

1949 WILLYS OVERLAND JEEPSTER

1949 Willys Overland Jeepster, VJ3, Model 463

Original cost: \$1,495.00

Previous owner(s): Owner from Omaha, 1995 – 1997; Bernie and Janice Taulborg Collection

Number made: 3,638

Engine, etc.: 134.2 cid; 63 hp; 4 cyl. ("Go Devil"); 104 in. wheelbase; 2,468 lbs.

The Willys-Overland Jeepster ("VJ") was introduced in April, 1948 and produced through 1950.

Jeepsters in 1948 were sold with snap-on side curtains; roll-up side windows were not provided. They had numerous deluxe features and a high level of standard equipment costing extra in other automobiles. Included were whitewall tires, hubcaps with trim rings, sun visors, deluxe steering wheel, wind wings, locking glovebox, cigar lighter, and continental tire with a cover. The \$1,765 price was about the same as the Ford Super DeLuxe club convertible with roll-down windows, fancier styling, and a V8.

Originally offered with only rear-wheel drive, the Jeepster did not catch on with the intended customers and was also limited by sparse advertising and an insufficient dealer network.

The 1949 Jeepster began production with a one-model/one-engine offering. Toward the middle of the year, an additional model was introduced with the new six-cylinder engine. The price was lowered to \$1,495 and some features became extra-cost options. Willys-Overland manufactured 31,595 civilian Jeeps and over 18,000 other types of commercial vehicles in 1949.

As the war in Europe escalated in the late 1930's, the United States saw its chances of being pulled into a second world war increase. It needed rapid

production of a lightweight truck. Willys had the strongest motor and lowest bid, and was ultimately awarded a contract to produce 16,000 units.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, the Army needed more Jeeps than Willys could produce and a contract was given to Ford because of its huge production capacity. Ultimately, over 600,000 Jeeps were produced from 1941 – 1945. Jeeps were referred to as faithful as a dog, strong as a mule, and as agile as a goat.

When the war ended, Willys saw no need to resume production of cars. They continued to do what they did best and became a world leader in four-wheel-drive vehicle production.

In 1953 Kaiser Corporation bought out Willys-Overland Motors and renamed it Willys Motors Company. In 1963, the company re-organized again, becoming Kaiser-Jeep Corporation. The name Willys-Overland was resurrected in 1975 as the name of a wholesale/retail parts business. Chrysler Corporation acquired the Jeep brand in 1987.

Sources: Standard Catalog of American Cars, 1946 – 1974. John Gunnell. Rev. 4th ed. Krause Publications, 2002.

<https://www.autoevolution.com/news/this-cute-1950-willys-jeepster-is-proof-that-crossovers-are-older-than-we-think-156384.html>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeep_Jeepster

http://uniquecarsandparts.com/lost_marques_willys.htm (History)