A TLCA PUBLICATION

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2026

TOYOTA TRAILS

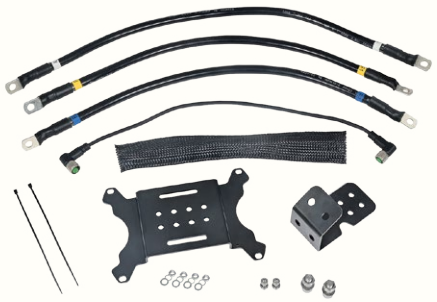


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You Can't Put Everything in a Spreadsheet

I have a confession to make. I'm a planner. Not just a casual, make-a-list-and-hope-for-the-best kind of planner. I'm an Excel spreadsheet, color-coded tabs, multiple contingencies kind of planner. People who know me have been known to make fun of my spreadsheets, and I'm pretty sure some of them think I need an intervention. But I like to be organized, I like to know what's coming, and I really like it when things go according to plan.

The problem, of course, is that life doesn't always cooperate. Neither do Land Cruisers, for that matter.

This fall, I attended Cruiserfest in Utah and Southern Cruiser Crawl in Arkansas. Both were wonderful events, but in completely different ways, and they reminded me that sometimes the things that make an experience special aren't the things you could have planned in the first place.

Cruiserfest was impressive by just about any measure. More than 600 people came together to support the Land Cruiser Heritage Museum, and Jules Cho, the museum's Executive Director, did a fabulous job pulling it all together. The vendor support was outstanding, the event was well organized, and everywhere I looked, people were smiling. As someone who appreciates a well-executed plan, I couldn't help but admire the tremendous amount of work that went into making it happen. But what impressed me most wasn't the logistics or the attendance numbers. It was seeing how much fun everyone was having.

Southern Cruiser Crawl was a very different experience. Attendance was lower than in years past, but that created a more relaxed, personal atmosphere. I had time to catch up with people I hadn't seen in far too long, and the generosity shown during the Live Like Lash fundraiser was incredible. If I'd been looking strictly at numbers, I might have missed what made the weekend so enjoyable. Sometimes smaller isn't a disappointment. It's just different, and different can be pretty wonderful.

That got me thinking about how much time we spend trying to make everything perfect. The perfect build, the perfect trip, the perfect event. We research, prepare, make lists, and convince ourselves that once everything is just right, we'll finally be ready to enjoy it. Meanwhile, some of the best experiences are happening while we're busy worrying about the details.

Anyone who's spent time on a trail knows that plans are really just suggestions. Something breaks, the weather changes, or the easy route turns into an all-day adventure. And while those moments aren't always fun when they're happening, they're often the stories we laugh about years later.

I'm certainly not giving up my spreadsheets. Let's not get carried away. But I'm learning that there's a difference between being prepared and being so focused on the plan that you forget to enjoy the experience.

As we head into the holidays, I hope you'll find time to slow down, appreciate the unexpected, and enjoy whatever adventures come your way. I wish you and your families a wonderful holiday season and a happy, healthy New Year.

And remember, some of the best things in life will never fit neatly into a spreadsheet.

Heather Royston
TLCA President
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Cover photo: December Weather. Photo by Devon Barker



Preventative Maintenance.
Photo by Devon Barker



TOYOTA TRAILS

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2026

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Toyota Trails - Issue #6

Toyota Trails is a bi-monthly publication

The Toyota Land Cruiser Association (TLCA) is an organization dedicated to Toyota 4×4 enthusiasts. TLCA and its publication, Toyota Trails, operate independently and are not affiliated with Toyota Motor Corporation.

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Individuals	3,432
Business	95
Chapter	2,121
Total Membership	5,648

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Advertising and Editorial Deadlines:
Jan./Feb. issue, due November 15
March/April issue, due January 15
May/June issue, due March 15
July/August issue, due May 15
Sept./Oct. issue, due July 15
Nov./Dec. issue, due September 15

Business Advertising:
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Editorial contributions are welcomed and should be electronically mailed to editor@tlca.org. Information in this newsletter is from varied sources and TLCA gives no warranty nor claims responsibility as to the accuracy or completeness.

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Printer:
Publication Printers, Denver, CO.

Canadian Post Publications Mail
Agreement No. 40065056
Canadian Return Address:
DP Global Mail,
4960-2 Walker Road,
Windsor, ON
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A Publication of the
Toyota Land Cruiser Association
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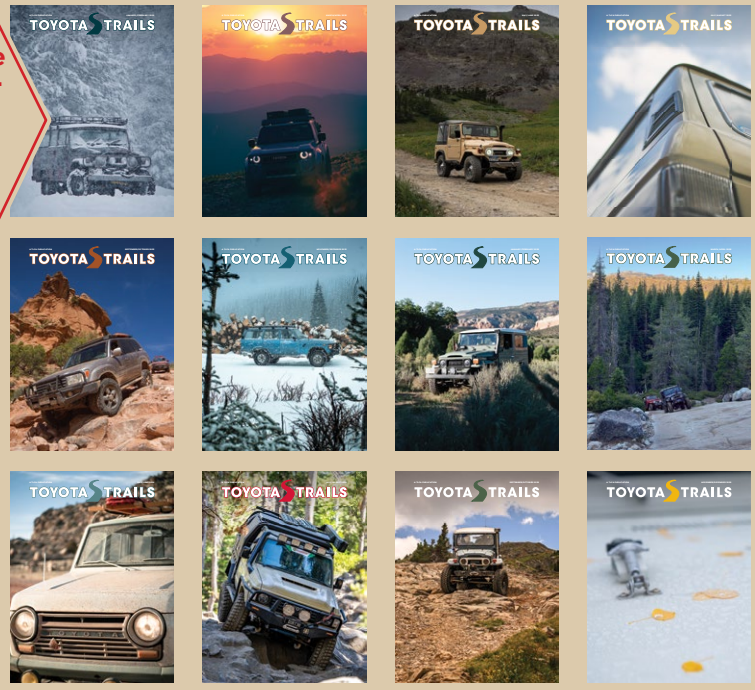


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TRAIL HEAD

Managing Editor

Welp, just like that, another year is about to roll over on the odometer of life. And like any trusty ol' Land Cruiser, we just keep on trucking. I used to spend the winter months maintaining or upgrading our Land Cruisers and hopefully getting out a few times, if possible. These days, I'm far less interested in the upgrading and maintaining part and way more interested in the "getting out a few times" part. I'm not that old, but my days of crawling around on a cold garage floor turning wrenches are probably behind me. I still love to tinker, and I'm sure I always will, but I want to drive more now than ever. No real destination in mind, just wherever my bumper leads. This issue sorta feels like that. It's a driving issue.

It all begins with Kit Steimle traveling to Stanton, Kentucky, for the 9th Annual Kentucky Toyota Trail Ride hosted by KYTLCA. This event continues to grow and impress, and the members of KYTLCA have that chapter running shipshape. Their website looks great, their social media is active, and they're hosting a banger event every year that sounds like a blast to attend. They're also active in trail restoration and sustainability. Kudos to the crew at KYTLCA! Kit is a founding member, and it's clear how much this club, and the area, mean to him. He takes us along in camp, at dinner, and on the trails, and the club provides great photography. This event is no longer an up-and-comer. KYTLCA and the KTTR have arrived.

Next, we head west from the Bluegrass State and into the beautiful Montana backcountry. 406 Cruisers covers all of Montana, and they gather every month for club meetings and always have a trail ride or two on the schedule. Aaron Thies has been leading a small group up to Goose Lake in southern Montana each summer, and if there were ever a trail ride to hop on, this is the one. This story is special to me because it covers an area that means more to me than few other places on this planet. I have been traveling, camping, and exploring in this area for nearly 30 years. My brother and I hiked to Goose Lake before I ever owned a Land Cruiser. My son learned to drive our Land Cruiser on the roads in this area. I've eaten trail lunch in the wildflowers with my dad and son on this trail. Three generations sitting near our Land Cruiser appreciating all the blessings of this life. There are two places I've been in a Land Cruiser that sit above the rest when it comes to awe-inspiring beauty and views. The San Juan Mountains in Colorado are one, and Goose Lake is the other. The increasing number of side-by-sides in the area over the last five years has changed the trail and the area for sure. Getting all the way to Goose Lake is an accomplishment, and the views just get better and better as you go.

Staying out west and chasing more beautiful mountains, we hitch a ride with Preston Scott and his best friend, Gabe, in their 1996 FZJ80. Few things are better when you're young than tossing some gear into a vehicle you love and hitting the road with a buddy. They filmed their adventure using old photography gear and survived on camp food and random showers. Core memories are made in such ways.

After all that driving and mountain viewing, it's nice to just sit back and relax a bit too. Breck Light pens a story about owning and cherishing an old Land Cruiser that we can all relate to. It's easy for us to look past some of the imperfections of our trusty four-wheeled steeds and only see the beauty. That's what makes us love them so much.

Now that summer light is fading into another winter, it's a great time to plan out a few trips for next year. Traveling alone is stellar. It's an escape and a solace that not everyone can understand, so plan some personal time if needed, but don't forget the welcoming nature of TLCA events either. There's a TLCA event happening almost every weekend from March until October, and as we all know, these are some of the finest people to spend a weekend around. Every TLCA chapter has a website, social media page, and local meetings. I'm still friends with some of the Rising Sun members I met at my very first meeting nearly 20 years ago. I didn't know a soul, but I had a Land Cruiser and a desire to explore. That was enough.

Enjoy the holiday season with loved ones. Drive around in the snow if you're able. Tinker if it suits you. If not, find a comfy chair and live vicariously through some of our great members and their adventures. 2026 was a great year for TLCA, and 2027 will be even better. See ya' next year.

Stan Wright
Denver, Colorado

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS



Aaron Thies

Aaron Thies is a Bozeman, Montana-based photographer, Land Cruiser enthusiast, and firm believer that old Toyotas are happiest when they are covered in dust and pointed toward somewhere with questionable cell service. He spends much of his free time exploring Montana in his built 1997 Lexus LX450, usually with a camera nearby and no particular interest in taking the easy road. Aaron is active with the 406 Cruisers and enjoys photographing trail runs, camp life, unusual builds, and the people who somehow make getting stuck, fixing things, and driving slowly over rocks look like a perfectly reasonable way to spend a weekend. He has a particular weakness for 80-Series Land Cruisers, remote mountain roads, and vehicles with far more character than fuel economy.



Kit Steimle

Kit Steimle is a lifelong off-road enthusiast, Toyota Land Cruiser aficionado, and founding member of the Kentucky Toyota Land Cruiser Association (KYTLCA). A retired 21-year law enforcement veteran, he enjoys trail adventures, storytelling, and the camaraderie of the Land Cruiser community.



Breck Light

Breck Light is a seventh generation farmer in Central Virginia where he lives on the family farm with his wife Emelyn, baby boy named Ridge, a Basset Hound and a GSP, plus lots of Angus cows. He's an aspiring novelist, ultra runner, and overall outdoor person. Breck first caught the Land Cruiser bug on that fly fishing trip several years ago and if anything, the sickness has only deepened since then. While he hasn't strayed too far from home in the 40 series yet, Breck has put it through its paces as an all around farm truck, using the old boy for everything from raking hay and evening fence checks, to chasing escaped cows or loading it up for a quick overnight farm camp out with the dogs. The Land Cruiser is a part of his lifestyle now, just the way it should be.



Preston Scott

Preston Scott is a 21-year-old from Mandeville, Louisiana, who has been hooked on Toyota Land Cruisers for as long as he can remember. Growing up, he spent weekends at Cruiser events with his dad and developed a love for adventures and all things Land Cruiser. A college baseball player during the school year, Preston uses his summers to explore as often as possible. Most recently, he and his best friend hit the road for a month-long journey across the western United States in "Fat Amy," his 1996 FZJ80.


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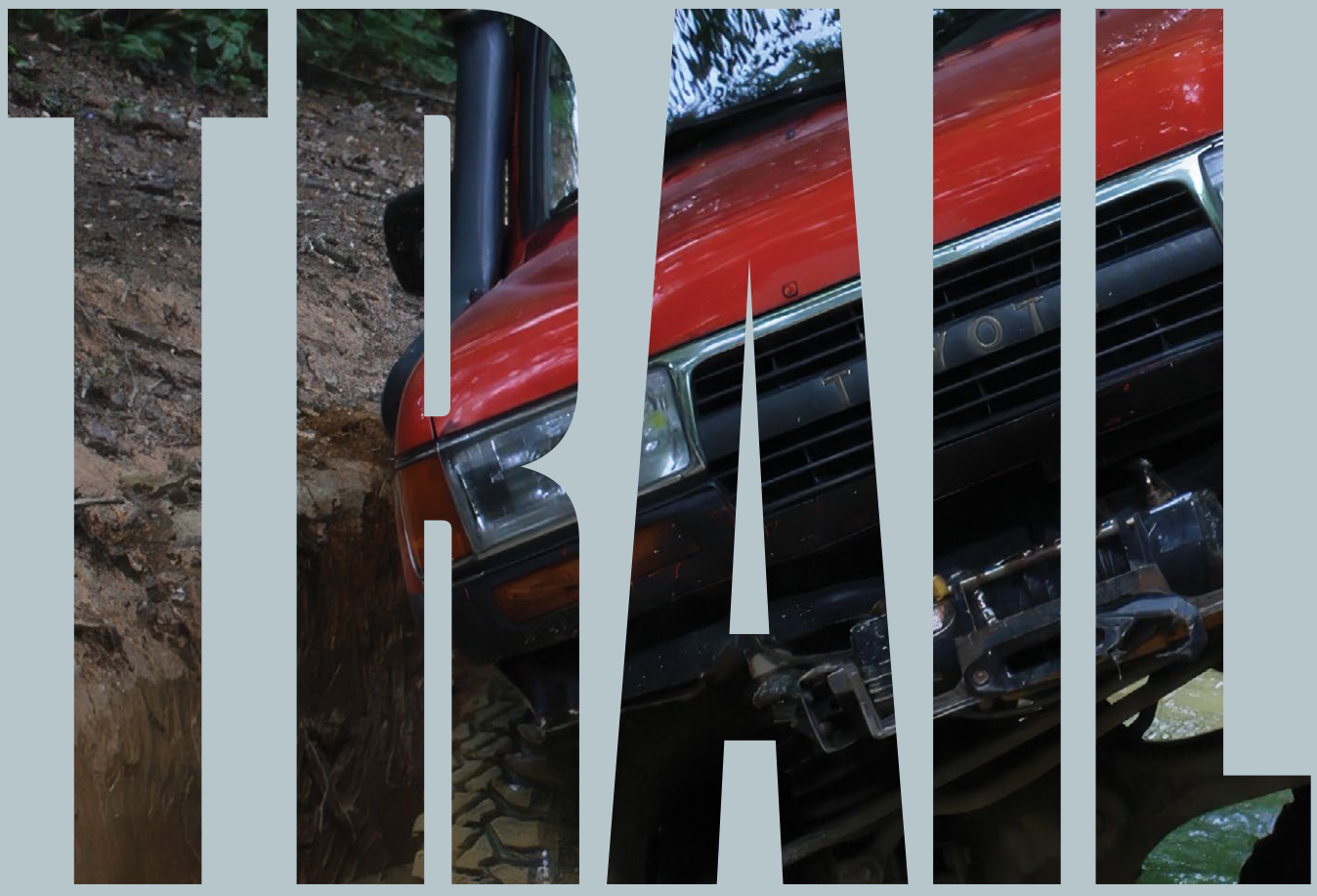
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KENTUCKY


TRAIL



Words: Kit Steimle
Photos: Luke Bogner & Samantha Miller





There are few things better than a weekend spent behind the wheel of a Toyota Land Cruiser, surrounded by good people, great trails, and some of the most beautiful country around. The Kentucky Toyota Trail Ride, held July 16–18, 2026, delivered all of that and more.

More than 250 Toyota enthusiasts came from around the region to spend the weekend exploring the hills, forests, and backroads of beautiful Eastern Kentucky. Callie's Campground served as home base for the event and quickly filled with lots of Toyota 4x4s, tents, campfires, and plenty of trail stories.

The real highlight, of course, was getting out on the trails.

The Red River Gorge and Daniel Boone Backcountry Byway provided an incredible backdrop for the weekend. From winding forest roads and creek crossings to rocky climbs and overlooks, the area offered exactly the kind of scenery and terrain that makes you remember why we own these vehicles in the first place. The weather cooperated (except it was 100 degrees and rained cats and dogs on Friday), the trails were fantastic, and everywhere you looked there seemed to be another great photo opportunity.

But as anyone who has been around the Land Cruiser community knows, these events are about much more than the trucks.



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One of my favorite moments from the Kentucky Toyota Trail Ride didn't actually happen on the trail.

A member, Dr. Bill Landon and his wife Dr. Sharyn Jones, brought their 80 to the event. It started having trouble after it lost fuel pressure. He came down to the pavilion, where everyone was hanging out, swapping stories, talking Land Cruisers and enjoying the evening, and mentioned what was going on.

That was about all it took.

Before long, several people were gathered around the 80 trying to figure it out. Toolboxes opened, wrenches started getting passed around, and everyone seemed to have an idea, a part, or a willingness to crawl underneath and help. What could have easily ruined the couple's weekend turned into a two- or three-hour group effort to get their Cruiser running again.

Then, in true Land Cruiser fashion, Luke Bogner just happened to have an extra fuel pump.

Because, apparently, these are the kinds of people who bring spare fuel pumps to trail rides.

The pump went in, the 80 fired back up, and they were back in business.

Nobody was getting paid. Nobody was keeping track of whose tools were being used or how much time they had spent helping. It was simply a group of people seeing another Cruiser owner in trouble and deciding, "We're going to get you going."

Friday night's potluck dinner brought everyone together after a day on the trails. There was plenty of great food, conversation, laughter, and the inevitable discussions about trucks, modifications, broken parts, and the next trail ride. Saturday's raffle was another highlight and added even more fun to an already great weekend.

One of the highlights of the weekend for me personally was being asked to MC the welcome ceremonies and Saturday night raffle. Standing up there in front of everyone was more meaningful to me than most probably realized.

KYTLCA is my home club. I was fortunate enough to be one of the ten founding members of the Kentucky Toyota Land Cruiser Association, and although I moved away seven years ago, that connection has never really gone away. Coming back to Kentucky, seeing old friends, meeting new members, and having the opportunity to be part of the event in that way felt a little like coming home. Being handed the microphone and getting to welcome everyone—and later having some fun MC'ing the raffle—was a full-circle moment for me. Seven years away or not, I'm still one of those ten founding members of KYTLCA, and I'm damn proud of it.

A lot has changed over the years. The club has grown, new faces have joined the family, and the event has become bigger than I probably could have imagined when those original ten members



got things started. But the heart of the club hasn't changed. It's still about Land Cruisers, trails, friendships, helping each other out, and protecting the places that allow us to enjoy these vehicles the way they were meant to be enjoyed.

What stood out most was the sense of community. Whether someone showed up in a beautifully restored classic Cruiser, a well-used trail rig, or a newer Toyota, everyone was there for the same reason—to enjoy the outdoors, explore some great trails, and spend time with people who share the same passion.

By the end of the weekend, the trucks were a little dirtier, the coolers were a little lighter, and everyone had a few more stories to tell, and of course a few emptier pockets for new parts.

The 2026 Kentucky Toyota Trail Ride was simply a great weekend—great weather, great trails, great food, and most importantly, great people. I want to personally thank Samantha Miller for the incredible amount of work she put into pulling this event together, along with Luke Bogner and everyone else who volunteered their time and effort. When more than 250 people show up and have a weekend this enjoyable, you know there were countless hours of planning happening long before the first Land Cruiser ever hit the trail. And really, that's what the Land Cruiser community is all about. And this is the community I love. (and that's why I love it)

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