

A disabled person's view of the benefits of owning a JDM

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My wife and I are owners of two right hand drive Toyota Land Cruisers, a 1989 BJ74 and a 1991 HDJ81. We purchased the BJ74 model in 2004 primarily as a daily driver. It is also used as an occasional back-road vehicle as my wife and I are avid outdoor enthusiasts despite my disability. I have a degenerative muscle condition known as Inclusion Body Myositis that has slowly progressed since 1985. We purchased another Land Cruiser, a larger HDJ81 model, in 2006. My wife trains staff in the rural communities of Alberta and uses the HDJ81 primarily as a highway vehicle.

The BJ74 is well suited for someone with disabilities for several reasons. Its reputation for ruggedness and reliability as a 4-wheel drive vehicle is a very important factor. Breakdowns, stalls and adverse road conditions are more than just a minor inconvenience to me; they could be extremely hazardous. Finding myself stuck on the side of the road could lead to a very long, cold, wait for help, especially on back roads. Travel within the city is also difficult in the winter months and is made easier by my vehicle choice.

The seat height of this vehicle allows for easy access as my condition makes it very difficult for me to get up from low seating positions. I've also found that the seats are very comfortable when driving for long distances.

My wife and I have taken this vehicle to Nevada twice since we have owned it. The heavy-duty suspension allowed me to install a scooter lift last September. Due to this I can transport my scooter everywhere I travel, as I have not been able to get out of my wheelchair unassisted for the last two years. The scooter and lift has provided me with much greater freedom in my daily living.

Another important factor for someone with disabilities is the fact that I exit on the curbside due to the right hand drive nature of this vehicle. Therefore, my safety is enhanced when I have to extract my scooter from the back of the vehicle. This is especially important during the winter months, as then I do not worry about slipping into traffic. A fall in cold weather leaves me susceptible to further injuries and possible hospitalization, as I am unable to get up on my own in the event of a fall. Offhand, I can't think of any other vehicle better suited for my needs.

Although the HDJ 81 was purchased for my wife's use it still provides all the advantages of the BJ74 except for the scooter lift. However, with the use of a ramp my scooter can be carried in the back of this vehicle when necessary.

This vehicle is also large enough to pull a camping trailer that we hope to purchase in the near future. Since our travel is so difficult for me this will allow for more extensive travel we desire to do.

My wife and I are aware that she has to be much more cautious when passing on two lane highways but this is offset by the numerous safety advantages of driving on the right side. She has found the biggest advantage is night driving. It is no longer necessary to look into the oncoming lights because sitting on the right side makes it easier for her to focus on the white line down the right side of the road. In the past, my wife would not drive at night but now has no problem whatsoever.

We have also found it easier to judge objects along the side of the road such as pedestrians, parked cars, bicyclists, etc. It naturally forces her to drive further away from the centerline, which allows oncoming cars to pass more safely. We are sure that the BJ74 and HDJ81 will be our last vehicles purchased. Both these vehicles are low mileage, in excellent mechanical condition and should serve our needs well into our retirement years.

Regards,
Doug Johnson