

2015 Toyota Highlander: Room for Up to Eight in a Package That's a Perfect Ten

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[2015 Toyota Highlander Product Information](#)

[2015 Toyota Highlander Hybrid Product Information](#)

It's turning heads all over town. What really sets the 2015 Highlander apart from its competitors is a distinct balance of style, comfort, performance and utility. Three powertrain choices stand out, including Hybrid Synergy Drive which delivers 280 total system horsepower and segment-leading fuel economy. The others include a 2.7-liter 4-cylinder and a 270-horsepower 3.5-liter V6. The four and the V6 are both mated with a six-speed automatic transmission.

Built on a 109.8-inch wheelbase and measuring 191.1 inches long – a 3-inch increase over the previous generation — the 2015 Highlander easily slips through urban traffic and into parking spaces. It's a sleek package that is quite roomy, with numbers telling a compelling story.

The Highlander offers up to 158.7 cu. ft. total cabin volume. That includes 13.8 cu. ft. with the third seating row in use — a 34-percent increase over the previous model. With the 60/40 split fold-flat third-row seats down, cargo space expands up to 42.3 cu. ft. and then up to 83.7 cu. ft. with the 60/40 split fold-flat second row lowered.

The seating saga continues with a second row that offers bench seating for three or two captain's chairs featuring a collapsible side tray with cup holders for added convenience. Entering the third-row is easy with a one-step second-row sliding seat function on both driver and passenger sides. Compared to the previous generation Highlander, the feature provides nearly three more inches of space for easier entry and exit to the third-row. Third-row passengers find more comfort than before thanks to an overall interior width increase of 3.7 inches, along with a standard recline function.

If passengers happen to get a little unruly, the driver can use a virtual bullhorn, a feature called Driver Easy Speak (standard on XLE and Limited grades). Using the microphone for the vehicle's voice-command multi-media system, Driver Easy Speak carries the driver's voice through the audio system's rear speakers. You'll be heard without shouting. (Whether you'll be listened to is currently beyond the technology.)

Athletic Look for a Family Hauler

A lower roofline gives the new-generation Highlander a sleeker profile, while projecting wheel arches rev up the character. In front, Highlander's hood merges with a trapezoidal grille, wraparound headlamps and deeply chiseled fenders for a bold, "planted" appearance.

The look turns heads, and the form packages the function. Beneath the chiseled style is more high-strength steel throughout the structure. Where some midsize SUVs sacrifice visibility for style, the next-generation Highlander gained enhanced visibility thanks to repositioned A-pillars and larger rear quarter glass. That's good for the driver, and good for third-row passengers who will enjoy more of the scenery on their family adventures.

The Highlander cabin, more peaceful than ever, results from an extensive effort to reduce noise and vibration. Acoustic-type glass used for the windshield helps keep outside noise where it belongs – outside. There's 30-percent greater silencing insulation coverage in the floor areas over the previous generation, and additional elements that you can't see also help to reduce what you don't want to hear.

Three hydraulic engine mounts, expanded coverage of the dash silencer and enhanced body sealing all help to dampen vibration. A change in the exhaust layout helped the cause, and the available panoramic moonroof was designed to reduce wind noise, even when it's open.

Premium Interior Design, Added Function

Passengers will enjoy the Highlander's exceptional quiet from the comfort of an interior filled with premium

materials, extensive standard equipment, with the latest information technology and a versatile seating arrangement. There's refinement everywhere you look and touch. A soft-touch instrument panel and silver-painted, satin, and chrome-plated accents throughout the interior convey a near-luxury feel.

Seating coverage starts with premium fabric and also includes available smooth or perforated leather. Most models (LE Plus grade and above) feature contrast stitching for the seats, and on the Limited grade, wood-grain pattern trim on the dash and doors adds a touch of elegance to this family vehicle. No detail went untouched. A high quality knit headliner and available second-row sunshades (on XLE and Limited) are reminiscent of a luxury vehicle.

A highlight of the cabin is the massive roll-top center console, which provides a comfortable armrest easily shared by the driver and front passenger. Opened, the console box is roomy enough to hold a large handbag or 60 juice boxes.

In all models, a new LCD Multi-Information Display within the gauge cluster puts vital information in the driver's direct line of sight. A 3.5-inch black and white display screen is standard in the LE and LE Plus grades and 4.2-inch color screen in XLE and Limited. Additional available convenience features include Automatic High Beam Headlights, Dynamic Radar Cruise Control, and Smart Key with pushbutton start.

Even Parents Are Allowed to Have Some Fun Behind the Wheel

The new-generation Highlander is available in three powertrains. The LE front-wheel drive model offers a 185-horsepower 2.7-liter four-cylinder engine equipped with Variable-Valve Timing with intelligence (VVT-i) and paired with a six-speed electronically controlled automatic transmission. EPA-estimated fuel economy is 20 mpg city / 25 mpg highway / 22 mpg combined.

All other grades come with a 3.5-liter V6 equipped with a variable intake manifold and dual Variable-Valve Timing with intelligence (VVT-i), which controls phasing on both the intake and exhaust camshafts to help optimize torque and fuel efficiency. The super-smooth V6 generates 270-horsepower at 6,200 RPM and 248 lb.-ft. of torque at 4,700 RPM. Acceleration and fuel efficiency are enhanced over the previous generation Highlander due to a new six-speed, electronically controlled automatic transmission that offers selectable manual sequential shifting. Fuel economy is EPA-rated at 19 mpg city/25 mpg highway/21 mpg combined on FWD models and 18/24/20 for AWD.

Nobody expects a three-row SUV with seating for eight to act like a sports car, but drivers will appreciate the more agile handling in the new Highlander. A stiffer body structure, enhancements in suspension performance and optimized electric power steering all contribute to a more dynamic character. Rest assured, though, the finely tuned MacPherson strut front suspension and double-wishbone rear suspension provide top-tier ride comfort. Highlander rolls on standard 18-inch alloy wheels with 19-inch alloys standard on the Limited grade.

Dynamic Torque Control All-Wheel Drive (AWD)

Most customers with a midsize three-row SUV don't need to conquer the Rubicon Trail, they just need an all-wheel drive system that can get the vehicle through slippery weather, snow and perhaps the occasional muddy trail. And they don't want to give up fuel economy for that capability.

Highlander's Dynamic Torque Control AWD system fits the bill. This advanced AWD system continuously monitors and controls the torque transfer between the front and rear wheels via an electromagnetically controlled coupling positioned in the rear differential. Dynamic Torque Control uses input from various sensors (vehicle speed, steering speed and angle, throttle angle and yaw rate) to actively govern torque distribution to the rear wheels, as needed.

Front to rear torque distribution can vary from 100:0 to 50:50, with front-wheel drive automatically engaged under normal driving conditions to help reduce fuel consumption. The system automatically shifts to AWD when accelerating to help prevent front wheel slippage, or when sensors detect wheel slippage. An AWD LOCK switch holds the 50:50 torque split for certain low-speed driving situations in challenging conditions. The multi-information display shows the torque-distribution settings.

A sophisticated, high-speed interactive management system coordinates control of the Dynamic Torque Control AWD, Vehicle Stability Control (VSC) and Electric Power Steering systems to enhance performance, handling and safety.

Highlander Hybrid: More Power, Higher Fuel Efficiency

If the Toyota brand has become synonymous with hybrids, that's the result of a successful 15+ year strategy to be the worldwide hybrid leader. Toyota currently offers seven hybrid models (plus another six in the Lexus luxury family), among them the new Highlander Hybrid.

This model's Hybrid Synergy Drive system pairs a 3.5-liter V6 gasoline engine with a high-torque electric drive motor-generator to produce 280 total system horsepower. Its EPA-estimated fuel economy of 27 mpg city/28 mpg highway/28 mpg combined put the Highlander Hybrid at the top of the three-row mid-size SUV class.

The Highlander Hybrid is available exclusively in the Limited grade and is equipped with standard electronic on-demand all-wheel-drive with intelligence (AWD-i).

Grading the New Generation Highlander

The 2015 Highlander starts with the high-value LE grade and progresses to the LE Plus with added equipment, the XLE, and then top-of-range Limited with luxuries like heated and ventilated front seats, heated second-row captain's seats and a heated steering wheel.

For easy ordering, Toyota made the LE and LE Plus grades mono-spec, offered with no option packages. That's no problem with such extensive standard equipment rosters. The LE grade comes standard with the following value features:

- 18-inch alloy wheels
- Entune[®] Audio featuring a 6.1-inch touchscreen display audio
- Bluetooth[®] phone and music streaming; an integrated backup camera
- Seating for eight with second- and third-row 60/40 split fold-flat seats
- Heated side mirrors with turn signal indicators
- Ample storage compartments including a massive roll-top center console;
- An in-dash shelf with easy access to power and USB ports
- A windshield wiper de-icer, and much more.

The LE Plus grade adds:

- Fog lights
- A height-adjustable power rear liftgate with flip-up rear hatch window,
- 8-way power driver seat with lumbar support
- Entune Audio Plus with SiriusXM Satellite Radio and HD radio
- Three-zone automatic climate control
- a leather-wrapped steering wheel and shift knob.

The XLE grade starts to move the Highlander into the luxury arena with:

- Leather-trimmed seats
- Heated front seats
- Smart Key with push button start
- A tilt-slide moonroof
- Chromtec[®] roof rails
- Second-row integrated sun shades
- A 4.2-inch color multi-information display.

The standard Entune Premium Audio with Navigation and App Suite features an 8-inch touch screen display. Additional standard equipment includes an anti-theft system, Homelink[®], and a 5,000-lb. towing capacity. You can spec a Highlander XLE with seating for seven with second-row captain's chairs, and a Blu-ray[®] DVD rear-seat entertainment system is also an option.

A New Height for Highlander Luxury

The Highlander Limited offers a distinct touch of luxury. Outside, it adds 19-inch Chromtec[®] alloy wheels and LED daytime running lights. Inside, ambient lighting around the dash and doors adds a touch of elegance, while numerous amenities raise the comfort quotient considerably. Seating for seven includes perforated leather-trimmed seats, heated and ventilated front seats, a 4-way power passenger seat, memory settings for the driver seat and side mirrors, and second-row captain's chairs.

Advanced technology features include Blind Spot Monitor with Rear Cross-Traffic Alert, rear parking sonar, and Entune Premium JBL[®] Audio with Navigation and App Suite. There are three option packages available to take the Highlander Limited (gas or Hybrid) higher still. One is a Blu-ray DVD rear-seat entertainment system. An available Driver Technology Package adds more safety features, including:

- Safety Connect (Emergency Assistance, Stolen Vehicle Locator, Roadside Assistance and Automatic Collision Notification. Available by subscription.)
- Pre-Collision System with Dynamic Radar Cruise Control
- Lane Departure Alert with Automatic High Beam Headlights

And then, there's the top of the top, the Platinum Package that adds the Driver Technology Package plus a panoramic moonroof, heated steering wheel and heated second-row captain's chairs.

Safety Star

All 2015 Highlanders have eight standard airbags. Like every 2015 Toyota, Highlander features the standard Star Safety System[™], which includes Enhanced Vehicle Stability Control, Traction Control, Electronic Brake-force Distribution, Brake Assist, Anti-lock Braking System, and Smart Stop Technology. All Highlanders also come equipped with a standard backup camera and Hill-start Assist Control.

Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Indiana (TMMI) in Princeton, Ind., which employs over 4,000 American workers, assembles all Highlanders and exports them to 12 countries.

Limited Warranty

Toyota's 36-month/36,000 mile basic new-vehicle warranty applies to all components other than normal wear and maintenance items. Additional 60-month warranties cover the powertrain for 60,000 miles and corrosion with no mileage limitation. The hybrid-related components, including the HV battery, battery control module, hybrid control module and inverter with converter, are covered for eight years/100,000 miles, whichever comes first.

The Highlander also comes standard with Toyota Care, a complimentary plan covering normal factory-scheduled maintenance and 24-hour roadside assistance for two years or 25,000 miles, whichever comes first.