

Automotive

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F10P*

Observer & Eccentric | Sunday, September 8, 2002

Toyota revs up RAV4

Advertising Feature

CAReport



By Anne Fracassa
Avanti News Features

ANNE
FRACASSA

The last time I tested the Toyota RAV4, I was not impressed. It was really small, had no cargo area and was cramped. I remember thinking that a rear-end collision would certainly kill anyone in the back seat. And at the time, my kids were in car seats—in the back seat.

But we survived the week without incident, wrote the test drive and went on my merry way.

Well, Toyota redesigned the RAV4 last year and what a surprise it is. I thoroughly enjoyed the week's drive in the RAV4 and was very impressed—not only with its versatility, convenience and comfort, but also with its great gas mileage.

First of all the redesign is smart. This is one pretty compact sport utility vehicle. It looks perfect in "white pearl." When the sun hits it the right way, the pearl part of the white looks like it's been drenched in body glitter. (Those of you with boys won't understand.) Really cool effect. Really pretty, too.

The model tested was the L package, which comes with everything color-keyed. That includes outside mirrors, door handles, bumpers, body side molding and hard spare tire cover.

The L package also gives you integrated fog lamps, tonneau cover, air conditioning cruise control, AM/FM/cassette stereo with six speakers, power door locks, power windows, privacy glass and heated power mirrors. It even comes with carpeted floor mats.

Let's talk about the comfort. I drove it all over the Detroit area, from east to west, to southern



It's a winner: 2002 Toyota RAV4 Vehicle class: Sport utility. Power: 2.0 liter 4-cylinder engine. Mileage: 23 city/27 highway. Where built: Toyota City, Japan. Base price: \$18,975. As tested: \$26,420

and northern corners, and even though the longest drive took about 2 1/2 hours, the seating comfort was superb.

I love the space up front. There's 42.4 inches of front leg room, something I absolutely love. In the back, there's 32.6 inches. I crawled back there and I was still comfy. It seats five, according to Toyota documents, but if comfort's an issue, the fifth person has to stay home. I think it's a little tight. Four's comfortable.

As I said, I remember NO CARGO SPACE in that first RAV4 I tested. Well, now you can take this baby on vacation. In back of the rear seat, you'll find 29.2 cubic feet of cargo volume. And if you remove the 50/50 split rear seat, you'll have a little more than 68 cubic feet to play with.

By the way, the rear seat can also slide, fold and recline for your rear passengers. How convenient for the dating set.

Power is really superb with an all-aluminum 2.0 liter 4-cylinder engine that produces 148 horses. More than enough with this small SUV. You'll get where you need to go in a hurry. Not

once did I worry about merging on the freeway or passing a slow-moving vehicle.

The RAV4 is available in both front wheel drive and full-time 4-wheel drive. I would opt for the 4-wheel drive for convenience and excitement.

Ride and handling is excellent, of course thanks to its front independent MacPherson struts and a double wishbone coil spring independent suspension. Front disc brakes with 9-inch rims and a 4-wheel anti-lock braking system makes a difference.

Safety features abound. Let's talk about 3-point automatic locking retractor, emergency locking retract seat belts on all seating positions, front seat pretensioners (I hate those), driver and front passenger airbag system, side impact door beams, child seat anchor brackets and tether brackets.

The RAV4 is a great deal for anyone with a family or a teenager who needs to spread his or her wings. It's a winner.

Write Anne Fracassa at avanti1054@aol.com.

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Fort Knox Gold CC Metallic medium parchment cloth, power auto windows, dual power mirrors, air, AM/FM stereo radio w/CD player, 15" alloy wheels, power locks, 2.0L SPI engine, auto, P195/60R15 BSW tires. Stock #20181 **WAS \$15,575**

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2002 RANGER 4X2 XLT SUPERCAB

Oxford White CC, dark graphite cloth, sliding rear window, speed control, air, alloy wheels, AM/FM stereo radio w/CD player, 15" chrome wheels, rear jump seat, XLT appearance group. Stock #20133 **WAS \$20,450**

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2002 EXPLORER XLS 4X2

Topaz Red CC, graphite cloth capt chairs, P235/70R16 A/S OWL tires, air, cassette, full lace steel wheels, privacy glass, 5-speed auto O/D trans, 3.45 ratio rdg axls, stop bar, prism cat/cd player, 15" alloy wheels, power windows, power locks, 2.0L SPI engine, auto, P195/60R15 BSW tires. Stock #20133 **WAS \$27,885**

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\$19,452^{57*}

A-PLAN 36 MONTH LEASE RENEWAL	ZERO DOWN \$279 ^{15**} mo.	\$1500 DOWN \$236 ^{88**} mo.	122 (2002) EXPLORERS AVAILABLE
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2002 F150 SUPER CREW 4X2

Aurora Beige CC, parchment 4x20 split bench, perf equip pkg, 507A, XLT series, power chrome mirrors, air, 4.0L EFI V8 engine, elec 4-sp auto O/D, P255/70R-10 OWL all-season, overhead console, sliding rear window, cast alum wheels (6). Stock #25751 **WAS \$28,680**

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\$20,003^{*}

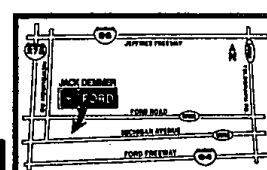
A-PLAN 24 MONTH LEASE RENEWAL	ZERO DOWN \$323 ^{85**} mo.	\$1500 DOWN \$256 ^{72**} mo.	75 (2002) SUPER CREWS AVAILABLE
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MODEL	DOWN PAYMENT	TOTAL DUE AT INCEPTION
RANGER	0 Down	\$430
	0 Down	\$1800
F150 SC	0 Down	\$372
	0 Down	\$1500
FOCUS	0 Down	\$2081
	0 Down	\$1414
EXPLORER	0 Down	\$1954
	0 Down	\$1800

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