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The opening pages of

1988 Jeep Grand Wagoneer Restoration Guide

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RESTORATION ESSENTIALS

1988 Jeep Grand Wagoneer

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

RestorationEssentials single-year guide · Model year 1988 only · Grand Wagoneer (SJ), Toledo-built

KEY FACTS AT A GLANCE

- **Model year covered:** 1988 only. This guide does not cover other years except where differences from 1988 are explicitly noted.
- **Engine:** 360 cu in (5.9L) V8 — 144 hp in the documented 1988–89 specification (range guide); 140 hp / 280 lb-ft general rating (Hagerty)
- **Transmission:** TorqueFlite 727 automatic; Selec-Trac.
- **Transfer case:** Selec-Trac (NP228 / NP229 by specification).
- **Axles:** Dana 44 front and rear (Hagerty).

1. Manufacturer history: Jeep

The SJ Wagoneer ran from 1963 to 1991 without a major body-panel change — Brooks Stevens' box outlived the company that designed it. For 1984 the Wagoneer and Cherokee names moved to the new downsized XJ platform, and demand for the big SJ kept it in production under a new name: Grand Wagoneer — the renamed flagship, carrying the specification that had defined the earlier Limited. Chrysler bought AMC in 1987 and, wisely, changed almost nothing but the build quality. In total 101,637 Grand Wagoneers were built (Hagerty). The Grand Wagoneer became the original luxury SUV in the years the market was inventing the idea — and its signature restoration task has nothing to do with metal: the woodgrain.

2. Model history: where 1988 sits

The Grand Wagoneer ran 1984–91 on the SJ platform that dated to 1963: one body, leaf springs, Dana 44s, the TorqueFlite 727, and Selec-Trac. The changes that matter are Wagoneer-trim-specific, not platform changes: the 1984 renaming and the Custom experiment, shift-on-the-fly Selec-Trac for 1985, the 1986 interior/exterior refresh, V8-only from 1987 under new Chrysler ownership, the 1988 sunroof/clear-coat/stereo additions, the 1989 console/keyless-entry/rear-wiper equipment step, carryover 1990, and the Final Edition 1991. This guide covers one year only; the register in Section 3 states exactly what this year changed.

3. What is unique about the 1988 Jeep Grand Wagoneer

- First sunroof year: the optional electric sunroof arrives for 1988 (Hagerty; MotorTrend) — a 1988 with a sunroof is factory-plausible; one on an earlier car is not.
- Clear-coat paint arrives (Hagerty) — paint process, not just color, splits the run here: refinishing a 1988 to the earlier single-stage process is the wrong finish.
- The stereo is upgraded the same year (Hagerty) — dash audio parts are 1988-specification.
- The first full Chrysler-era model year: post-purchase cars are 'essentially a match for their predecessors' outside these additions (MotorTrend).

Year-change register — 1988 vs. the year before:

- NEW: optional electric sunroof; clear-coat paint; upgraded stereo.
- CARRIED OVER: V8-only line; 1986-refresh body and interior; 727; Selec-Trac; Dana 44s.
- FIRST FULL YEAR: Chrysler-era production (purchase 1987).

4. Technical restoration data — 1988 Jeep Grand Wagoneer

4.1 Specification table (1988)

Item	1988 specification
Transmission	TorqueFlite 727 automatic; Selec-Trac.
Transfer case	Selec-Trac (NP228 / NP229 by specification).
Axles	Dana 44 front and rear (Hagerty).
Brakes	Power front discs, rear drums.
Trim / packages	Essentially a match for the 1987 car (MotorTrend) with three additions: optional electric sunroof (new for 1988), clear-coat paint (new for 1988), and an upgraded/louder stereo (Hagerty). The documented 1988 VIN 1JCNJ15U8JT233689 (range guide) anchors the year's format — J is the 1988 year letter.
Production	Per-year production not stated in the sources consulted — none printed (run total 101,637).

Engines (1988):

Engine	Rating	Notes
360 cu in (5.9L) V8	144 hp in the documented 1988–89 specification (range guide); 140 hp / 280 lb-ft general rating (Hagerty)	The only engine. Two-barrel carburetor.

4.2 VIN and serial decoding

Grand Wagoneer VINs are 17 characters throughout, but the FORMAT changes inside the run. For 1984–86 (Hagerty decode): 1 = USA, J = Jeep, C = multi-purpose vehicle; the fourth character is the engine (C = six-cylinder, N = V8); then transmission/transfer case (J = automatic, column shift), body style 15 (four-door Wagoneer), GVW code U (6,200 lb); the ninth character is the check digit; the tenth is the year letter; T = Toledo; then the six-digit serial. For 1987–90 the same layout continues with its year letters. For 1991 the format is restructured: the third character becomes 4, the fourth is GVW (G = 5,001–6,000 lb), fifth S (Grand Wagoneer line), sixth 5 (Grand series), seventh 8 (4-door SUV), eighth 7 (5.9L V8), check digit, year letter, P (Toledo #2), serial. Year letters follow the standard sequence E=1984, F=1985, G=1986, H=1987, J=1988, K=1989, L=1990, M=1991 — see the corrections file on the Hagerty text's internal conflict. The VIN lives on the firewall (upper driver's side), the door-jamb sticker, and the dash plate visible through the windshield. On a vehicle whose body never changed, the VIN is the model year.

4.3 Year-correct procedures and finishes (1988)

- **Paint work:** establish clear-coat vs earlier finish from the individual car's codes before quoting — 1988 is the changeover year in the sources consulted.
- **Sunroof cars:** the roof mechanism and its drains join the inspection list; a leaking sunroof car shows it in the headliner and floors.
- **Torque:** factory values vary by fastener and year. Confirm torques against a Jeep shop manual (TSM) for 1988 before final assembly. This program's sources do not publish a verified 1988 torque table, so none is printed — a borrowed number would be worse than none.