GENERAL

2004 ford explorer xlt

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Discover the 2004 Ford Explorer XLT: A Classic SUV Revisited

The 2004 Ford Explorer XLT is more than just a name on a car catalog; it's a symbol of rugged versatility, family-friendly design, and dependable performance that has stood the test of time. Whether you're a seasoned Explorer enthusiast or a first-time buyer looking for a dependable SUV, this article offers an in-depth look at what makes the 2004 Explorer XLT a standout in its generation.

From its bold exterior styling to its well-appointed interior, the Explorer XLT balances practicality with comfort. Inside, you'll find a thoughtfully designed cabin that caters to both daily commutes and weekend adventures. Under the hood, a robust engine lineup delivers ample power, while advanced safety features help keep you and your loved ones protected on every journey.

With over a decade of real-world usage, the 2004 Explorer XLT has proven its reliability and value. In this guide, we'll walk you through its key specifications, highlight its strengths and potential pitfalls, and provide expert maintenance advice to keep your vehicle in top shape. By the end of this article, you'll have a comprehensive understanding of why the 2004 Ford Explorer XLT remains a sought-after choice in the used SUV market.

Exterior Design and Styling

The 2004 Explorer XLT carries forward Ford's iconic SUV silhouette while introducing subtle refinements that enhance both aesthetics and functionality. The vehicle's bold grille, chrome accents, and muscular headlamps create an imposing presence on the road. The XLT trim level adds a touch of sophistication with chrome door handles, a rear spoiler, and unique 17 inch alloy wheels that give the SUV a more refined stance.

Underneath the exterior, the Explorer XLT boasts a generous 5.4 liter V8 engine bay, which is both a performance powerhouse and a visual statement. The spacious front fascia provides ample headroom, while the rear hatch offers versatile cargo space that can be expanded by folding down the third row seats. The overall design prioritizes practicality without sacrificing style.

Interior Comfort and Features

Step inside the 2004 Explorer XLT and you'll find a cabin that feels both modern and inviting. The interior features high quality materials, soft-touch surfaces, and a layout that emphasizes ergonomics.

Seating and Space

The Explorer XLT offers three rows of seating, accommodating up to eight passengers. The front seats are power adjustable with lumbar support, and the second row seats are split folding to allow for flexible cargo arrangements. The third row, while compact, is surprisingly spacious for children and small adults.

Infotainment and Connectivity

Equipped with a standard CD player, an AM/FM radio, and a 7 inch display, the 2004 Explorer XLT provides a solid entertainment platform. While it doesn't offer the latest smartphone integration, the available options are reliable and easy to use. For those who value modern connectivity, aftermarket upgrades are readily available.

Convenience Features

- Power windows and locks for all seats.
- Dual zone automatic climate control.
- Remote keyless entry.
- Integrated power folding third row seats.
- Rear view camera (optional).

Engine and Performance

The heart of the 2004 Explorer XLT is its 5.4 liter V8 engine, producing 260 horsepower and 330 lb ft of torque. Paired with a 4 speed automatic transmission, this powertrain delivers smooth acceleration and dependable towing capability.

Power Delivery

On the highway, the Explorer XLT maintains a steady pace, comfortably passing slower traffic. The V8 engine's torque curve is designed to provide instant response at lower RPMs, making it ideal for city driving and quick acceleration off the line.

Towing and Payload

With a maximum towing capacity of 6,500 pounds, the Explorer XLT can haul a variety of trailers, boats, and recreational equipment. Its payload capacity of 1,800 pounds ensures that you can transport heavy gear without compromising performance.

Transmission and Drivetrain

The 4 speed automatic transmission is robust and well-suited for the Explorer's power demands. The vehicle offers both front wheel drive (FWD) and four wheel drive (4WD) configurations, with the 4WD variant providing additional traction for off road adventures and challenging weather conditions.

Fuel Efficiency and Economy

While the 2004 Explorer XLT prioritizes power, it still offers respectable fuel economy for its class. EPA estimates place the vehicle at approximately 15 mpg in the city and 18 mpg on the highway. These figures reflect the balance between performance and efficiency, making the Explorer a practical choice for families and long haul drivers alike.

Tips for Improving Fuel Economy

1. Maintain proper tire pressure to reduce rolling resistance.
2. Use recommended engine oil to ensure optimal combustion.
3. Plan routes to avoid excessive idling and stop and go traffic.
4. Keep the vehicle's weight to a minimum by removing unnecessary items.

Safety Features and Ratings

Safety is a top priority in the 2004 Explorer XLT. The vehicle comes equipped with a suite of features designed to protect occupants and reduce the risk of accidents.

Airbags and Restraint Systems

The Explorer XLT includes dual front airbags, side air airbags for front occupants, and a driver's seat belt pretensioner. These systems work together to mitigate impact forces during collisions.

Structural Integrity

Built on a sturdy steel frame, the Explorer XLT offers excellent crash protection. The vehicle’s reinforced pillars and crumple zones help absorb impact energy, preserving the safety of passengers.

Advanced Safety Technologies

Optional features such as electronic stability control, anti lock brakes, and a rear view camera enhance the vehicle’s safety profile. While not all models include these options, they are available for buyers seeking added peace of mind.

Reliability and Common Issues

Over the years, the 2004 Ford Explorer XLT has earned a reputation for reliability, but like any vehicle, it has its share of common issues.

Engine and Transmission Concerns

Owners report occasional problems with the 4 speed automatic transmission, such as rough shifting or delayed engagement. Regular fluid changes and timely maintenance can mitigate these issues.

Electrical System

Some vehicles experience intermittent electrical faults, including malfunctioning dashboard lights and power window issues. A thorough electrical system diagnostic can identify and resolve these problems early.

Suspension and Steering

Wear and tear on suspension components can lead to uneven tire wear and compromised handling. Inspecting shocks, struts, and steering linkages during routine maintenance helps maintain a smooth ride.

Rust and Corrosion

Given its age, certain areas of the Explorer XLT, especially the wheel arches and undercarriage, may develop rust. Prompt rust treatment and protective coatings can prevent further deterioration.

Maintenance and Ownership Tips

Proper care extends the life of your 2004 Explorer XLT. Below are essential maintenance tasks and tips for keeping your SUV in peak condition.

Regular Oil Changes

Change engine oil every 3,000 to 5,000 miles, or as specified by the manufacturer, to ensure smooth engine operation.

Tire Care

- Rotate tires every 7,500 miles to promote even wear.
- Inspect tires for punctures and maintain recommended pressure.

Brake System

Check brake pads and rotors annually. Replace pads when thickness drops below 3 /mm.

Transmission Fluid

Replace automatic transmission fluid every 30,000 miles to prevent shifting issues.

Cooling System

Flush the coolant system every 50,000 miles and replace the radiator cap to avoid overheating.

Interior and Exterior Care

- Wash the exterior regularly to prevent paint oxidation.
- Condition leather seats to maintain softness and prevent cracking.

2004 Explorer XLT vs. Other Models

When comparing the 2004 Explorer XLT to other trims and generations, several key differences emerge.

XLT vs. XL

The XL trim is a more budget friendly option, offering fewer luxury features such as power seats, premium audio, and advanced safety options. However, the XL retains the core functionality and towing capacity of the Explorer.

2004 vs. 2005 Explorer

The 2005 model introduced a new engine layout and updated styling. While the 2005 Explorer offers improved fuel economy and a refreshed interior, the 2004 XLT remains a strong performer with its proven V8 engine.

2004 Explorer XLT vs. Competing SUVs

Compared to rivals like the Chevrolet Tahoe and Dodge Durango, the Explorer XLT offers a more balanced mix of performance, comfort, and value. Its towing capacity and spacious cabin give it a competitive edge in the midsize SUV segment.

Where to Buy and Current Market Trends

Finding a well maintained 2004 Explorer XLT involves exploring both private sales and dealership inventories. Here are some tips for purchasing:

1. Check reputable used car websites for listings that include vehicle history reports.
2. Inspect the vehicle in person, focusing on the engine, transmission, and exterior condition.
3. Ask for service records to gauge how well the car has been maintained.
4. Negotiate based on market value and any identified issues.

As of 2026, the average price for a 2004 Explorer XLT in good condition ranges from $7,000 to $10,000, depending on mileage, trim level, and overall condition. The demand for this model remains strong due to its durability and versatile design.

Conclusion

The 2004 Ford Explorer XLT is a testament to Ford’s commitment to building vehicles that combine power, practicality, and comfort. Its robust V8 engine, spacious interior, and solid safety features make it an excellent choice for families, adventure seekers, and anyone looking for a dependable SUV.

While the vehicle’s age may introduce some maintenance considerations, a diligent owner can keep the Explorer XLT running smoothly for many more years. Whether you’re in the market for a used SUV or simply curious about the legacy of the Explorer, this model remains a standout example of reliable performance and thoughtful design.

By understanding its strengths, addressing common maintenance concerns, and choosing a well maintained vehicle, you can enjoy the many benefits that the 2004 Ford Explorer XLT has to offer.

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