

MOTERING FOCUS: JEEP CHEROKEE TRAILHAWK

Have you ever wanted to cross a desert in a proper Jeep? It's always appealed to me, and very happily I got the opportunity to do just that recently.



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Jeep flew me with two other British motoring journalists to Marrakesh in Morocco, so we could try out the 2015 Cherokee Trailhawk. But this was no run of the mill media event – it was a few days of tough driving away from the imperial city across the Agafay Desert and High Atlas Mountains.

The North African region's rocky setting is interrupted by astonishing fissures and curves, while concealed canyons jut out against the backcloth of the mountainous panorama. Nothing about the forbidding terrain appears to make much sense – except to the new Jeep Cherokee.

The full-bodied Trailhawk 4x4 model comes with a potent 3.2-litre V6 268bhp petrol engine and a nine-speed automatic gearbox. It's virtually a bulldozer in terms of build and brawn – and this makes it the ideal vehicle for an adventure in the wilderness. Just rotate the car's Selec-Terrain dial to 'sand' mode and the Jeep Active Drive Lock does the rest.

Any apparently impossible barriers to progress are soon dealt with by the sport utility vehicle's (SUV) exclusive

'Rock' mode. And when the route gets even tougher, '4WD-Low' can be selected. This engages the low range gears and makes use of the rear differential lock. The end result is that nothing seems to stand in the way of the Jeep's 'can do' talent. Even almost vertical uphill and downhill gradients can be set to rights. By triggering Selec Speed Control, the pre-set pace can be held, leaving you to focus 100 per cent on nothing other than the steering; the Jeep Cherokee Trailhawk does the rest.

Out of the desert, the vehicle's on-tarmac wherewithal is just as inspiring, as I found out on the roads hacked into the Atlas Mountains. Applause has to go to the Trailhawk's independent suspensions; and once any crater-like potholes disappear from under the wheels, the Jeep's rear axle disengages and switches to front wheel drive all by itself.

Other admirable features to make owning the Jeep Cherokee Trailhawk a pleasure include tinted sunscreen glass, coloured grille surrounds and roof rails, off-road wheel flares and 17-inch aluminium wheels.

Inside the cabin, the equipment continues with Nappa Leather trim, red interior stitching accents, all-season floor mats, a cargo net, a media centre with an 8.4-inch touch screen display and USB remote port.

The 2015 Jeep Cherokee Trailhawk got me through my desert and mountain escapade so capably I was almost disappointed by the dearth of drama. To be fair though, the theatrical staging made up for any further rushes of adrenaline required.

Take it from me; if you're into hardcore 4x4s you could do a lot worse than this one.

FAST FACTS

- Max speed: 112 mph
- 0-62 mph: 8.4 secs
- Combined mpg: 29.4
- Engine: 3239cc 6 cylinder 24 valve petrol
- Max. power (bhp): 268
- Max. torque (lb.ft): 232
- CO₂: 223 g/km
- Price: £34,865

PROS 'N' CONS

- Traction ✓
- Durability ✓
- Equipment ✓
- Space ✓
- Fuel efficiency X