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LIFE & WORKCARS RUMBLE SEAT

2023 Ineos Grenadier Fieldmaster: King of the Off Road

Designed as a utility-first 4x4, the Grenadier is made for the toughest terrain—in ways that compromise performance on asphalt, writes Dan Neil.



EXPLORER'S CLUB The Ineos Grenadier has been engineered for extreme durability, exploiting traditional technologies such as ladder frames, beam axles, recirculating-ball steering and progressive-rate springs that other manufacturers have abandoned in the quest for better road manners.

PHOTO: INEOS

By *Dan Neil* [Follow](#)

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BUILDING a stump-jumping, wall-crawling 4x4 from scratch isn't hard, if you start with Sir Jim Ratcliffe's kind of scratch.

The British petrochemical billionaire, 70, grew up loving Land Rover Defenders of the latter 20th century. When, in 2016, Land Rover replaced the Tonka-like Defender with a model more luxury-focused and commensurately less utilitarian, Sir Jim didn't like it, not one bit.

After attempting to acquire the old Defender's tooling from Jaguar Land Rover and being denied, Sir Jim and two billionaire buddies formed Ineos Automotive in 2017. They named the debut product Grenadier. It's quite the regimental soldier, if you get my drift.

If the names sound familiar it probably means you're posh. Sir Jim, one of the richest people in the UK, owns FC Lausanne-Sport in Switzerland. The company also has a presence in F1. According to the comms staff, Ineos is derived from the Latin *ineo* (new beginning) and the Greek *neos* (something new). The Greek goddess of dawn, Eos, is also in there somewhere, making it an orgy.

The first media drive for the production Grenadier was held last month in the snow-swept Scottish Highlands, where rates were reasonable due to the threat of White Walkers. At a crack-of-dawn press briefing, Ineos execs said the company would bring the Grenadier to major global markets, including the U.S., by the end of the year. Production at Hambach, France, has begun in earnest. Execs have a soft expectation of 17,000 units annually, with one shift, and up to 34,000 with two shifts working.

The Grenadier's frame is so stout an elephant could ride on the roof, a la Mitt Romney's dog.

Then they said something that, had I not been sitting down, would have blown my kilt over my head like Marilyn Monroe's dress. In the U.K., the base model starts at 49,000 GBP—about \$60,000. The schoolboy-fantasy Fieldmaster I was using for the day retails for 73,000 GBP, or \$87,700 in real money. The company stresses that U.S. prices have not been set, but anything close to those numbers is practically grand-theft auto.

How? I wondered impertinently—and still do. How could this beyond-niche start-up, with manufacturing in France, compete on price with mass-market off-roaders like Jeep Wrangler Rubicon, Ford Bronco and even the current Defender? Where the hell is the margin? I'm sorry. Did I just shout that out loud?

I mean, look at all the blue-chip suppliers and top-shelf components wrapped up in this project. Under the clamshell hood is a 3.0-liter inline-six gas engine (sans hybrid electrics), re-tuned by supplier BMW to lower peak revs and broaden the torque curve. The remapped eight-speed automatic transmission comes in a box from ZF, in Germany. Downstream, the drive assembly has been curated for extreme gnarliness: a manually engaged two-speed transfer case from Tremec; front and rear beam axles from farm-equipment maker Carraro; and one or three locking differentials (Eaton), depending on option package. *Ungawa!*



CLEARED FOR LANDING The aviation-inspired cockpit of the Ineos Grenadier is highlighted by broad backlit control panels in the center-stack and overhead, comprising a mosaic of smaller screw-in panels with dedicated switches. The controls to prepare for off-roading—including one marked “Off-Road”—are arrayed in the overhead console. The lower panel, seen here, hosts the comfort and climate functions.

PHOTO: INEOS

The chassis is likewise full-on rescue ranger, with high-steeping coil-spring suspension (23 inches of wheel travel); recirculating-ball steering; and a steel ladder frame so stout that an elephant could ride on the roof, a la Mitt Romney's dog.

Dressed in cold-rolled steel panels that were styled with a T-square, the Grenadier bears a strange, equal-parts resemblance to both the classic Defender and Mercedes-Benz Geländewagen. The horizontal roof can feature Defender-style safari windows or, in their place, cargo rails with power outlets activated from the overhead switch panel.

The Grenadier's emotional centerpiece is its aviation-style flight deck, presenting pilot and co-pilot with banks of heavy switches, backlit in flat panels in the center-stack and overhead. I've always wanted to be a Forest Service chopper pilot.

Despite the luddite ethos—the parking/emergency brake is lever operated—there is plenty of tech aboard, some of it playing key roles in the experience. Rather than a traditional instrument display ahead of the steering wheel, the Grenadier has a small panel for warning and status icons, for things like headlamps and the 4x4 system. The speed and tach readouts live in the 12.3-inch display, atop the center-stack of switches. How very not old-school.

The infotainment display answers to a multi-function rotary selector between the seats—right where a forest ranger would want to put his or her growler of black coffee. Lacking a standard navigation system, the Grenadier will instead rely on users' wirelessly connected handheld devices. It's fiddly. The Android device assigned to the test car was

having reception problems having to do with all the dragon activity in this part of the woods. I eventually resorted to a paper map.

Off tarmac, the Grenadier is a bonny, boxy billy goat. With the transfer case in low range, with axles locked, it can crawl up, over and down damn near anything at an ant's pace, just over 1 mph. The short, skid plate-protected overhangs and close-coupled wheelbase give Grenadier superheroic powers of up-and-over.



FIELD AND STREAM The Ineos Grenadier has an impressive tale of the tape: 10.4 inches of ground clearance, a maximum wading depth of 35 inches (with snorkel option); a maximum side tilt angle of 45 degrees; a whopping 23 inches of wheel travel, with nine degrees of front axle articulation and 12 degrees across the rear axle. Inside, everything below the dash is washable with a hose. The floors have drains.

PHOTO: INEOS

Also, through: With the optional snorkel intake it has a wading depth of 35 inches. The Grenadier can tilt sideways up to 45 degrees before rolling over—*Oh no, the dog!*

It's on asphalt where the compromises take their toll. The tractor-ish recirculating-ball steering system, necessary to cope with the extreme front-axle articulation, is quite vague and wandering on-center, with an imprecision that gets more pronounced as inputs and momenta rise. With 5,875 pounds fetched up 10 inches on live axles, progressive-rate springs and big winter tires, the Grenadier's body motions are non-trivial.

The freshman class has a few issues. For some crazy reason, the windshield wipers don't clean the lower corners of the windshield. That won't be easy to remedy.

In the overhead panel, the switches for the (optional) front and rear locking diffs can be elusive. The system relies on wheel-speed sensors to detect the status of the diffs. This means the vehicle, or at least the wheels, need to be moving to detect, or not, a difference in wheel speeds. Only then will the diff-lock buttons overhead go from flashing amber to solid. Whether you take the high road or the low road, the diff-lock switchgear is awful, worse than bagpipe music.

But at these prices, I think I could get used to it.

2023 Ineos Grenadier Fieldmaster



DEFENDER PRETENDER Inspired by a bygone generation of rugged 4x4s, including the Land Rover Defender, Mercedes-Benz G-Class and Toyota Land Cruiser, the Ineos Grenadier's styling shares elements of each. In 2020, Jaguar Land Rover lost a case claiming the Grenadier's design infringed on its intellectual property.

PHOTO: CHRISTIAN RIEFENBERG/BEADYEYE

Base price: \$60,000

Price, as tested: \$87,700

Power and drivetrain: Naturally aspirated 3.0-liter DOHC inline six-cylinder; eight-speed automatic transmission; manually engaged dual-speed transfer case (2.5:1 low range ratio); locking center, rear and front differentials

Power/torque: 282 hp at 4,750 rpm; 332 lb-ft from 1,750-4,000 rpm

Length/wheelbase/width/height: 191.2/115.0/84.5/80.2 inches

Curb weight: 5,875 pounds

0-60 mph: 8.6 seconds

Cargo capacity: 44.3 cubic feet

Corrections & Amplifications

The Ineos Grenadier Fieldmaster has a turbo engine. An earlier version of this article incorrectly said that the engine is not turbo. (Corrected on Feb 17)

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