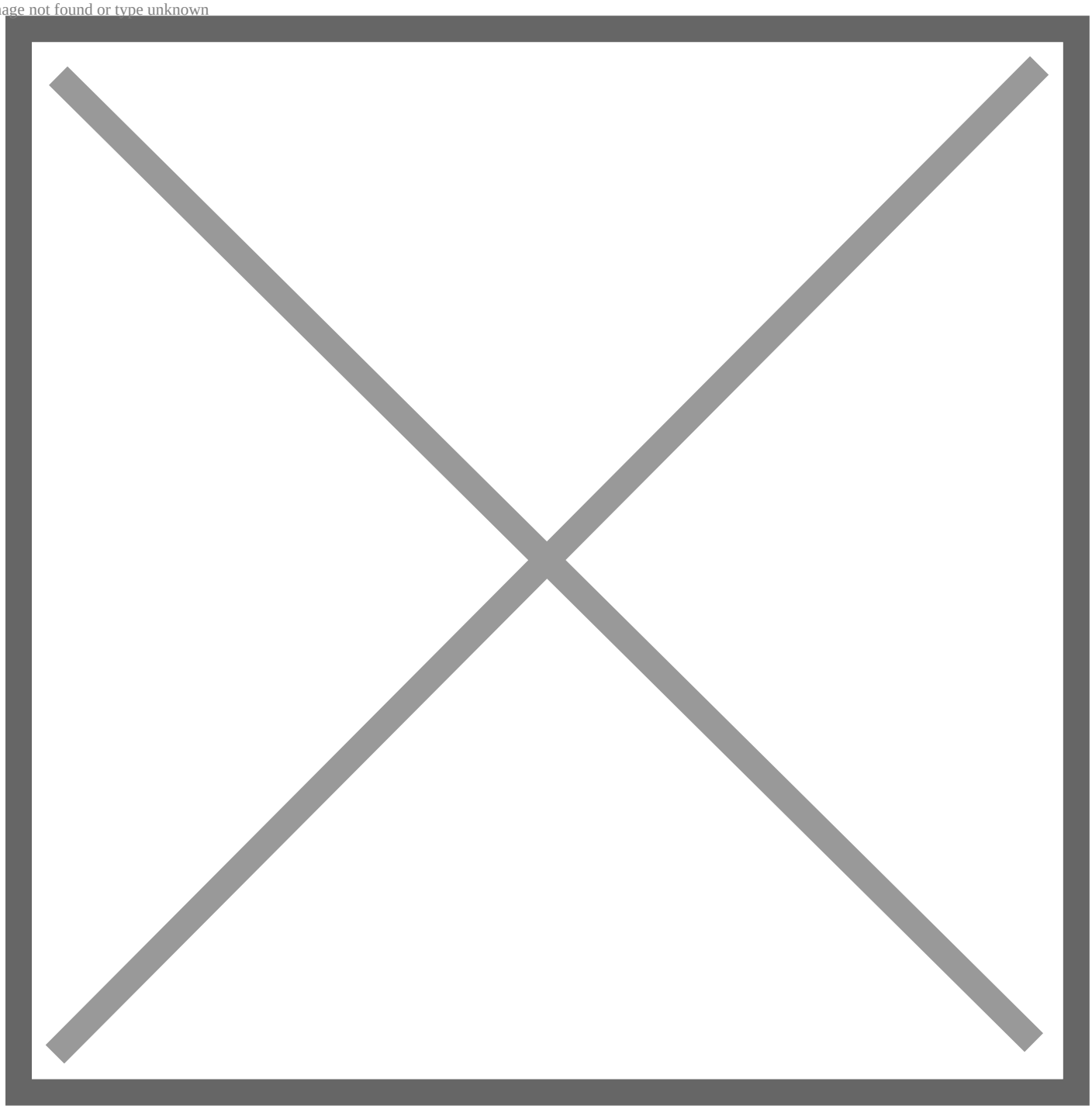
Toyota 4Runner Icons: Third (1996 – 2002) & Fourth (2003 – 2009) Generations

March 06, 2025

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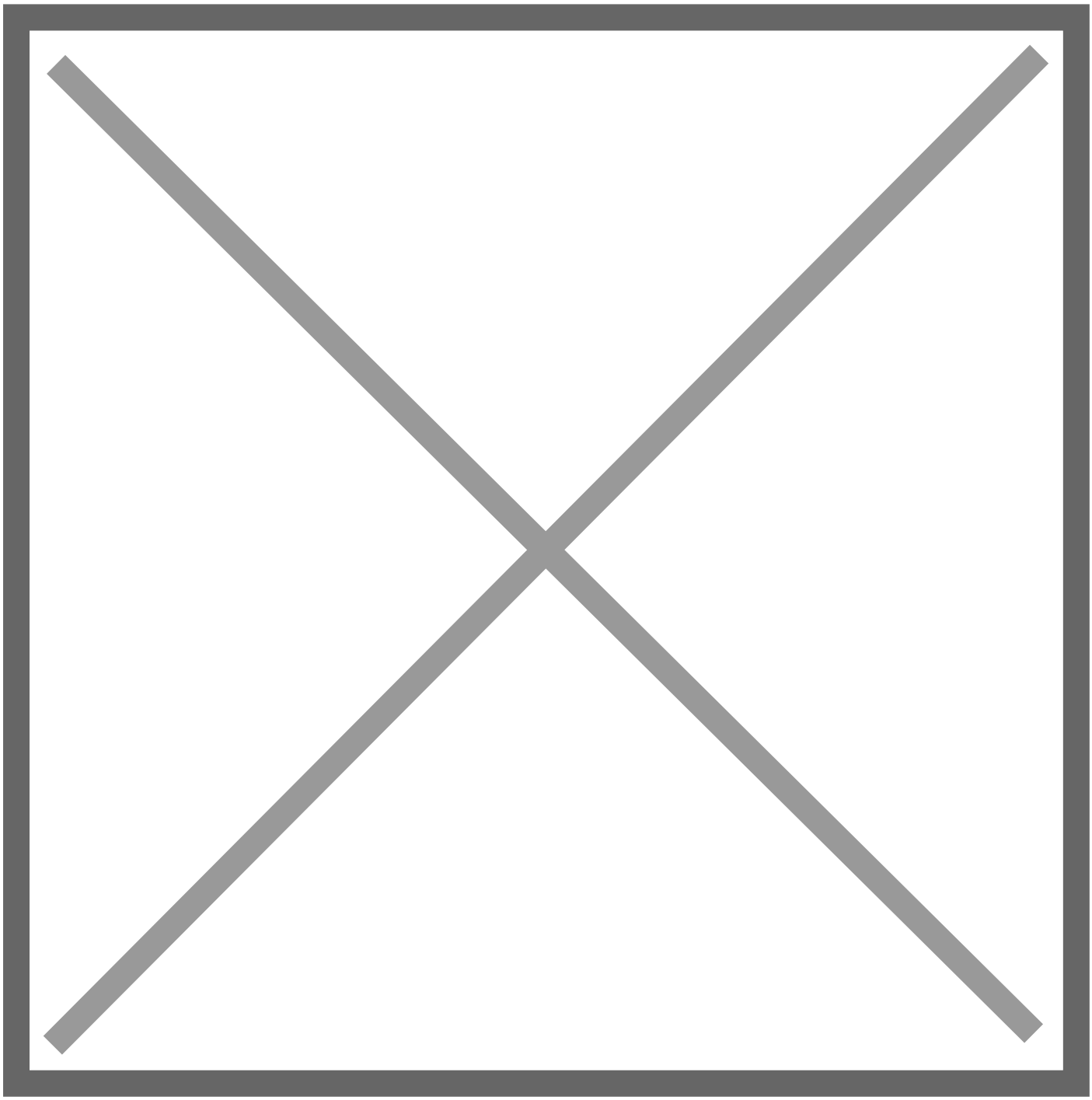


The Toyota 4Runner’s innovation and groundbreaking ability to blend the heft and performance of a truck with the everyday practicality of a sedan made its debut in 1984. The first two generations solidified its reputation as a vehicle for various customers.

That legacy continued to roll with the release of its subsequent models. The mid-1990s established the 4Runner as a reputable force in the emerging SUV space. By the early 2000s, SUVs were ubiquitous across the U.S., and the rugged yet refined vehicle kept customers coming back.

The third- and fourth-generation 4Runners proved that SUVs were here to stay and that their presence in the marketplace was needed.

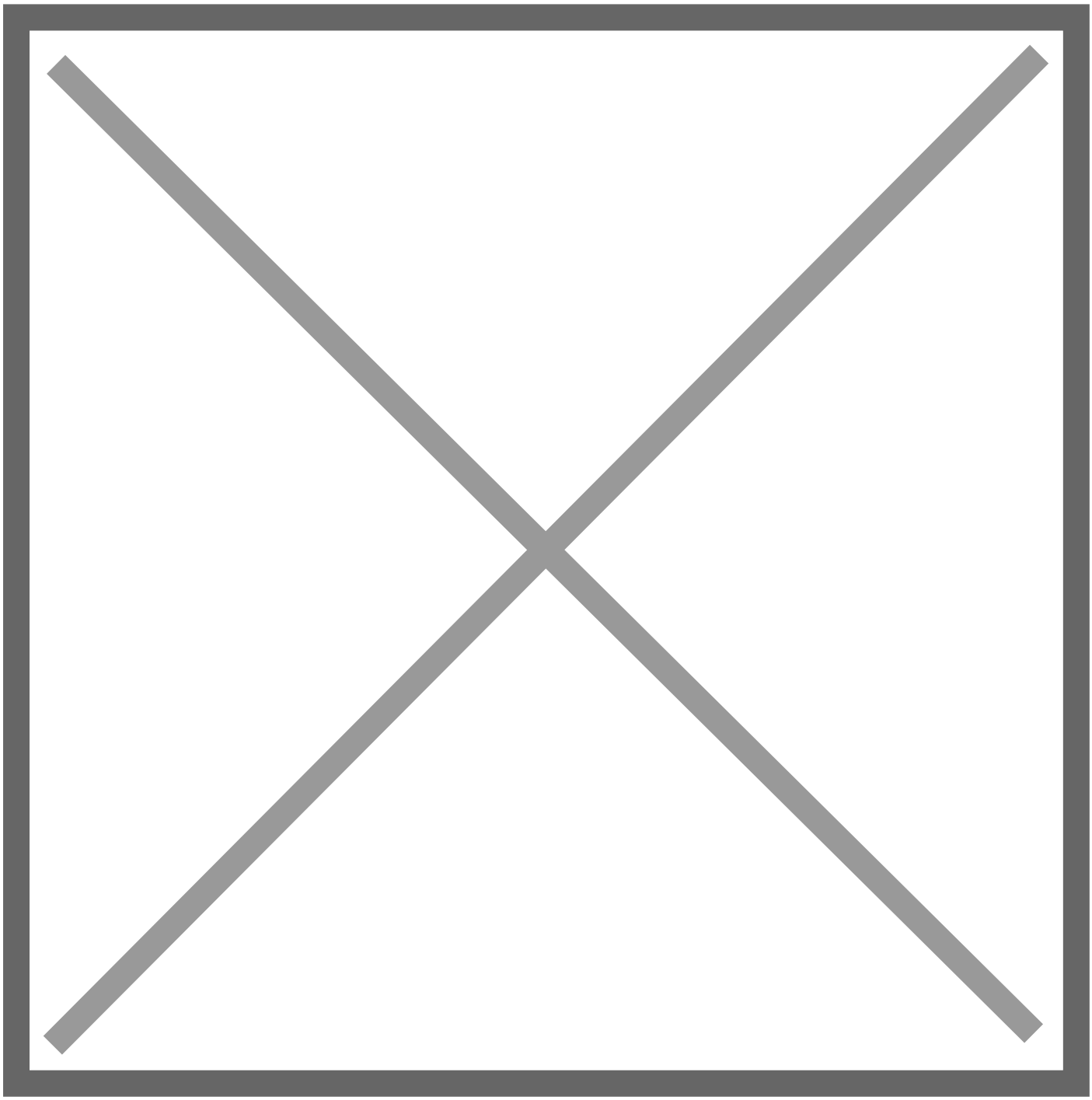
Third Generation, 1996-2002



In 1996, Toyota redesigned the third-generation 4Runner. As part of the redesign, new safety features, engines and chassis were also introduced, as well as an expanded trim-level lineup, which included four new models.

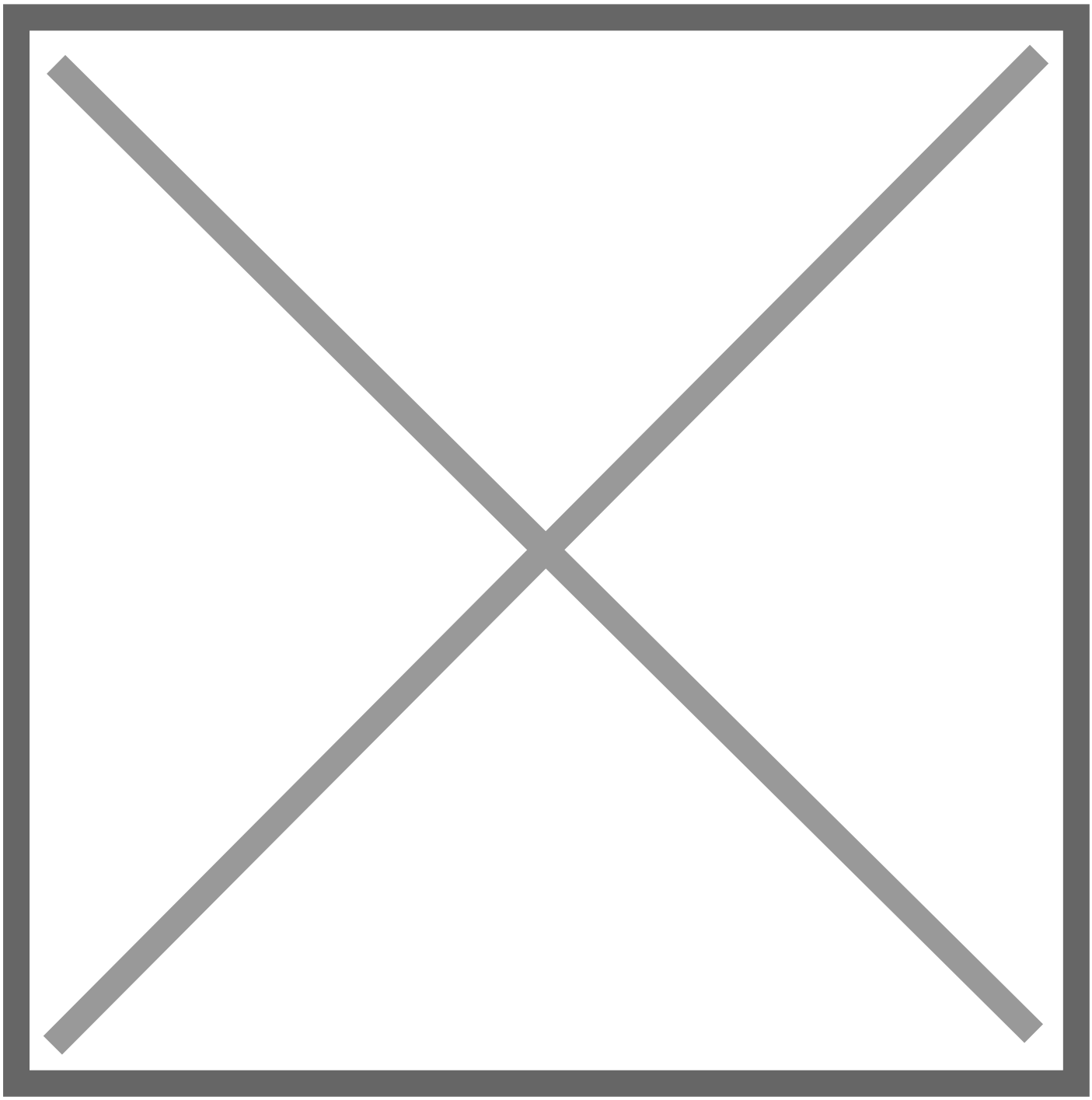
A 2WD four-cylinder model with either a five-speed manual or a four-speed electronic transmission (4ECT) was added, along with a 4WD four cylinder with a 4ECT and a 4WD V6 Limited.

What’s more, the interior cabin was refined to help optimize comfort for driver and passengers and the cargo area was enlarged for increased utility.



Over the next few years, the 4Runner made more feature changes. One of the most notable updates was the addition of Toyota's Vehicle Stability Control (VSC) system in 2001, which relied on electronics to help control the vehicle during a loss of traction.

Fourth Generation, 2003-2009



The new millennium ushered in a new era with the 2003 Toyota 4Runner. While the midsize SUV retained its truck-based roots, it offered a new V8 engine and a new gear mechanism that automatically distributed torque between wheels based on traction. Its look was updated with rounder edges and it was available in a choice of refined trims.

What’s more, in 2004, an optional third row seat became available on the Toyota 4Runner Limited and SR5 models. Additionally, a backup camera became available with a navigation system.

The fourth-generation 4Runner included some technologically advanced features such as a downhill/hill-start assist control. The off-road capabilities made it a favorite for those driving on unpaved surfaces like dirt, gravel, mud, snow, sand or rocks.

Over six years, the fourth-generation Toyota 4Runner allowed drivers to get out and explore.