

Toyota 4Runner Icons: First (1984 – 1989) & Second (1990 – 1995) Generations

February 20, 2025

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In celebration of the Toyota 4Runner's 40th anniversary, this five-part series explores the rich history and bright future of the iconic SUV.

Taking inspiration from innovative creations can lead to some of the best designs. The Toyota 4Runner made its debut in 1984, inspired by the Toyota Trekker and based on a Toyota Hilux pick-up. An off-road vehicle was added to the market — and as they say, the rest is history.

First Generation, 1984-1989

With SUVs still in their infancy, the 4Runner was one of the leaders in the space. The name itself signaled the start of a new frontier in mobility. It was a vehicle that combined the versatility of four-wheel drive with the comfort of a passenger car. It originally had only two seats, none in the back, and a fiberglass top over the cargo area that could be removed. Due to its no-frills design, it was initially viewed as nothing more than a simple boxed in pickup truck.



Throughout the first generation's run, the 4Runner had some notable features that distinguished it from similar vehicles in the marketplace.

For example, the rugged adventure friendly SUV featured a detachable rear top, a steel roll bar and a rear window that rolled down – all of which helped set it apart from other vehicles in its class.



Over the years, it added more ground clearance and ride quality with Hi-Trac independent front suspension, an available turbocharged engine on the SR5 models and changes to the headlights and striping.

Second Generation, 1990-1995

During the 1990s, SUVs were becoming more popular, and the 4Runner was a driving force in the SUV evolution. The standard and classic SUV-like shape and appearance known today was prominent throughout this 4Runner generation.



For instance, rear doors made access to the rear seats easier, and the fiberglass removable roof was replaced with a single body design. Like the original iteration, it also offered customers the option to choose from a 4-cylinder or V6 powertrain.



The second generation grabbed the attention of everyday drivers who were curious to see what this new world of SUVs offered. Little did they know that the legendary nameplate was just getting started.