

Lyons on Wheels

by Dan Lyons • *Special to The Daily Gazette*

2024 Jeep Wrangler 4-Door Rubicon 392 Final Edition 4x4

MSRP: \$50,695 (Wrangler 4xe) As Tested: \$108,475 (Rubicon 392 Final Edition 4x4)



Jeep launched the first, four door Wranglers in 2007, and they promptly pushed the two door versions out of the showroom. Adding two doors (and a skosh more room) made the Wranglers a tad more civilized. With that, the Jeep's buyer base expanded substantially, to include not only off-roaders, but others who just like the Wrangler's rugged vibe. The attitude wore well with American car buyers, and Wrangler's visibility increased in canyons - wilderness and urban.

Wrangler Rubicon 392 is something else again. The limited production variant of Wrangler shoe-horns the vaunted Hemi V-8, into the hardest core version of the sawed-off SUV. The result is a specialty version of a specialty vehicle: a muscle car motor in a trail bashing platform.

As the name suggests, the Rubicon 392 is powered by a 392 cubic-inch (6.4L) Hemi V-8. Rated at 470 horsepower and 470 lb.-ft. of torque, the Uber Ute reaches sixty from a standstill in the low four second range, and turns the quarter mile in under 13 seconds. Impressively strong, the engine's fuel economy is predictably weak. EPA estimates are 13/16/14, and I average 12 mpg's in a week behind the wheel. The Hemi's sound track is pure muscle car, and the driver sets the volume. The dual-mode active exhaust system has two settings: One is a muted rumble, for keeping the neighborhood peace, and the other is the Call of the Wild.

Like all Rubicons, the 392 variant is heavily equipped for off-road activities. The laundry list of gear includes two-speed transfer case, full-time 4WD, Dana 44 axles, electronic locking differentials and sway-bar disconnect, factory 2-inch lift, upgraded frame rails, heavy duty shocks, frame rails and beadlock-capable wheels shod with 35-inch, all-terrain tires. A 48:1 crawl ratio allows the driver to traverse steep grades at engine idle speeds. The cold-air intake



Photos are courtesy of Dan Lyons.



hood includes a water separator (keeping up to 15 gallons per minute away from the engine's incoming air). Angles of approach/departure/breakover are 46.7/39.8/24.5 degrees respectively, and ground clearance is 11.1". An 8,000 pound capacity Warn winch is factory installed as are heavy duty rock sliders and a triple loop grille guard. The Wrangler's water fording capability is rated at 34.5".

It's safe to say that the 392 Rubicon is far more at home off road than on. The torque from the engine is bottomless, and that serves the driver well on or off pavement. But, a live axle suspension, recirculating ball steering, short wheelbase and tall ride height aren't the ingredients you'd select for a corner carving vehicle. Handling on the road is not what you'd call agile, and - with the beefy tires - braking from speed takes longer than you'd like. None of this is a surprise; the 392 Rubicon is all about extremes.

2024 was to have been the final edition of the 392 Wrangler. Stellantis had said that 3,700 of the 2024 Final Editions would be produced worldwide. They've since announced that, due to popular demand, the 392 Final Edition would continue in 2025. Prices and production numbers for the 2025 versions have not yet been announced.

Car & Driver called the Wrangler 392, "a rocket-propelled basset hound." While I love that visual, I think of it more as a Hemi with hiking boots. Introduced in 2021, the combination of stout, off road capability with rumbly, muscle car power makes the 392 a specialty piece. Ditto and more so, given the six figure price tag. We'll see Wranglers in the future, but none that will sound and feel like these do.

A 40 year resident of the Capital District, Dan Lyons is the author of six automotive books, and photographer of more than 200 calendars.