

Cherokee Trim Packages

Contributed By: Bill Kelsey

Ian Conley wrote: > *I currently own a 79' Cherokee Chief S. Does anyone know what the > difference is between the S and the regular Chief if any?*

Ian, do you **really** have a 79 foot Cherokee? Yikes, and the rest of us think we get bad mileage!

OK, all kidding aside, you are really asking the wrong question here. Jeep never produced a "Cherokee Chief S". Rather, there were two separate trim/option packages, the "S" and the "Cherokee Chief". And the short answer to a question about the difference between the "S" and the "Cherokee Chief" is "they are decorated differently".

The confusion between the "S" and the "Cherokee Chief" has two sources, I think. First, because when the widetrack Cherokee was introduced (as recently discussed on the list, late in the 1975 model year as an early 1976 model) it was available only with the Cherokee Chief package, the widetrack became identified as the "Cherokee Chief"; even Jeep used this designation in its literature for 1976. Even after the Model 17 was available with other (or no) trim/option packages in 1977 or 1978, the name stuck.

Second, Jeep used the "S" medallions, which were originally part of the "S" trim/option package which predated the widetrack Cherokee, on all Cherokees other than those with the basic "standard" trim. Why Jeep didn't have another version made without the "S" is unknown (probably to save money), but it has led to confusion such as you have experienced. In 1980 Jeep left these medallions off the new high end "Laredo" package, and in 1981 dropped the "S" package and the medallions altogether.

The long detailed answer follows:

In model year 1979 there were 3 Cherokee body-types and 4 trim packages:

body types:

Model 16 (2-door narrowtrack Cherokee), introduced in model year 1974

Model 17 (2-door widetrack Cherokee, called "wide wheel" in 1979), introduced as an early 1976 model

Model 18 (4-door narrowtrack Cherokee), introduced in model year 1977

1979 option/trim packages, from most basic to most extensive:

standard (stripper) on all models

"S" (sport) on all models

Cherokee Chief (Model 17 only)

Golden Eagle (Model 17 only; first offered in model year 1979)

In 1980, the Laredo was added as the new high-option Cherokee option/trim package, beyond the Golden Eagle. In 1981 the "S" and "Golden Eagle" packages were dropped, and the Chief became available on both the Model 17 and Model 18 (and became the standard option/trim package for the 4-door Cherokee).

All Model 17s were the same other than standard drivetrain options.

1979 Cherokee trim/option packages:

The basic "standard" option/trim package, available on all Cherokee models, consisted of: (interior) vinyl front & rear bench seats with retractable seatbelts (Model 18); vinyl front buckets & rear bench seats with retractable seatbelts with front passenger's folding seat back (Model 16 & 17); padded sun visors; padded instrument panel; 12" inside day/night mirror; heater & defroster; glove box lock; oil, volt, temp, fuel gauges; color-keyed vinyl floor and cargo area covering; cigar lighter; armrests, front and rear; front ash tray; (exterior) chrome-plated aluminum bumpers front and rear; lights (head, parking, tail & stop, backup, directional (with lane changer feature, side safety; outside left (driver's) mirror; bright ("chrome") ventwindow, windshield, tailgate window moldings; high impact resistant windshield; "4-wheel drive" badges on the front fenders.

The "S" option/trim package, available on all Cherokees models, consisted of the standard feature with these changes or additions: (interior) custom vinyl bucket seats (Western weave fabric optional); center armrest & cushion; driver's folding seat back; passenger assist handle; interior pillar covers (Model 18); engine-turned instrument cluster overlay; custom door and rear quarter trim panels; color-keyed carpeting & carpeted wheelhouse covers; rear seat ash trays; color-keyed vinyl sports steering wheel; small "S" medallion on the glove box door; (exterior) body side and tailgate tape stripe (this is the stylized Indian design body decal unique to the "S"); bright trim in rear quarter window (Model 16 & 17); flipper quarter window (Model 16 & 17); large "S" medallions on the front fenders above the "4-wheel drive" badges (Model 18) or behind the rear quarter windows with the "4-wheel drive" badges on the front fenders (Model 16 & 17); 15"x7" aluminum wheels (Model 16 & 18); 15"x8" styled steel wheels painted white with red stripe (Model 17); flared front & rear fenders (Model 17); 10x15 outline white letter "Tracker A-T" tires (Model 17).

The Cherokee Chief option/trim package, available in 1979 only on the Model 17, consisted of the interior features of the "S" (with different seat covers), and included the same exterior features with these changes: unique body two-tone paint in low gloss black (replaced the "S" stripe); "Cherokee Chief" lettering on lower body sides & tailgate; bright ("chrome") drip & rear roof moldings; large "S" medallions on the front fenders with the "4-wheel drive" badges moved to behind the rear quarter windows (that is, the reverse of the arrangement on the Model 16 & 17 "S").

The Golden Eagle option/trim package, available in 1979 only on the Model 17, consisted of the interior features of the Cherokee Chief except with denim fabric seat covers and only available in tan, with the addition of the soft-feel sports steering wheel, and included the same exterior features with these changes: bright ("chrome") door frame moldings; eagle decal on hood, special tape striping on hood, cowl, body sides, and tailgate, and "Golden Eagle" lettering on lower door panels (replacing the "Cherokee Chief" decals); "bronze-tone" tinted rear quarter & flipper windows; black frush guard; 15"x8" styled steel wheels painted gold with black stripes; large "S" medallions behind the rear quarter windows with the "4-wheel drive" badge on the front fenders (in the same places as on the Model 16 & 17 "S").

As can be seen, the only difference between these three option/trim packages (and the basic "standard" option/trim level) is in how each decorates the Model 17.

Too, to add to the confusion, in 1979 almost everything could be ordered as an option -- so my 1979 Model 17 "S" includes everything listed for the "Chief" and "Golden Eagle" packages except some of the "chrome" moldings and the paint and decals specific to the "Cherokee Chief" and the "Golden Eagle".

Bill Kelsey Aberdeen, South Dakota '79 widetrack Cherokee "S"