

Used Land Rover Discovery inspection checklist

What to check on a used Discovery 3, 4 or 5, what a problem looks like, and when to walk away.



SHUFTI
shufti.com.au

COVERS

Discovery 3 2005–2009

Discovery 4 2009–2017

Discovery 5 2017 on

☐ **Tick it** if it's fine. **Cross it** if it isn't, and note what you found so you can price it into your offer.

Safety critical: affects how safely it drives or protects you in a crash. Best to have a mechanic check it before you buy.

Negotiate: costs money to fix, from wear to major repairs. Get a quote and take it off the price.

0 Before you go

- ☐ **Get the VIN and rego** before you travel. A seller who won't share them is a red flag on its own.
- ☐ **Ask how it was used:** towing a caravan or horse float, outback trips, beach driving or school runs?
- ☐ **Know what you're looking at:** diesel or petrol; air or coil suspension. Air suspension checks below are marked.
- ☐ **Ask for the engine to be cold**, and bring a torch, gloves and something to lie on.

1 Exterior

- ☐ **Panels and paint.** Uneven gaps or paint on trim (crash repair), scrapes low on the body (off-roading), hail dimples on the roof and bonnet.
- ☐ **Ride height.** Parked overnight, it sits level side to side and front to back. Air suspension: a corner sitting low after standing needs a quote.
- ☐ **Tailgate.** Opens, shuts and locks cleanly, by button and remote; a power tailgate runs smoothly.
- ☐ **Bullbar** (if fitted) is made to work with the airbags and is solidly mounted.
- ☐ **Lights and glass.** All lights work, no condensation inside; windscreen free of chips in the driver's view.
- ☐ **VIN plate** (in a door frame or under the bonnet) is there, untouched, and matches the papers.

2 Under the bonnet

- ☐ **Coolant** at the mark and brightly coloured. A low tank, a sweet smell or regular top-ups need a mechanic.

- ☐ **Oil level** between the marks, not above the top one, and not smelling of fuel. A rising level on a diesel can come from short trips interrupting the exhaust filter's self-clean.
- ☐ **Leaks.** Wet oil or coolant crust around the engine, turbo pipes and hoses.
- ☐ **Turbo (diesel).** Oil inside the big air pipes, a loud siren-like whistle, or blue smoke.
- ☐ **Water crossings.** Silt or mud in the air filter box or around the engine.
- ☐ **Extra wiring** for a second battery, fridge, lights or UHF radio is neat and fused. Messy wiring causes faults and fires.
- ☐ **Cold start.** Fires in a couple of seconds and settles to a smooth idle. Knocking, rattles or smoke that won't clear needs a mechanic.

3 Underbody and 4x4

- ☐ **Frame and underbody.** Kinks, cracks or fresh welds, especially near the towbar and rear suspension.
- ☐ **Beach use.** Sand or salt packed into the underbody rusts it from the inside. Surface rust is normal; flaking or holes are not.
- ☐ **Air suspension:** split or cracked rubber air bags, and a compressor that doesn't run on and on.
- ☐ **Front end.** Split rubber boots behind the wheels (grease sprayed around) and loose steering parts.
- ☐ **Oil leaks** from the engine, gearbox, diffs and transfer case.
- ☐ **Towbar and guards.** A worn tow ball means lots of heavy towing; dented guards show hard off-road use.
- ☐ **Tyres** match the sticker in the door frame, wear evenly and are under ~6 years old. Check the spare too.

Stay safe. Never go under a car held up only by a jack, and never open the radiator or coolant cap on a hot engine. Keep hands, hair and loose clothing clear of fans and belts when the engine is running, and do checks under the bonnet with it switched off where you can. On the test drive, hold a current licence, confirm the car is registered and insured, obey road rules, and only brake hard when the road behind is clear. Meet in a safe, public-facing place, take someone with you, and don't carry large amounts of cash to a viewing.

4 Interior and electrics

- ☐ **Warning lights.** Key to "on": every dash light comes on, then goes out once running. A suspension, engine or "restricted performance" message needs explaining.

!
- ☐ **Water leaks.** Damp carpet, a stained headlining or water in the spare-wheel well. Check under the floor mats and around the sunroofs.

\$
- ☐ **Third-row seats** fold and lock; belts work. Electric seats (if fitted) work from every button.

\$
- ☐ **Seatbelts** pull out fully, retract and latch, with no fraying.

!
- ☐ **Air con** blows cold front and rear; heater gets hot. Climate controls and screens are costly to repair; test every one.

\$
- ☐ **Electrics.** Screens, cameras, sensors, windows, mirrors and keyless entry. Count the keys.

\$

5 Test drive

- ☐ **Automatic gearbox.** Smooth changes, no slipping or thump into gear. Towing wears autos; ask when the fluid was changed.

\$
- ☐ **Power and smoke.** Pulls strongly, with no flat spots, sudden power loss or black smoke.

\$
- ☐ **Air suspension:** raise and lower it with the switch: it moves evenly, with no warnings, and holds height.

\$

- ☐ **4WD.** Try each terrain mode and low range (if fitted) on gravel or grass: no clunks, binding or warnings.

\$
- ☐ **Steering and brakes.** No wandering at highway speed, or shaking through the brake pedal.

!
- ☐ **Noises.** Knocks over bumps; a hum that grows with speed (wheel bearing); a whine as you accelerate (diffs).

\$
- ☐ **Afterwards,** check for warning messages, a steady temperature gauge and new drips underneath.

\$

6 Documentation

- ☐ **Seller's ID** matches the rego papers, and the VIN matches on the papers and VIN plate.
- ☐ **Service history.** Every service on time, with receipts, ideally from a specialist. Gaps in the history on a complex car like this are worth a much lower offer.

\$
- ☐ **Major work.** Ask about any engine, gearbox, timing or suspension work, with the paperwork.

\$
- ☐ **Modifications in writing.** Lifts, bigger tyres and tunes, with engineering sign-off where your state requires it.
- ☐ **Warranty.** A newer Discovery may still be under Land Rover's new-car warranty. Check the start date and that servicing kept it valid.

What this guide can't tell you about the Discovery you're looking at

8+

recalls on Discoveries built since 2005*

33

common faults reported on Discoveries built since 2005*

739

owner complaints on Discoveries (also sold as the LR3 and LR4) built since 2005*

Money owing, stolen or a write-off?

A tidy car can hide all three.

What's each fault worth?

Shufti's negotiation coach turns it into leverage.

A Shufti inspection covers all of that, plus:

✓

Guided checks for the exact car you're inspecting

✓

PPSR and government recall checks included

✓

Crosschecks 3M+ recalls and owner complaints

✓

Spots issues from your photos and audio

✓

Test drive routes with turn-by-turn navigation

✓

Negotiation coach with repair cost estimates

Get Shufti on your mobile now.

Not sure yet? Try the free sample vehicle in Shufti. No sign-up needed.

Download on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play

Disclaimer. Shufti is not affiliated with or endorsed by Land Rover; Land Rover and Discovery are trademarks of Jaguar Land Rover Limited. Figures are counts from Shufti's analysis of official records and published reports, not a statement that any particular vehicle is affected. This checklist is general information only and is not professional, mechanical, legal or financial advice. It covers common checks, not every possible fault, and a car can pass every item here and still have problems. It is not a substitute for a pre-purchase inspection by a qualified mechanic, which is worth considering before you buy, especially if anything tagged Safety critical turns up. Repair costs vary widely; get your own quotes. Roadworthy, registration and transfer rules differ by state, so check with your state road authority. Private sales generally don't come with the consumer guarantees that apply when you buy from a dealer. You use this checklist at your own risk and, to the extent permitted by law, Shufti accepts no liability for any loss, damage or injury arising from its use.

* Shufti analysis, October 2026, of official recall notices, complaints lodged by vehicle owners with vehicle safety regulators, and independent reviews and owner forums. Faults are counted when two or more independent sources report them.

© 2026 Shufti. App Store is a service mark of Apple Inc. Google Play is a trademark of Google LLC.

Page 2 of 2