam, 16-valve, Power Tech V-8. It produces 260 horsepower and 330 pound-feet of torque. That's 25 more horsepower, and 35 added units of torque, over the standard 4.7. The Overland's runs to 60 of 6.7 seconds trims six-tenths of a second off the pace of the last hot rod Grand Cherokee we tested, the 5.9 Limited. The Overland also dusts off the quarter mile in 15.2 seconds at 88 MPH. With the standard Quadra-Drive full-time four-wheel drive system, the Overland jumps out of the hole like a charging Rhino, but our drivers noted power drops off considerably when the engine reaches the upper regions of the rev band. That's most likely due, in part, to a fairly high third gear ratio in the carryover 5-speed automatic transmission.

Other Overland mechanical upgrades are found in the suspension. The Overland comes standard with the Up-Country Suspension and Skid Plate packages that are optional on other Grand Cherokees. The Up-Country package gives the Overland a slightly increased ride height and adds high pressure monotube shocks to the live axle, coil spring suspension. Off-road control, true to Jeep heritage, is exceptional. But the setup does nothing to tame the also-signature Jeep-jiggly ride. Slalom runs also produced familiar results, lots of body roll and front plow. But the chassis stays firmly planted and the fast ratio recirculating ball steering is precise, although somewhat over boosted. Out on the highway, the Up-Country suspension does a fine job of soaking up large bumps and potholes. But the quick reacting steering combined with the body jiggle made for lots of little steering corrections and a rather nervous straight line behavior.

2002 Jeep Grand Cherokee Overland

Engine	4.7 liter, single-cam, 16-valve, Power Tech V-8
Horsepower	250

Torque	330 lb feet
0-60 mph	6.7 seconds
1/4 mile	15.2 seconds @ 88 mph
60-0 mph	118 feet
EPA Mileage	14 mpg city 19 mpg highway

There's no problem keeping the Overland straight and true under heavy braking. With 12 inch discs at the corners, dual and single piston calipers at the front and rear respectively, and ABS, we averaged stops from 60 in an excellent 118 feet. Pedal feel is soft and nose dive is predominate, but this baby feels like it can stop on a dime.

With the Overland interior upgrades, you'll feel like a million bucks. Sliding into the Overland's plush, 10-way power, heated suede and leather-trimmed front buckets is easy. The Overland also adds a real Redwood Burl steering wheel, plus rain-sensing wipers. And available power adjustable pedals include his-and-her memory settings, that also control seat positions, radio selections, and mirror settings. There are more unique Redwood burl accents throughout the cockpit, and in the center stack you'll find controls for the in-dash CD player and 10-disc rear-mounted changer, as well as the dual zone climate controls. The Overland also comes standard with side curtain airbags, still somewhat rare among mid-size SUVs.

The rear seat can handle up to three, but it's quite comfortable for two adults on long trips. It's split 60/40 and folds for a modest cargo capacity of 72.3 cubic feet.

As expected for a Premium SUV, the Overland commands a premium price. Base sticker for the 2002 Jeep Grand Cherokee Overland is \$37,430. Our tester, loaded to the hilt, rang up to \$39,090. But when compared to import badged rivals, the Overland, with its most likely unused but over-the-top off-road capabilities, is a steal, and it's a genuine Jeep. The 2002 Jeep Grand Cherokee Overland is an excellent example of how to keep current without a complete overhaul. With its handsome styling additions, a more powerful engine, and a sweetly appointed interior, the Overland is why Jeep fans keep coming back for more.