

Long-Term Verdict: 2005 Land Rover LR3 HSE

One year later, still as masterful as MacGyver



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Arthur St. Antoine - writer; Editors of Motor Trend - photographer | Oct 1, 2006

In fall 2004, [Land Rover](#) replaced its Discovery SUV with the all-new LR3. This was no minor update: The LR3 arrived boasting an all-new platform with a [Jaguar](#)-sourced, 300-horse V-8; a bold, contemporary exterior (the stylists even pulling design cues from mid-century architecture); a thoroughly reworked cabin with true seven-passenger capability; and, perhaps most important, the debut of Land Rover's brilliant Terrain Response system, which allows drivers to automatically configure the vehicle's myriad 4WD systems for different conditions (i.e., mud, snow, sand) simply by twisting a dial. The LR3 proved as impressive in the metal as it looked on paper, winning our 2005 Motor Trend Sport/Utility of the Year award.

In December 2004, we took delivery of a topline LR3 HSE in striking Zambezi Silver. The miles piled up quickly; with its hold-everything interior and Ritz-Carlton refinement, the LR3 proved one of the most popular vehicles in our test fleet. Not that it lived a cushy life: We took our Rover off-roading and camping all over the Western U.S. (with second- and third-row seats folded flat, two adults can sleep inside) and made repeated forays into the alkaline flats and rocky canyons of Death Valley (including one memorable adventure where the outside temperature reached 128 degrees F—which didn't seem to bother the LR3 a bit). The logbook began filling up with words like "benchmark" and "amazing" and "I want one of these." Part of the LR3's appeal is the sense of cool, unflappable confidence it imparts (feeling Hill Descent Control tiptoe down steep

Jaguar Land Rover Ltd.

grades is particularly magical). The LR3 seems ready for anything (and lived up to that again and again during its stay with us). Even when you're just cruising around town, it feels good to know you could tackle Armageddon if you had to. It's like always having MacGyver along for the ride.



The optional rear seats earned generally high marks. Other big SUVs make optimistic claims of offering seven-place seating (the Jeep Commander comes to mind), but the LR3 delivers. Adults can fit in back comfortably. On paved roads, even long drives with seven aboard are possible without catcalls from the rear seats, though third-row passengers do suffer on rough surfaces (once, when riding over a long stretch of washboard, the passengers way back complained that the seats were vibrating so much they started to itch). Fold the second- and third-row seats, and the LR3 provides a whopping 90.3 cubic feet of cargo room, a fact that made it a particular favorite of our intrepid photo and video crews.





With 300 horsepower and 315 pound-feet of torque, the 4.4-liter V-8 has the grunt for effortless city commuting and off-road maneuvering, and it pulls smoothly and without feeling strained (max towing is 7716 pounds). But a performer the LR3 isn't. With nearly three tons to lug around, the V-8 needs a full 9.2 seconds to haul the Rover up to 60 mph. And you can imagine what all that mass does for fuel economy. During its stay with us, which included plenty of Los Angeles stop-and-go and a healthy dose of high-effort off-roading, the LR3 delivered an average of just 13.6 mpg. When we took delivery in December 2004, a typical 18-gallon fill-up cost us \$42.66. A year later, for the same amount of fuel we paid \$53.10--and gas prices have climbed steadily since (the LR3 prefers premium unleaded, thank you). MacGyver doesn't come cheap.

You'd think it a bad marriage to mix hard-core off-roading with the LR3's abundance of sophisticated hardware--including adjustable air suspension and electronics for everything from the throttle to the parking brake. But you'd be wrong. Our LR3 gamely shouldered all we could dish out without complaint or serious injury. Service issues were minor. A scrambled nav screen was fixed with a simple software update (which has since been applied to all new LR3s). A potentially leaky fuel tank in our early production vehicle was replaced under recall. And A/C that occasionally refused to blow cold and an intermittent low-coolant light were repaired under warranty. Our sole out-of-pocket costs went toward a quart of synthetic oil (\$7) and, after 21,000 miles, new front and rear brake pads (\$613.69). After more than a year in which it rarely sat still, the LR3 showed its age only in a few squeaks and rattles that hadn't existed when it was new (well, forensic scientists would undoubtedly also notice all the crumbs, rubber bands, coins, and paper bits that worked their way under the rear seats).

Our long-term LR3 proved that Land Rover's Discovery replacement has the goods to make quick work of almost any driving challenge--and it's built to stand up to the rolling odometer, too. We hated to see our silver superstar leave us. True, the LR3 is expensive to buy and costly to feed, but few other vehicles on the road today are so everlastingly at ease, whether the attire is climbing boots or black tie.

Our Car

Base price	\$49,995
Cold Climate Package	\$1050
Heavy-Duty Package	\$625

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From the logbook

"The clever interior details are class-leading, but I'm still nonplussed by the center stack--too boxy and cluttered. Huge raves for second- and third-row flexibility, and rear visibility is wonderful." - Mark Williams

"A pleasurable vehicle to bounce around town in, yet it holds its own when the road gets curvy. Everywhere it goes, it's comfortable for all of its occupants (this might be the best third-row seat ever built). There's an enormous amount of cargo space. And the nav has topographic lines--cool!"-Brian Vance

2005 Land Rover LR3 HSE

Powertrain/Chassis

Drivetrain layout	Front engine, FWD
Engine type	90* V-8, alum block/heads

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