

# OF THE YEAR 2003

## JEEP CHEROKEE



The style and practicality of this vehicle is reflected in its relative rarity second-hand, and good demand for those that do appear ensures that prices won't be cheap.

Still, the Cherokee is still one of the most fashionable off-roaders on the high street, with excellent family practicality as well as excellent road behaviour and quite reasonable performance even from the dull 2.4-litre petrol engine. The most desirable version is the 2.5-litre turbodiesel, priced second-hand at anything from £12,000 for an untidy Sport to £20,000 for a well cared-for Limited. This uses a superbly refined, state-of-the-art Mercedes common-rail diesel that gives lively performance and 30mpg economy. The 208bhp petrol V6 versions are pokey but thirsty, so there'll be more of these around, though hardly at cut-rate prices.

All versions are competitively equipped, even the Sport models boast air conditioning, electric windows, central locking and a CD player, while the Limiteds add cruise control and an upgraded Bose sound system. If safety matters note that the Limited also gets side curtain airbags.

Don't be fooled that the Cherokee is as competent off road as any other Jeep. For enhanced ride comfort the front suspension is independent, consequently lacking real articulation. However, the 4WD system is an effective selectable type with low range, so the car copes well with less demanding all-terrain progress. The accent is on practicality, the Cherokee boasting a single-handed rear seat-fold mechanism and a two-part rear door which allows light items to be loaded through the flip-up rear screen, the lower door section swinging open sideways for bulkier items.

### RATING

PRICE RANGE	£13,000-£20,000
ON-ROAD	●●●●○
OFF-ROAD	●●●●○
PRACTICALITY	●●●●○
AVAILABILITY	●●●●○
VALUE FOR MONEY	●●●●○

## LAND ROVER DISCOVERY



If you're after a comfortable car to do some serious off-roading in then an old Discovery is ideal since you get a lot of style and quite a bit of residual refinement for as little as £1500. For that you'll be getting something that looks a bit tatty, so you won't mind bashing it about in the rough.

But for more refined and fashionable family transport look at more like £10,000 for an early example of the revised post '98 Discovery which is tauter on the road, generally better-built and more reliable.

The Td5 engine is a bit noisy but it's efficient and reliable if properly serviced, so naturally these have held their value better than the V8s – consider that you can enjoy the peppy performance and luxurious surroundings of a year-old V8 ES seven-seater for under £25,000, a good £10,000 off the original asking price. The very success of the car has ensured a wide selection of used examples at Land Rover dealers and other 4x4 specialist dealers, while the depressed second-hand pricing has also ensured a good selection on offer from private sellers.

From an equipment and trim point of view a used Discovery is excellent value since even the GS has anti-lock brakes and traction control, alloy wheels, sunroof, remote locking and electric windows. Air conditioning was optional on these, though it's included in the latest models, but it was always standard in the top-spec ES, which also had leather upholstery with electric seat adjustment, electric sunroof and a CD autochanger. Look out for Adventurer versions which appeared in mid-2000, featuring twin sunroofs and self-leveling suspension, powered by the Td5 and around £18,000 for an early example.

### RATING

PRICE RANGE	£3000-£27,000
ON-ROAD	●●●●○
OFF-ROAD	●●●●○
PRACTICALITY	●●●●○
AVAILABILITY	●●●●○
VALUE FOR MONEY	●●●●○

## MAZDA TRIBUTE



Mechanically identical to the Ford Maverick, the only reason for picking a Tribute instead of the Ford is that Mazda offered a slightly bigger range, including a base 2.0-litre GXi which lacks the alloy wheels and electric sunroof fitted to all other 4x4 versions – be aware that Mazda also offers a 2WD version, which you don't want to touch if you're intending to take the family off-road.

An early GXi shouldn't cost more than £12,000 in reasonable condition, and for that you will get air conditioning, remote locking, electric windows and side airbags. Pay £500-£800 more for a clean GSi, the extra getting you the smart alloys and electric sunroof, along with cruise control and front fog lamps. Meanwhile, £17,000 should get you into a luxurious and lively leather-upholstered V6 auto.

Like the Maverick the interior of the Tribute is uncluttered, with an uncomplicated dash, easy controls and comfortable enough seating for five. The boot is also capacious, and the seat-fold mechanism easy to cope with, so practicality is high even if style inside and out is on the bland side.

If the Tribute doesn't look much like a rugged off-roader it's because it is much more at home on the road, where it handles extremely well, with accurate steering and little body roll, although the suspension is firm and can get jittery over rough surfaces.

The four-wheel drive system engages automatically when required, a bonus on road as well as in the rough because it automatically compensates for wet or slushy conditions. For more serious off-roading the system can be engaged manually, but the Tribute has no low range option.

### RATING

PRICE RANGE	£12,000-£17,000
ON-ROAD	●●●●○
OFF-ROAD	●●●●○
PRACTICALITY	●●●●○
AVAILABILITY	●●●●○
VALUE FOR MONEY	●●●●○