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# ***THE BIRTH OF THE WRANGLER TJ***

The Jeep Wrangler TJ is one of the most awesome production 4x4s. It is fun to drive, but it's also capable of handling virtually any terrain you may encounter. On the road, it offers car-like handling characteristics, at least when compared to earlier Jeeps. The Jeep Wrangler TJ is most at home, however, when navigating off-road trails and living up to its “Trail Rated” badge.

The Jeep Wrangler TJ was introduced in 1997; one year after the Wrangler YJ was discontinued. The TJ experienced a 10-year production run that included three different engines and eight transmission offerings. The most refined TJs came in the later years, so owners of earlier models may find their TJs to be a bit deficient in engine power and transmission strength. However, the chassis and suspension components remained largely unchanged. The same goes for the interior and exterior, which received minor changes and improvements through the years.

Despite the Wrangler's off-road prowess right out of the box, it does have its limitations when it comes to conquering more extreme trails. Those of you who have traveled off the pavement in your Wrangler have likely experienced these limitations. A stock Wrangler per-



***With ample power and ever-capable off-road ability, the Jeep Wrangler TJ has become a modern-day legend for the brand. (Photo courtesy DaimlerChrysler)***

forms well through a variety of terrain, but if you take on obstacles that are taller than the suspension can flex, you'll probably be looking at some damage. Tire size is typically the first improvement TJ owners make, and upsizing is one of the most common upgrades. Larger tires are often paired with a suspension or body

lift for the correct fit, and engine performance and axle gearing usually follow shortly thereafter. The best part? All of these components and more are abundantly available from a variety of aftermarket parts manufacturers, giving you the choice to build up your Wrangler TJ just about any way you like.

## Jeep History

The first Jeeps were produced in 1941 when the U.S. military recruited automakers to build a “light reconnaissance vehicle” to assist in the war effort. Three companies stepped up to the plate to design and build prototype vehicles to meet the Army’s desired specifications. Requirements included a fold-down windshield, a two-speed transfer case with 4WD, a wheelbase less than 75 inches, and a 600-lb load capacity. Willys-Overland produced what it called the Willys Quad, while Ford Motor Company offered its Pygmy, and the American Bantam Car Manufacturing Company submitted its Model 40 BRC. After extensive testing and a second round of contracts for 1,500 vehicles each, the Army selected the Willys Quad as its choice. It went into production as the Willys MA, and eventually as the Willys MB. Ford also produced a great number of these vehicles, then called the GPW, under license by Willys-Overland. Other military models followed, including the M38 and M38-A1, the latter of



*The release of the Wrangler TJ in 1997 fueled the aftermarket into a parts manufacturing frenzy. Upgrade parts from bumper-to-bumper are available for this model Wrangler.*



*The Jeep Wrangler TJ Unlimited was introduced in 2004. It features a longer wheelbase and more cargo space. A Rubicon Unlimited model was released in 2005. (Photo courtesy DaimlerChrysler)*



*Jeep introduced its most capable vehicle ever with the release of the Wrangler Rubicon in 2003. The rig came equipped with 31-inch Goodyear MT/R tires, 4.11:1 axle gear ratio, a transfer case with a lower 4:1 low-range gear ratio, and front and rear Dana 44 axles outfitted with air-actuated lockers.*