


# Toyota / Lexus:

“ If it **ain't** broke,  
don't **fix** it. „

By Beverly & Steve Smirnis



**T**he slogan seems to be the mantra in the Toyota/Lexus world. The Toyota Land Cruiser has been in production since 2007, receiving only a mild refresh in 2016. The entry-level Land Cruiser priced at \$86,880 has now entered the 2021 model year with only very minor differences from the 2020 model.

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*Perhaps wisely, decision-making for Land Cruisers purchasers was virtually eliminated. They were only available in one trim level until the Heritage Edition was introduced for 2020, which deletes the third row option and adds bronze-colored BBS wheels, special badges and a roof rack. Every Land Cruiser comes with a 5.7-liter V8 engine that produces 381 horsepower and 401 lb-ft of torque, paired to an eight-speed automatic transmission and a full-time four-wheel-drive system.*

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Buyers have been willing to continue shelling out the money for the Land Cruiser for several reasons. Many remain loyal to the old school SUV due to the clout that the Land Cruiser name carries with the off-road and overlanding communities. If you're looking for a large, luxurious family hauler, most of comparisons are crossovers, while Land Cruiser is a true body-on-frame

SUV. Most importantly, the large, luxury SUV is capable of towing 8,000 pounds and equipped with off-road hardware including a locking center differential. Another factor that weighs in is Toyota's move to load every model in its lineup with standard safety and driver-assistance technologies that many others offer only as options. Two years of complimentary scheduled maintenance, uncommon in this segment, also resonates with Toyota loyalists in general.

However, the announcement has just been verified; 2021 will be the last year model for the Land Cruiser, with internal competition mostly to blame. The Sequoia answers to those looking for a luxurious large SUV from Toyota but don't care to shell out the extra money for a Lexus. Based on the Tundra pickup, Sequoia still remains a true SUV with its body-on-frame platform. The TRD Pro trim level, added for the 2020 Sequoia and denoted by its blacked-out emblems, adds the off-road capability factor to the Sequoia as well with upgraded Fox shocks, skid plates and significant ground clearance and is rates to tow up to 7,400 pounds.

Here again, Toyota limits the choices. The Sequoia is available only with the V-8 engine mated to a six-speed automatic transmission. You do have the choice of rear- or four-wheel drive. But the Sequoia is criticized for lacking the modern features of some of its rivals and for its sub-par gas mileage performance. While the V8 puts out 383 horsepower and 403 pound-feet of torque, the 6,100-pound Sequoia is slower to accelerate than some of its rivals with less power. In spite of the criticisms, Sequoia buyers appreciate some of the old school things about it, and those types of buyers like that the Sequoia has many of the attributes of the Land Cruiser and Lexus LX500 at a lower price point. Sequoias can be had for as low as about \$50k. Our TRD Pro Sequoia tester had a price tag just north of \$65K.



choose a two or three row seat option. (The Mark Levinson audio system is exclusive to the three-row option.) The LX never struggles to make an impression, but it too is criticized for being mostly unchanged since 2008.

The strategy by Toyota / Lexus in the large, luxury SUV segment appears to be: Stick to your guns and keep selling vehicles, making few changes and limiting available options until they eventually become obsolete and replaced by other Toyota / Lexus nameplates. Essentially, Toyota / Lexus is in a position of strength that also puts it in the position of holding somewhat of a monopoly. Truly, their biggest competition are the other vehicles in their own fleet. The brand has done a superior job of winning over buyers and focusing the strategy on them instead of worrying so much about the actions of competitors.



The Lexus LX500 cousin, nearly identical to the Land Cruiser, starts at just over \$87K and adds lots of luxurious appointments such as real wood and supple cushioning while using the same body-on-frame architecture. The LX500 comes nearly fully loaded and with one available powertrain—the 5.7-liter V8 mated to an eight-speed automatic transmission with full-time all-wheel drive. It also sports superior off-road ability with standard lockable center differential and a two-speed transfer case and five different terrain modes. Its air suspension can give the large Lexus over 11 inches of ground clearance. Buyers can



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