

## Car review: 2014 Toyota 4Runner

Written by Frank S. Washington, NNPA Columnist  
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DETROIT – The 2014 Toyota 4Runner is a throwback, one of the few true sport utilities on the market. That, is it has body on frame construction.

The sport-utility has been revamped with a more rugged exterior and a more refined interior. There are three trim levels: the SR5, the Limited and the Trail grade. We test drove the Trail grade. It had a redesigned front fascia that was bulkier, which conveyed a rugged physique.

The grille was more muscular, and it had inlays that extended the headlights to the bumpers. There was also the hood scoop that imbued the Toyota 4Runner with a sense of power. Under that scoop was a 4.0-liter V6 that made 270 horsepower and 278 pound-feet of torque. It was mated to a five-speed automatic transmission with a transfer case. It had dual independent variable valve timing that optimized torque across the engine's operating range.

The Toyota 4Runner had decent fuel economy. It had an EPA rating of 17 mpg in the city and 23 mpg on the highway in 4X2 mode. In 4X4 mode, it got 17 mpg in the city and 22 mpg on the highway. Its maximum towing capacity was 5,000 pounds and like all 4Runners it featured an integrated tow-hitch and wiring harness.

This engine provided plenty of power. Although the Toyota 4Runner did have that low-engine whine of a pickup truck at very low speeds, there was enough oomph for it to be maneuverable on expressways.

One thing was lacking though, a lane change indicator. What's more, the midsize SUV didn't have blindside-alert, either. That might be part of an option package that the test vehicle didn't have. Still, when driving utility vehicles, it helps to be able to alert other drivers easily that you're changing lanes and for you to know when another vehicle is in your blind spot.

The interior of the 4Runner was upgraded, too. Door trim was soft touch with faint French stitching that you've really got to be an expert to tell if it is faux or real. The steering wheel was leather wrapped as was the gear selector knob.

The instrument panel housed the speedometer, tachometer, voltage, fuel and coolant temperature gauges, plus a multi-information display. The instruments' background was black

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and the numerals were white with a blue background. It was a really clean look.

Toyota has moved towards an interior horizontal layout in the 4Runner. The centerstack was not really a stack; it was wide but not too vertical. And by moving the 4Runner Trail's off road control switches to an overhead console, designers again created a clutter free appearance on the dash.

The Trail trim 4Runner had two rows as of seats, the third row was folded. With just two rows of seats, there was an expansive storage area behind the second row. The SUV also came with a full-size spare that, fortunately, we didn't have to use.

There wasn't much optional equipment on our Toyota Trail Premium 4X4, probably because with what came in this package not much more was needed. Options included a dynamic suspension system and rigid running boards.

Standard equipment included a backup camera, a moonroof, Bluetooth, satellite radio, a navigation system, heated sideview mirrors, a power sliding liftgate window, heated front seats and Toyota's Entune app information system.

With a base price of \$38,645, several options and freight cost, as tested the total was \$41,825. That's a lot of capability for a reasonable price tag.

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