



# JEEP CHEROKEE CHIEF

*If it has any faults, you have to look hard to discover them.*

**BACKGROUND**/The name Jeep and the term four-wheel drive are synonymous. If that statement leaves you with any doubts, then just ask any World War II veteran. Jeep 4X4's are as familiar throughout the globe as Coca Cola (maybe even more so). Since that conflict, the familiar military Jeep has undergone gradual change and refinement, so that the little "workhorse"—while it resembles its forebears—at first blush is now larger, more comfortable, definitely more glamorous, and far more powerful than anything the GI's knew. Too, other body variations have evolved for the ubiquitous 4X4 chassis over the years, the latter metamorphosing into longer wheelbases, wider stances, and so forth.

Perhaps the most successful body style, other than the CJ's of course, is the king-size 4-door station wagon known as the Wagoneer. But seeing the success of the Blazer and GMC's Jimmy, followed later by Dodge and Plymouth look-alikes, Jeep designers took the cue and came up with—for the '74 model year—their own 2-door, dubbing it Cherokee. The Cherokee, a 2-door Wagoneer, is available in either standard form or with optional trim as the Cherokee "S." For mid-'75, yet another Cherokee model was unveiled and, fittingly, its name is the Chief.

**GENERAL**/The Cherokee Chief is not just a plain-jane Cherokee oozing with extra-cost add-ons. Instead, it is a happy marriage of Cherokee body with Jeep J-10 pickup axles. This new union necessitated heavily flared wheelwells to accommodate the greater width between the pickup wheels—66½ ins. front track, 63 ins. rear track for the Chief, as compared to a nominal 57-in. fore-and-aft track for the standard and "S" Cherokees. In short, "plain" Cherokees are basically Wagoneer underneath, while the Chief is primarily J-10 pickup axles on the same 109-in. wheelbase Cherokee/Wagoneer frame. The pickup/Cherokee combination produces a wider track than the other Cherokees and, thanks to the fender flares, the Chief comes equipped with wide 8-in. wheels (7 ins. for the "S") and big 10X15 wide-tread Goodyear All-Terrain tires. The key to the Chief's success is width—and the result is a greater distribution of road bumps for a more comfortable ride and improved stability and maneuverability.

The Chief was brand new in Febru-

ary of '75, but the Cherokee and Cherokee "S" were back for their second year; however, due to their newness, only minimal changes were made. The Cherokee, introduced to replace the Commando, fills the slot between the basic CJ's and the luxury Jeep, the Wagoneer. Still recognized as a 2-door Wagoneer with pickup grille, the '75 Cherokee looks no different from a '74—and except for its unique paint scheme, "Cherokee Chief" decals and fender flares, the Chief looks the same as its tribal brothers. A wide range of colors is offered on the Chief, with a special scheme for each, in which the dominant color is contrasted by flat black around the rear windows, fender flares and lower body panels. Engine selection, unchanged from '74, is the same for all Cherokees, with two V-8's for California and a 6 and an additional V-8 for the rest of the nation. For '75 all vehicles over 6000 lbs. GVW are exempt from certain safety and emissions regulations still required on lighter cars and trucks, thereby making it possible to satisfy the emissions levels without a catalytic converter. Consequently, for '75, most truck manufacturers, including Jeep, modified their lighter trucks with heavier springs and larger tires in order to bring them above the 6000-lb. rating. Cherokee models, rated at 5600 lbs. in '74, just squeaked by with a '75 GVW of 6025 lbs. Avoiding the converter saved AMC a lot of money—and keeping the hot converters out of the forests sure makes Smokey happy.

**CHASSIS**/All Cherokees use a ladder-type frame with five crossmembers and heavy-channelled, boxed side rails. It's designed to take a real beating. The Cherokee suspension, regardless of model, is of the same design, and spring and shock selection is no different from one Cherokee model to another, including the Chief. Suspension is by semi-elliptic multi-leaf springs at both front and rear, and shock absorbers are the conventional tube type. For '75, Cherokee shocks are a bit longer than they were in '74 and their mounting is now staggered—one in front of the axle and one behind—for a more comfortable ride and less axle hop. Speaking of comfort, the standard rear springs are 6-leaf progressive for '75 with a deflection rate of 160/260 lbs. per in.—which means they get stiffer when you need

them. The spring deflects or bends 1 in. when it is loaded with 160 lbs. of weight or force and it will bend another inch when the weight increases another 160 lbs., or 320 lbs. total. On the third inch, it may progress to 200 lbs./in. for a 520-lb. total, until the progression finally reaches its maximum rate of 260 lbs./in. The result is a soft, comfortable ride on the street; however, for off-roading, the thicker leaves on the bottom deflect less than the thinner ones on top; thus, bottoming out is reduced. The deflection rate for the standard 4-leaf front springs is 200 lbs./in.; available as an option are heavier springs with two leaves in front and six in back. They have a constant deflection rate of 260 lbs./in. in front and 230 in the rear—and since they're not progressive but are meant for off-road, the ride is on the rough side.

The standard brakes are self-adjusting with 11-in. diameter drums front and rear; power is available only with the optional front disc brakes and the discs only with power—a required option on the Chief. All Cherokees, except the Chief, come equipped with the standard H78X15 (F78 standard in '74) 4-ply Polyglas tires mounted on 6-bolt 6-in. wheels or the optional (standard on the "S") 7-in. aluminum "mag" wheels. Three other tires of the same size—but with different ply ratings—are offered as options, including HR78X15 steel-belted radials. However, with the Chief, there are no tire choices—you take what you get ... but the gettin's pretty good. A big tire was needed to fill the standard 8-in. rims, and it materialized in Goodyear's All-Terrain 10X15 "Tracker A/T"; sorry, though, it's exclusive to the Chief.

If you order a Cherokee Chief or any Cherokee with either a V-8, air conditioning or Turbo Hydra-Matic, then you automatically get variable-ratio power steering. The ratio varies from 13:1 to 16:1 and it requires only 3½ turns to go from full right to full left. A stick-equipped Cherokee 6 (other than a Chief) without air gets a standard Saginaw recirculating-ball steering box with 24:1 ratio and five turns of the wheel from lock-to-lock.

**DRIVELINE**/The standard Cherokee engine, including the Chief, is the 258-cu.-in. 6-cylinder with 1-bbl. carburetor. Rated at just 100 net hp, the

# JEEP CHEROKEE

6 is a bit too small for the 3700-lb. vehicle and, understandably, it's not the most popular engine. The base V-8 is the 2-bbl. 360; like the 6, it didn't meet California emissions standards. Consequently, neither engine is sold in that state, although they are available elsewhere. Completing the engine lineup are the 4-bbl. 360 and 4-bbl. 401; due to their lean carburetion, emissions are low enough to permit California sale. Transmission choices include a 3-speed or 4-speed manual—both with floorshift—and a Turbo Hydra-Matic 400; axle ratios include a 3.07, a 3.54 and a 4.09. A limited-slip rear differential ("Trac-Lok") is available as an option on all Cherokees except the Chief, or on those models with either Quadra-Trac or the 4.09 axle. The Chief is limited to only one axle ratio—the 3.54.

The conventional transfer case is Spicer's Model 20; unlike the Quadra-Trac, it requires a floor-mounted shift lever and the Warn hubs. The lever can be positioned in either low four-wheel drive, high four-wheel drive, high two-wheel drive or neutral. (Neutral provides the power for the dealer-installed winch.) On pavement, the vehicle with the conventional case must be driven only in 2-wheel high with the front hubs unlocked. To engage the front differential, you must get out of the Jeep, manually lock the hubs and then shift into four-wheel-drive high or low. It's no great effort, but there are times when weather or terrain do make it difficult to leave the vehicle. For those times, Jeep led the others by introducing Quadra-Trac, a full-time four-wheel drive (Warner Gear), for '73. It's the most successful of all the full-time units and can be ordered in either the standard high-range model or with optional low range. The low range is engaged by pulling on a T-

handle under the dash; on all Quadra-Tracs, a switch in the glovebox locks the center differential to evenly split the power from front to rear.

For '75, Jeep discarded ignition points and, for the first time, standardized pointless electronic ignition. Also new is Jeep's optional "cold climate group" consisting of a 70-amp battery, 62-amp alternator and engine block heater. The 4-bbl. carbs have been modified for greater economy with smaller primaries. In addition, a Cruise Command Speed Control is optional.

**BODY**/Since its '74 introduction, the Cherokee body has changed only in trim and in appearance... and it's trim that identifies the Chief. The flat black around the windows and lower body, highlighted by Cherokee Chief decals, combines with the big tires, fender flares and wider stance to guarantee second looks from everyone. The Chief package is offered on both standard and "S" Cherokees, and the optional "Levi's" interior is available with the "S." The seats are covered with a blue or tan vinyl cloth that looks and feels like denim right down to the stitching and brass rivets. Also available on the Chief are the "S" and standard interiors, both of which have new contoured bucket seats. The "S" interior is fancier and has more padding; it uses carpeting instead of standard vinyl, pleated and embossed seats and an "engine-turned" instrument panel instead of the standard painted version. New for '75, and standard on the "S," is a deep-dish sports steering wheel. For the Chief, the same wheel is padded and covered with leather. Also new for '75 are optional AM/FM stereo and electrically heated tailgate window.

**TEST VEHICLE**/For our test vehicle, we chose the newest of Cherokees—the Chief. It was equipped with a 401 V-8,

air, Turbo Hydra-Matic, and Quadra-Trac with the low-range option; like all Chiefs, it had the big Goodyear "Tracker A/T" tires on 8-in. rims and a 3.54:1 rear axle. It also included the minimum required options—power disc brakes, power steering and fuel tank skid plate. The interior was blue Levi with the extra-cost center armrest.

**OBSERVATIONS**/With a full tank (22 gals.) of gas, but otherwise empty, our Chief tipped the scales at 4560 lbs. Since its GVWR is 6025 lbs., some fast figuring reveals that its payload is 1465 lbs.—or five big guys and 465 lbs. of beef stew and beer. Seating capacity is five, with two in front and three on the rear bench seat. For increased cargo space or room for sleeping, the rear seat folds forward.

The Chief was our first test car to go on the chassis dyno and we weren't quite sure how the Quadra-Trac would react. Lou Cruse increased the engine speed gradually but quickly backed off when a loud bang startled us. With the rear tires spinning on the rollers, the center differential couldn't decide where to send the power—and it objected. Finally, some of the power was sent to the front wheels; consequently, the Chief tried to drive off the dyno. In reply, we raised the front tires off the ground and computed the power loss to the front differential. Quadra-Trac Jeeps were the only vehicles with this particular problem. Their competitors (New Process) kept sending power to the wheels with the least traction—the spinning rear tires—and none to the tires with the most traction—the ones in front. The situation was verified in the dirt: When the Chief got stuck in soft sand, power went to the wheels with the most traction, enabling us to drive out—but the same situation with a Chevy or Dodge sent power to the spinning tires... and the more they spun, the deeper we sank.

**ON-PAVEMENT**/The Chief's on-pavement performance was excellent. The extra-firm seats provide very good back support and, unlike most cars or trucks, a trip of 400 miles required no squirming or repositioning to get comfortable. However, after driving two different Chiefs the same distance, we found that the one with the center armrest was preferable. Without it, your arm is left to hang beside the seat—or resting in the lap, and that gets uncomfortable. The armrest on each door is too skinny and firm to be comfortable for more than 5 miles—so, the left arm joins the right one on the seat. However, those are the only complaints we had. All instruments are in clear view—unobstructed by the steering wheel—and all controls are well within reach. Unlike the other 4X4's, the Chief doesn't sit excessively high; because of this lower CG and progressive springs, the ride is passenger-car

## BOX SCORE

Each of the following factors was rated on a scale of 1 to 10, as: Poor, 1 to 2. Fair, 3 to 4. Good, 5 to 7. Excellent, 8 to 10. An 8-point award, for example, was given if the category warranted better than a GOOD rating, but not the highest of EXCELLENT. Each book staff member compiled his own Box Score; then averages were drawn accordingly. Here's how the Cherokee Chief stacked up.

On-pavement handling/performance.....	8.5
Off-pavement handling/performance.....	8
Maneuverability.....	7
Stability.....	7
Acceleration.....	6.5
Gearing.....	8
Braking.....	8
Hillclimbing ability.....	8.5
Prolonged travel comfort.....	8.5
City travel comfort.....	8.5
Interior access (front seat).....	8
Rear seat access (if applicable).....	7.5
Load space access.....	8
Engine access.....	8
Engine splash shielding.....	8.5
Instrument/controls layout and access.....	8
Visibility.....	8

soft and visibility is very good—without the usual blind spots created in other rigs by high front ends.

Ventilation was provided by adjustable dash vents and good old-fashioned vent windows. The Chief is big, but the optional air conditioning had no trouble cooling the entire interior. Acceleration from the 401 was very good and the front discs gave us plenty of whoa-power. The Chief's extra-wide track and big tires and wheels combined with variable-ratio power steering for quick, accurate maneuvers and very good handling. Off-ramps and back roads were anticipated rather than avoided. Like most power steering systems, this unit was sensitive to the smallest movement, and at freeway speeds it demands some attention to keep it from wandering; on the plus side, it does force the driver's attention and prevents him from becoming too relaxed. In town, the Chief is no different than a passenger car. Its 3½ turns lock-to-lock is sensitive for the highway, but tight parking is a one-handed operation.

**OFF-PAVEMENT**/In the boonies, the Chief took us everywhere—with no hesitation. Bounce was much less than with a higher truck and the firm seats cushioned the shocks of the rougher bumps. The wider track contributed to a better ride than the Wagoneer because the road shocks are distributed over a wider area. At Indian Dunes we engaged the optional low range and locked the center differential before challenging the hills. The steepest hill is a 41° grade of soft dirt—the kind that makes your palms sweat and your knees shake—but the Chief charged to the top without the usual sliding of the other vehicles.

**TRAILER AND RV USE**/Jeep offers two trailer-towing packages for the Cherokee. The first is for trailers weighing up to 3500 lbs., and it includes: heavy-duty cooling system, heavy-duty flasher, wiring harness, and frame-mounted hitch. It requires nothing smaller than the 2-bbl. 360, Turbo with Quadra-Trac, power disc brakes and power steering. For \$100 more (\$199 without air, \$170 with) you can prepare a Cherokee to tow a trailer up to 7000 lbs. This package includes: everything in package "A" plus an equalizing hitch receptacle, an inside spare tire mount, a 70-amp battery, 62-amp alternator, heavy-duty springs and shocks, and the 3.54:1 rear axle.

**SUMMATION**/The Cherokee Chief was unquestionably one of the finest four-wheel-drive vehicles that we tested. We had to search to find the faults that we did. It combines into one attractive package the comfort of a family sedan and the performance and durability of an off-road machine. The Cherokee is definitely a winner. 🐾

### CHEROKEE CHIEF—GENERAL

Curb weight (lbs.)	4560
Payload (lbs.)	1465
Track (ins.) front/rear	66.5/63
Overall length (ins.)	182.5
Overall height (ins.)	71
Overall width (ins.)	75
Overhang (ins.) front/rear	30.5/45.5
Ground clearance (ins.):	
Mid-wheelbase	13
At lowest differential	9
At lowest chassis point/component	13/muffler
Approach angle (degrees)	36
Departure angle (degrees)	20
Floor height (ins.) front door	21
Floor height (ins.) tailgate	26
Tailgate width (ins.)	55
Tailgate height (ins.)	24
Cargo length (ins.) w/rear seat	45
Cargo length (ins.) w/o rear seat (N/A pickups)	67
Cargo width (ins.) extreme	52.5
Cargo width (ins.) between wheelwells	N/A
Cargo height (ins.) (N/A pickups)	41
Steering (turns lock-to-lock)	3.5

### ENGINES

	Displacement (cu. ins.)	Bore (ins.)	Stroke (ins.)	Compression ratio	Net hp @ rpm	Net torque @ rpm
Standard	258 6-cyl. (1-bbl.)	3.75	3.895	8.0:1	100 @ 3500	195 @ 2000
Optional	360 V-8 (2-bbl.)	4.08	3.44	8.25:1	175 @ 4000	285 @ 2400
Optional	360 V-8 (4-bbl.)	4.08	3.44	8.25:1	195 @ 4400	295 @ 2900
Optional	401 V-8 (4-bbl.)	4.165	3.68	8.25:1	215 @ 4200	320 @ 2800

### DRIVETRAIN COMBINATIONS

Engine	Transmission	Transfer case	Axle ratios
258 6-cyl.	3-speed manual Turbo-Hydro	Conventional Quadra-Trac	3.54/4.09
360 V-8 (2-bbl.)	3-speed manual 4-speed manual Turbo-Hydro	Conventional Quadra-Trac	3.07/3.54
360 V-8 (4-bbl.)	4-speed manual Turbo-Hydro	Conventional Quadra-Trac	
401 V-8	Turbo-Hydro	Quadra-Trac	

### CHASSIS

Model	Wheelbase (ins.)	GVW's (lbs.)		Turning circle (ft.)
		Stand.	Opt.	
Std. Cherokee	109	6025	N/A	38.4
Cherokee "S"	109	6025	N/A	38.4
<b>Cherokee Chief</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>6025</b>	N/A	<b>40.9</b>

Brakes		Tire sizes		Steering		Fuel capacity (gals.)	
Stand.	Opt.	Stand.	Opt.	Stand.	Opt.	Stand.	Opt.
Drum	Disc/drum (power)	H78X15	HR78X15	Power	N/A	22	N/A
Drum	<b>Disc/drum (power)</b>	H78X15	HR78X15	<b>Power</b>	N/A	22	N/A
Disc/drum (power)	N/A	<b>10X15</b>	N/A	Power	N/A	22	N/A

### BASE PRICE

(FOB factory. Manufacturer's suggested retail.)

Model	Price
Cherokee	\$4851
Cherokee Chief	\$5500

### TEST VEHICLE PERFORMANCE

Fuel consumption (mpg)—on-pavement	11.7
Fuel consumption (mpg)—off-pavement	4.0
On-pavement acceleration: 0-30 mph (secs.)	4.0
On-pavement acceleration: 0-55 mph (secs.)	12.2
Rear wheel horsepower @ 2500 rpm	91
Rear wheel horsepower @ 3000 rpm	97
Rear wheel horsepower @ 3500 rpm	84
Emissions at idle: 110 HC parts per million; .5% carbon monoxide.	

• Certain equipment, option combinations may not be available in some areas. See your dealer.