

Jeep Patriot is worth a look

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The upgraded CVT, which adds \$1,750 to the base price (instead of \$1,400 for the lower-tier CVT), includes a low range that engages when off-road mode is activated.

This best-in-class 19:1 ratio is ideal for crawling over rocks and logs, made even easier with the 2.5 cm (1 inch) increase in ride height for this year.

Hill-descent control, which is also part of the package, helps you to descend steep grades under control.

'Trail Rated', in case you're unaware, means the vehicle meets the company's standard for traction, water fording, articulation, maneuverability and ground clearance.

The Patriot may not measure up to the legendary Wrangler, but still provides nine inches of ground clearance, a 29-degree approach angle, a 33-degree departure angle and a 23-degree breakover angle. Good for at least moderate off-roading.

The trail rated Patriot also has added body sealing and high-mounted drivetrain vents for up to 19 inches of water fording ability.

Jeep certainly doesn't go overboard on powering this vehicle. The Patriot features a standard 2.4-litre World Engine that generates 172 hp and 165 lb/ft of torque, putting it right in line with four cylinder competitors like Tucson and Sportage, but marginally behind Honda CR-V and Toyota RAV4.

Consequently, I wouldn't describe performance as heart stopping, but in today's world of a buck-twenty-plus per litre of gas, who's complaining? Six cylinder-powered compact SUVs, like the RAV4, are more fun on dry roads, but less amusing at the gas pump.

Numerous engineering improvements, including an increased rear sway bar diameter, increased vehicle damping and better rebound in shocks and struts, have improved ride and handling. Steering is more responsive and has more feel, and there is now additional sound deadening.

Despite this last enhancement, moderate road and wind noise still penetrates the cabin, as does the characteristic moan from the CVT.

Chrysler has improved the interiors for all their products in 2011, and the Jeep Patriot is no exception.

Upgrades include new soft touch front-door trim panels; a new steering wheel with integrated controls for audio, cruise control, phone and other functions; backlighting of door switches, locks, windows and mirror controls, and more.

There's still plenty of hard plastic, but the chrome rings around the air vents and knobs, leather-wrapped steering wheel and nice fabrics are welcome progress.

And there's plenty of room for the driver and passengers, who can expect loads of head and legroom in both front and rear. Seats are comfortable and supportive, with available heating up front.



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The Jeep Patriot gets several interior upgrades for 2011, including new soft touch front-door trim panels; backlighting of door switches, locks, windows and mirror controls, and more.

Cargo room is also abundant, and its figure of 1,775 litres doesn't do justice to the cavernous area opened up when you drop the 60/40 rear seats and fold the front passenger seat forward. To keep things in place, there are four cargo tiedowns in rear.

Fuel economy, as posted, is a relatively frugal 9.9/7.5L/100 km (city/highway), but my average in mostly urban driving was in the high 12s.

The Patriot starts out as one of the least expensive compact SUVs on the market. But once you option it up to become a comfortable, convenient, fully off-road capable vehicle, the price climbs sharply to 30-grand and beyond.

Is it worth the price? Well, that depends on your desire to leave the asphalt. But keep in mind that if you do, the competition thins rather quickly, making the 2011

Jeep Patriot worth a serious look.

Jeep Patriot North 4x4 2011 (at a glance)

BODY STYLE: four-door, compact sport utility

DRIVE METHOD: front-engine, full-time four-wheel-drive

ENGINE: 2.4-litre DOHC four cylinder with dual variable valve timing (172 hp, 165 lb/ft of torque)

TOWING CAPACITY: up to 2,000 lbs with Freedom-Drive II package

FUEL ECONOMY: 9.9/7.5L/100km (city/highway)

PRICE: (front drive) Sport \$15,495, North \$19,795, Limited \$22,795; (4x4) Sport \$17,695, North \$21,995, Limited \$24,995

WEBSITE: www.jeep.ca



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2011 TITAN SL SL Crew Cab model shown



2011 FRONTIER SV 4x4 model shown

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