

2021 Toyota Sequoia Nightshade 4WD

Ownership Profile | 70,000 miles | 5.7L V8 | 6-speed automatic

Ownership outlook: FAVORABLE

A mature, truck-based full-size SUV with a well-established 5.7L V8/6-speed powertrain, strong utility, and a relatively straightforward mechanical layout. At 70,000 miles, the larger ownership questions are maintenance history, age/mileage wear, fluid-service history, cooling-system condition, and whether any VIN-specific recall work is outstanding. Fuel use is a major recurring tradeoff.

Core Ownership Summary

Area	Assessment	Why it matters
Powertrain	Strong	The 3UR-FE 5.7L V8 and AB60-series 6-speed automatic have a long service history. No evidence supports treating catastrophic internal engine failure as a normal expectation.
70k-mile position	Favorable	Mileage is moderate for the platform. Condition and service history matter more than the odometer alone at this point.
Maintenance exposure	Moderate	Routine service is conventional, but this is a large 4WD SUV: fluids, brakes, tires, and V8 service can create meaningful shop bills.
Known-issue exposure	Mixed	Watch for cooling-system leakage and oil seepage. Some widely discussed 5.7L issues are concentrated in earlier model years and should not be transferred automatically to a 2021.
Safety evidence	Mixed	Useful active-safety equipment is standard, but independent crash-test coverage is limited. NHTSA published a 4/5 rollover rating; full frontal/side ratings are not available.
Fuel use	Elevated cost	EPA rating for the 4WD model is 13 city / 17 highway / 14 combined mpg. This is a persistent ownership cost, not a reliability problem.

What stands out at 70,000 miles

- **Verify the 60,000-mile service history.** Toyota's schedule includes a broader inspection at 60,000 miles, including drivetrain fluids, steering, cooling system, transmission leakage, drive belts and 4WD components.
- **Plan ahead for the 120,000-mile service.** Spark plugs are scheduled at 120,000 miles; this is a useful future budgeting point rather than an immediate concern.
- **Inspect for coolant and oil evidence.** Dried pink coolant residue, unexplained coolant loss, or active oil seepage deserve source identification before purchase.
- **VIN matters for recalls.** A VIN was not supplied for this profile, so open-recall status cannot be confirmed for this individual vehicle.

Bighorn Research does not tell you what to buy. This profile is designed to help you understand what you are buying.

Vehicle Overview

Item	2021 Sequoia Nightshade 4WD
Platform	Second-generation Sequoia; body-on-frame full-size SUV
Engine	5.7L 3UR-FE V8, 381 hp
Transmission	6-speed automatic
Drivetrain	Part-time/full-time capable 4WD system with low range; A-TRAC on 4WD models
Nightshade	Limited-based appearance edition for 2021; black exterior trim and darkened styling details
Fuel economy	EPA: 13 city / 17 highway / 14 combined mpg for 4WD
Towing	Toyota advertised up to 7,400 lb depending on configuration
Mileage evaluated	70,000 miles

Ownership Character

The 2021 Sequoia is an old-school full-size SUV in a modern model year. Its core architecture predates many current downsized-turbo, multi-speed, and highly integrated powertrains. That brings both advantages and compromises: proven mechanical systems and straightforward capability on one side; high fuel consumption, older cabin technology, and substantial vehicle mass on the other.

The Nightshade package changes appearance and equipment presentation more than the underlying ownership equation. Reliability and maintenance conclusions should therefore be driven primarily by the 2021 Sequoia platform, 3UR-FE V8, 6-speed automatic, 4WD system, and the individual vehicle's history.

Best fit

- Owners prioritizing interior room, towing capability, conventional V8 power, 4WD utility, and long-term serviceability.
- Families or outdoor users who value cargo/passenger capacity more than fuel economy or cutting-edge infotainment.
- Owners comfortable budgeting for full-size-SUV tires, brakes, fluids, and fuel.

Less ideal for

- High-mileage commuters for whom fuel cost is a dominant concern.
- Buyers prioritizing the newest driver-assistance technology, cabin design, or small-vehicle maneuverability.
- Owners who want compact-car maintenance and consumable costs from a 6,000-lb-class 4WD SUV.

Why the model year matters

Many internet discussions combine every 2008-2022 Sequoia and every 3UR-FE application. That can overstate risk for a 2021. Earlier secondary-air injection campaigns, for example, do not establish that the same failure pattern applies broadly to this 2021 vehicle.

Reliability & Known-Issue Review

The strongest evidence supports viewing the 2021 powertrain as mature rather than problem-free. The most useful approach is to separate documented 2021 applicability from issues that exist elsewhere in the broader 3UR-FE history.

Issue / exposure	Evidence & applicability	What to look for	Ownership meaning
Cooling-system / water-pump leakage	Age/mileage wear exposure; credible recurring 5.7L repair pattern. No reliable evidence establishes a universal failure mileage.	Pink dried coolant near pump, coolant odor, low reservoir, active leakage, temperature irregularity.	Worth inspecting now and monitoring as mileage rises. RepairPal's current 2021 estimate is roughly \$700-\$900 before location/tax variation.
Cam-carrier / cam-tower oil seepage	Recurring technical/owner pattern across 3UR-FE applications; prevalence for 2021 is not established.	Oil residue high on engine, especially where cam housings meet cylinder heads. Identify the actual source before assuming a major reseal.	A minor seep and an active leak are different ownership problems. Labor can be significant if a true cam-carrier reseal is required.
Valley coolant leakage	Credible recurring repair pattern, but prevalence and a 2021-specific production boundary are not established.	Unexplained coolant loss, dried pink residue in engine valley or coolant tracking toward rear of engine.	Treat as an inspection point, not an expected failure.
Secondary-air injection system	Well documented on certain earlier Tundra/Sequoia populations. Earlier campaigns do not establish broad 2021 applicability.	Check-engine light, reduced-power mode, related stored/pending codes.	Do not assume an older-model problem applies simply because the engine family is shared.
Power-steering gear recall	Documented 2021 recall population; VIN-specific applicability required.	VIN recall lookup / dealer verification.	Potential fluid leak and sudden loss of assist. Recall remedy is inspection/replacement at no charge when applicable.

Platform vs. individual vehicle

A favorable platform cannot compensate for poor maintenance, collision damage, fluid neglect, overheating history, or heavy towing without appropriate service. Conversely, the existence of a documented failure mode does not mean this individual Sequoia has it.

At 70,000 miles, service records can materially change the outlook. A documented 60,000-mile inspection/service, regular oil changes, clean cooling system, healthy driveline fluids, and no unresolved warning codes would strengthen the individual-vehicle picture.

Scan it

A professional pre-purchase scan can reveal current, pending, history, emissions, ABS, airbag, 4WD and other module faults that may not illuminate a warning lamp during a short test drive. This is especially useful when evaluating seller claims that a warning light was 'just cleared' or recently repaired.

Maintenance & Ownership Planning

Toyota generally structures Sequoia maintenance around 5,000-mile / 6-month checkpoints, with larger inspection and replacement events at key milestones. At 70,000 miles, the question is less 'what is due today?' and more 'was the 60k work addressed, and what is coming next?'

Maintenance planning table

Maintenance item	Typical timing	Estimated shop cost	DIY practicality
Engine oil & filter	5k/6 mo checkpoints; oil replacement interval depends on operating conditions and Toyota schedule	Varies by shop; budget as recurring routine service	DIY-friendly
Tire rotation / brake inspection	5,000-mile checkpoints	Often bundled with service; brake work separate	DIY-friendly to Moderate
Engine & cabin air filters	Major replacement points include 60k and 120k; inspect/clean between as specified	Usually low-hundreds or less depending on shop/parts	DIY-friendly
4WD driveline inspection / propeller shaft lubrication	Major inspection points including 60k, 75k, 90k, etc.	Shop-dependent; fluid replacement costs rise if towing/severe-use schedule applies	Moderate
Spark plugs	120,000 miles	~\$300-\$500 typical national estimate; location can push higher	Moderate
Engine coolant	Replace at 150,000 miles under normal schedule; inspect earlier	Vehicle/location dependent	Moderate
Water pump (repair, not scheduled maintenance)	Condition dependent	~\$700-\$900 national estimate; some metro estimates exceed \$1,000	Advanced
Brake pads (repair/wear item)	Condition dependent	~\$300-\$350 per axle estimate before location/related work	Moderate

Cost note: Shop-cost figures are planning ranges, not quotes. Taxes, labor rates, OEM vs. aftermarket parts, dealer vs. independent shop, location, vehicle condition, and related repairs can materially change the final invoice.

DIY practicality

DIY-friendly = generally accessible with common automotive tools and ordinary mechanical experience. **Moderate** = more involved access, fluid handling, torque-sensitive work, or meaningful consequences if performed incorrectly. **Advanced** = substantial disassembly, specialized access/tools, or higher consequences of error. These labels describe accessibility; they are not repair instructions.

70,000-mile planning point

If the 60,000-mile service history is unknown, treat that as a maintenance-information gap. The next large scheduled replacement event is 120,000 miles, when spark plugs join the broader inspection list. For a 4WD Sequoia used for towing, heavy loading, or dusty/off-road use, Toyota specifies additional fluid and chassis maintenance.

Safety

Safety area	2021 Sequoia Nightshade 4WD	Assessment
Crash-test evidence	NHTSA did not publish full frontal/side ratings for this model year. Rollover rating: 4/5, with an 18.5% calculated rollover risk reported by NHTSA-derived sources.	Limited evidence
Standard active safety	Toyota Safety Sense-P includes pre-collision system with pedestrian detection, lane-departure alert, automatic high beams, and dynamic radar cruise control. Blind-spot monitor and rear cross-traffic alert are also listed for the 2021 Sequoia.	Favorable equipment
Stability / braking	Vehicle Stability Control, ABS, electronic brake-force distribution, brake assist, traction control; 4WD models use A-TRAC.	Favorable equipment
Recall exposure	2021 Sequoia is included in a power-steering gear recall population. VIN determines whether an individual vehicle is affected or has an unrepaired recall.	VIN verification needed

Recall detail

Toyota/NHTSA recall 21V-920 covers certain Sequoia vehicles where a power-steering gear assembly may leak fluid because of a manufacturing error. A sufficient leak can cause sudden loss of power-steering assist, increasing steering effort and crash risk. Toyota's remedy is inspection and replacement when necessary, free of charge.

A separate equipment recall, 21E-103, covers certain replacement steering-gear service parts. That does not mean every 2021 Sequoia has two independent vehicle defects; the second campaign concerns potentially defective service parts.

Material data gap: VIN not provided

This profile can identify model-year recall exposure, but it cannot determine whether this specific Sequoia has an open recall or whether a prior recall repair has been completed. VIN-level verification should be part of the individual-vehicle review.

Safety perspective

The Sequoia combines a substantial body-on-frame structure with useful active-safety features for its era, but its size and mass should not be confused with complete independent crash-test evidence. Because frontal and side ratings are unavailable for this model year, Bighorn treats the safety evidence as mixed rather than assigning a broad 'safe/unsafe' conclusion.

Owner Experience

Owner experience is subjective and is kept separate from reliability evidence. It helps describe what living with the vehicle tends to feel like; it does not establish failure prevalence.

Recurring owner theme	What it means in daily ownership
Space and family utility	Owners frequently value the three-row room, cargo capacity, and ability to carry people and gear without moving to a pickup.
Ride comfort	The Sequoia is commonly described as comfortable and easygoing for a large body-on-frame SUV, aided by independent rear suspension.
Powertrain feel	The naturally aspirated 5.7L V8 is generally valued for predictable response and towing-friendly torque rather than efficiency.
Fuel economy	The most consistent ownership tradeoff. EPA combined rating is 14 mpg for 4WD, and owner/reviewer experience commonly reinforces that fuel consumption is substantial.
Technology / age	The 2021 model year still uses an aging underlying platform and cabin/infotainment approach. Buyers coming from newer designs may notice this more than long-time truck/SUV owners.

Owner-review evidence

Edmunds' 2021 Sequoia owner-review page shows favorable overall sentiment, with reliability/manufacturing quality, comfort, ride quality, space, towing and off-road use among recurring positive themes. Fuel efficiency and technology appear among recurring negatives. The available review count is limited and includes some reviews from adjacent years of the same generation, so these themes should be treated as context rather than statistical reliability evidence.

So what?

A 2021 Sequoia can feel mechanically reassuring and financially demanding at the same time. The platform's appeal is conventional capability and durability; the ownership compromise is that fuel, tires, brakes, fluids and large-vehicle service remain large-vehicle expenses even when nothing is 'wrong.'

Ownership Timeline: From 70,000 Miles Forward

Mileage window	Likely ownership focus
70k-90k	Confirm 60k service history; continue 5k checkpoints; inspect brakes/tires, steering, driveline boots, differential/transfer-case condition, cooling system and oil seepage. At 75k and 90k, broader inspections return.
90k-120k	Age/mileage wear becomes more relevant. Monitor coolant level and water-pump area, accessory drive, suspension/steering wear and 4WD fluid condition. Budget for the 120k spark-plug service.
120k-150k	120k spark plugs plus air/cabin filters and broad inspection. Continue condition-based brakes/tires and driveline service. Engine coolant replacement arrives at 150k under the normal schedule.
150k+	Individual history dominates. Cooling-system components, suspension, wheel bearings, seals, accessories and age-related rubber/plastic components deserve increasing attention. High-mileage capability is real; high-mileage condition is still vehicle-specific.

Questions You Should Ask Before Buying

- Can you provide maintenance records, especially around the 60,000-mile service?
- Has the vehicle regularly towed, carried heavy loads, or spent significant time on dirt roads?
- Have front/rear differential, transfer-case, or transmission fluids ever been replaced? If so, when and why?
- Has the cooling system ever required repair? Any history of coolant loss, water-pump replacement, overheating, or unexplained coolant top-offs?
- Has any oil seepage or leakage been diagnosed? If yes, what was identified as the source?
- Has the power-steering gear recall been checked/completed for this VIN?
- Are there any current, pending, or recently cleared diagnostic codes?
- What brake and tire work has been completed, and what remains today?
- Has the vehicle had collision/body repair? If yes, what areas were repaired and is documentation available?
- Are all 4WD functions, low range, A-TRAC, driver-assistance features, cameras and parking sensors operating normally?

Material Data Gaps

Unknown	Why it matters
VIN	Prevents VIN-specific recall/configuration verification.
Maintenance records	Cannot confirm whether scheduled service and severe-use fluid maintenance were completed.
Accident / repair history	Cannot assess collision-related mechanical, alignment, water-sealing or structural exposure.
Usage history	Towing, heavy loading, off-road/dust exposure and idle time can change maintenance needs.
Current inspection / scan	Platform research cannot establish the present mechanical condition of this individual vehicle.

Comparable Alternatives

These are comparison points, not recommendations. They help show what priorities a buyer may trade when moving away from the Sequoia.

Alternative	Why compare it	Potential trade
Ford Expedition (similar era)	Full-size three-row body-on-frame SUV with strong towing and better EPA fuel economy.	Turbocharged powertrain and different long-term complexity/repair profile.
Chevrolet Tahoe / GMC Yukon (similar era)	Large three-row utility, broad service network, strong towing/cargo capability.	Different engine/transmission technologies and model-specific reliability exposures require separate research.
Nissan Armada (similar era)	Naturally aspirated V8, body-on-frame construction, three-row capability.	Different resale/ownership ecosystem and its own drivetrain/maintenance history.
Toyota Land Cruiser / Lexus LX 570	Related 5.7L V8 architecture with strong durability reputation and off-road capability.	Higher complexity/equipment level and potentially higher service/parts exposure; platform details are not identical.

Research Summary

At 70,000 miles, the 2021 Sequoia Nightshade 4WD presents as a mature, relatively well-understood full-size SUV rather than a vehicle approaching an obvious mechanical cliff. The 5.7L V8 and 6-speed automatic are established designs, and the strongest concerns are practical ownership exposures: fuel consumption, large-vehicle consumables, verification of prior maintenance, and inspection for cooling-system or oil leakage as mileage accumulates.

The internet contains substantial discussion of 3UR-FE secondary-air failures, cam-tower leaks, water pumps and coolant leaks. Those subjects are not equally applicable. Earlier secondary-air campaigns should not be transferred to a 2021 without evidence; cam-carrier and valley leakage are legitimate inspection topics but lack evidence supporting a claim that every 2021 should be expected to develop them; water-pump leakage is better treated as an age/mileage wear exposure than a guaranteed defect.

For this specific 70,000-mile vehicle, the most valuable missing information is not another model-level statistic. It is the VIN, maintenance history, usage history, diagnostic scan and physical inspection.

Bottom line

The platform outlook is favorable. The individual-vehicle outlook remains dependent on service history and current condition. A well-maintained example can offer a comparatively simple path to long-term full-size-SUV ownership, but the operating costs of a 5.7L V8 4WD vehicle remain part of that bargain.

Evidence & Sources

Bighorn prioritizes manufacturer and government records for specifications, maintenance, recalls and corrective actions; independent technical and ownership sources are used for corroboration and context. Owner reports are not treated as proof of prevalence.

Evidence confidence: Strong for core configuration, scheduled maintenance, recall existence and major platform characteristics. Moderate for the prevalence of non-campaign failure patterns such as cam-carrier and valley leakage. VIN-specific recall status and individual-vehicle condition remain unverified.

1. **Toyota USA - 2021 Sequoia Nightshade product information**
<https://pressroom.toyota.com/big-is-beautiful-2021-toyota-sequoia-adds-sizzle-with-nightshade-edition/>
2. **Toyota Owners - Maintenance Schedule**
<https://www.toyota.com/owners/maintenance-schedule>
3. **Toyota Owners - 2021 Sequoia manuals and warranty information**
<https://www.toyota.com/owners/warranty-owners-manuals/>
4. **NHTSA - Recall lookup and safety issue resources**
<https://www.nhtsa.gov/recalls>
5. **NHTSA/Toyota - Safety Recall 21V-920 / Toyota 21TA10**
<https://static.nhtsa.gov/odi/rcl/2021/RCMN-21V920-4536.pdf>
6. **NHTSA - Equipment Recall 21E-103 defect report**
<https://static.nhtsa.gov/odi/rcl/2021/RMISC-21E103-7742.pdf>
7. **IIHS - Vehicle ratings database**
<https://www.iihs.org/ratings>
8. **Edmunds - 2021 Toyota Sequoia owner reviews**
<https://www.edmunds.com/toyota/sequoia/2021/consumer-reviews/>
9. **Edmunds - 2021 Toyota Sequoia review / safety / fuel economy**
<https://www.edmunds.com/toyota/sequoia/2021/review/>
10. **RepairPal - 2021 Sequoia spark plug replacement estimate**
<https://repairpal.com/estimator/toyota/sequoia/2021/spark-plug-replacement-cost>
11. **RepairPal - 2021 Sequoia water pump replacement estimate**
<https://repairpal.com/estimator/toyota/sequoia/2021/water-pump-replacement-cost>
12. **RepairPal - 2021 Sequoia brake pad replacement estimate**
<https://repairpal.com/estimator/toyota/sequoia/2021/brake-pad-replacement-cost>
13. **Consumer Reports - 2021 Sequoia ratings/specifications (limited public data)**
<https://www.consumerreports.org/cars/toyota/sequoia/2021/ratings-specs/>

About this profile

This Ownership Profile is research and educational material, not a mechanical inspection, warranty, valuation, or guarantee of future reliability. Vehicle condition, prior maintenance, modifications, collision history, environment and use can materially change ownership outcomes. Repair-cost ranges are planning estimates and may vary substantially by location and shop.

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