2001 TOYOTA HIGHLANDER

This new vehicle is actually a spinoff of the Lexus RX 300, which itself has the modified platform of a Camry. The Highlander comes in a base model with four cylinders and front-wheel drive and a V6 model with all-wheel drive to round out Toyota's selection of sport utility vehicles.

Although the vehicle is relatively tall, getting in and out is easy in both the front and back. As usual with Toyota products, the seats are very comfortable and equipped with high seatbacks that accommodate passengers of all heights very well. The driver enjoys a very good driving position, but will find space a bit cramped for the left foot if the footrest isn't used.

The rear bench seats three adults of average height in relative comfort for long trips. Naturally, head and leg room is more than generous. The reclining rear seatbacks are split 60/40 and the bench itself folds flat.

Cargo space is good to excellent—even huge when the bench is folded flat. The back of the front bucket seat also folds completely down to make transporting long objects easier. The wide-opening rear door and its not-too-high sill also make loading easier.

Inside

The interior is very well finished, although usually for a Toyota we say excellent—we heard creaking in our vehicle, notably from the glove compartment lid. Soundproofing is very good except in high wind, when the roof rack makes a whining sound.

There is quite a lot of good-sized storage space, but it would be nice to have a bin between the front seats. As it is, there is only a dual cup holder at the base of the driver's seat.

Although the heating system is quiet and efficient, we'd prefer to have the radio controls above the climate controls, so that the eyes stay on the road as much as possible. It's hard to understand why only the driver's power window control is illuminated at night in the Limited model, which carries quite a hefty price tag.

In terms of safety, the Highlander has two front airbags, five adjustable head restraints that lock, anti-lock brakes, excellent visibility, and good headlamps. It does, however, lack side airbags.

Engine and transmission

The 3.0 litre V6 engine generates 220 horsepower and 222 ft.-lb. of torque, so obviously accelerating and passing are a cinch. This smooth and quiet engine provides progressive acceleration and powers the Highlander with great ease at all times. Like the four-cylinder model, it meets LEV (Low Emissions Vehicle) standards. And that's a good thing, because it gets pretty thirsty—during our test drive, it got an average of 14 L/100 km.

The four-speed automatic transmission is always very smooth and has well-spaced gear ratios. The all-wheel drive, which splits torque 50/50 from front to rear on a full time basis, is efficient.
and unobtrusive. The stability control and traction control systems available with the Limited Package work as expected, but cannot be overridden.

**On the road**

The independent suspension is firmly comfortable, but there is some bouncing that borders on hard when going over bumpy surfaces with a light load. At a certain weight, this diminishes. The vehicle handles well, but is a bit sensitive to lateral wind.

The power steering is well calibrated, stable, precise, and quite fast, but does not provide good road feel. On the other hand, the turning circle is short. Our test vehicle's four-wheel disc brakes were a bit short of power, but had good fade resistance.

When we examined the Highlander at the CAA-Quebec Technical Inspection Centre, we found it to be generally very well built. Despite this, it would be preferable if the rear differential ventilation valve were higher and if grime didn't get into the engine compartment so easily.

**Conclusion**

The Highlander was not made to clear off-road paths like a 4Runner, but rather to provide a spacious and slightly taller cabin than that of a car as well as the safety of an all-wheel-drive system on the V6 model. We can almost call this vehicle the new generation of station wagon because its features are so reminiscent of the big turnpike cruisers of yore, except for its higher ground clearance. The models are limited, however; you can't get the V6 with front-wheel drive only, for example, and to have certain luxury equipment you have to get the whole Limited Package (available only with the V6, all-wheel-drive model). So Toyota is not being too flexible.

**FOR**
- Comfort
- Engine
- Smooth transmission
- Space
- Visibility
- Driveability

**AGAINST**
- Lack of storage
- Low radio controls
- Firm ride
- Illumination of some controls
- Lack of flexibility in trim lines
- High cost of Limited trim

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engine:</strong></td>
<td>16-valve, 2.4-litre 4 cylinder; 24-valve, 3.0-litre V6</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Horsepower:</strong></td>
<td>155 h.p. @ 5,600 rpm; 220 h.p. @ 5,800 rpm</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Torque:</strong></td>
<td>163 lb.-ft. @ 4,000 rpm; 222 lb.-ft. @ 4,400 rpm</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Transmission:</strong></td>
<td>4-speed automatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brakes:</strong></td>
<td>4-wheel disc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length:</strong></td>
<td>468.5 cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Width:</strong></td>
<td>182.5 cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Height:</strong></td>
<td>173.5 cm (AWD: 174.5 cm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wheelbase:</strong></td>
<td>271.5 cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weight:</strong></td>
<td>1,580 to 1,760 kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Air bags:</strong></td>
<td>standard dual</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tires:</strong></td>
<td>P215/70R16</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Towing capacity:</strong></td>
<td>680 kg (V6: 1,587 kg)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Air bags:</strong></td>
<td>standard dual</td>
</tr>
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Fuel consumption with V6 engine:
- Transport Canada rating: city: 13 L/100 km (22 mpg); highway: 9.7 L/100 km (29 mpg)
- Test result: 14 L/100 (20 mpg)

Fuel tank capacity: 75 litres

Acceleration: 0-100 km/h : 8.5 seconds 60-100 km/h : 6.2 seconds

Competition: Acura MDX, Oldsmobile Bravada, Subaru Outback, Volkswagen Passat Wagon, Volvo V70

Maintenance (amount may vary from dealer to dealer):
Frequency: 6 months/8,000 km; total to 100,000 km: $895

Warranty:
- Full basic coverage: 3 years/60,000 km
- Powertrain: 5 years/100,000 km
- Surface corrosion: 3 years/60,000
- Perforation damage: 5 years/unlimited mileage
- Emissions control system: 3 years/60,000 km (full coverage); 8 years/130,000 km (catalytic converter, electronic control module and onboard diagnostic device)

Factory replacement parts:
Rear bumper: $842  Front brake disk: $105
Brake pads: $84  Muffler: $253
Front fender: $312

Average insurance premium (Quebec City, replacement cost endorsement, claim-free insurance record, female driver or male driver 30 to 40 years old): $686 to $1,796

Price according to trim line:
Base model: 31,900; V6: $36,100
Main options: Limited package: $9,200

Freight and preparation: $875
Dealers: Quebec: 71; Canada: 251

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