

Tailgatin'!

The Ford Expedition Tailgate Tour showcased the new 2007 Ford Expedition in cities nationwide. The event came to Glendale on Sunday, September 24, to give the public a detailed, hands-on look at the new hardware outside the Arizona Cardinals game

against the St. Louis Rams. We were invited to a presentation the day before, headed up by Ford Expedition chief engineer John Viera. Ford's boasts include increased comfort, safety and capability from a totally

redesigned Ford Expedition. What's most interesting is how this vehicle has grown while many SUVs shrink away from rising gas prices and other concerns, and even as Ford pulled the plug on its big Excursion.





Tailgate parties and football are a natural combination, and Ford wants to add the 2007 Expedition to that list. Last fall, the new Expedition and all-new Expedition EL appeared at five football games in key Southwestern and Southern markets, for tailgate events where fans could experience the new Expedition's cargo- and people-hauling capabilities.

"This is a ... fun way to introduce people to the new Expedition," said Michael O'Brien, Expedition marketing manager. "In both the standard and the extended length (EL) models, the 2007 Expedition enhances comfort, safety features and cargo capacity, everything a customer needs for a family vacations, everyday adventures, or a first-rate tailgate party." Seconding Ford's promotional pitch, website Cars.com named the 2007 Expedition EL as one of the top vehicles for tailgating. Along with fun, the Ford tailgate events represented a shift in Ford's marketing strategy, particularly for the SUV segment.

"The full-size SUV market has declined, but there still is a substantial core group of

consumers who want or need a large SUV," O'Brien said. "To reach them we have to be much more targeted in our marketing. Instead of concentrating on mass advertising, we need to try different techniques like taking the vehicle to our customers—grassroots marketing." And thus we found ourselves at the Arizona Cardinals' spanking new (and newly named) University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale, to preview the vehicles and to hear about the science and development behind them, straight from the engineers and development team, a day before the masses would arrive for the Arizona-St. Louis game and the full Tailgate Tour experience.

Large SUV customers tend to be family oriented. For the Expedition, they are also what Ford refers to as "Big Appetite for Life" customers, people with large families, who are adventurous, want new experiences and enjoy the outdoors.

According to O'Brien, 92 percent of Expedition customers use the vehicle for family vacations, while 82 percent have occasion to

carry three or more people behind the first row. They have a need not only to carry people, but with their desire for outdoor experiences, Expedition owners need room to carry equipment, from skis and bikes to all the ingredients for a successful tailgate party.

The Expedition's cargo capacity behind the first row is 108.3 cubic feet in the standard model and 130.8 cubic feet in the EL. The tailgate event included a graphic demonstration of the Expedition's capacity, pitting the Ford against rival Chevy Tahoe. Fans could also try to guess the number of objects the Expedition would hold and win such tailgate prizes as home team pennants, coolers with beverages, grills, stadium chairs, and more. Attending fans received a "Big Family Adventure Passport," stamped as they moved from exhibit to exhibit. A completed passport earned a prize. Along with football fans, events were also held with local dealers and media, including the time we spent with Expedition chief engineer John Viera (originally from Phoenix and enjoying the weather).





Ford launched the modern large-SUV segment with the Expedition in 1997. The 2003 Expedition introduced several firsts to the segment, including independent rear suspension, fold-flat seats with a power-folding third row, Safety Canopy™ air bags and AdvanceTrac® with RSC®. Today, the market in America is changing. Large traditional utility vehicle sales have declined from a peak of more than 1 million units in 2003 to a bit more than 800,000 in 2005. Ford anticipates the market of large SUVs will continue to decline through the rest of the decade before stabilizing. Full-size SUV customers want room for all their friends and all their gear, says Ford, and many want four-wheel drive and towing capability.

New EL extends full-size appeal
With 14.8 inches of additional overall length, the Expedition EL delivers 130.8 cubic feet of cargo space—including 24 cubic feet more behind the third-row seat than the already spacious Expedition. The EL rides on a 131-inch wheelbase—12 inches longer than standard—to preserve the base model's superior ride and handling. "We lengthened the wheelbase on the EL to add all that extra cargo capacity without compromising driving dynamics," says John Viera, Expedition chief engineer.

Expedition EL is unique from the B-pillar back with its own floor pan, one-piece body side, running boards, rear fascia, roof rack, rear quarter glass, one-piece headliner and quarter panel trim. The second-row doors are also unique to improve the ingress and egress to both second and third rows.

Comfortable and capable Inside
Each trim level features a distinctive look. The XLT defines tough luxury. The technical grain of the deep gray dashboard contrasts with embossed cloth seat inserts and warm steel trim. Two Eddie Bauer options combine rich, warm-gray first- and second-row leather-trimmed seats with a choice of camel or stone accents. Limited is a statement in monochromatic rich gray or charcoal black luxury. Heated and cooled front seats are available. The driver's seat's rearward track travel was increased by 20 millimeters to accommodate drivers from 4 feet 11 inches up to 6 feet 4 inches tall. Expedition XLT features six-way power-adjustable front seats, with a 10-way-power driver's seat standard on all models with leather trim. One-lever action, kneel-down, 40/20/40-split second-row seats fold flat with the load floor to offer extra cargo space and easy third-row access.

A Centerslide™ section can move forward up to 11 inches to give a front-seat passenger easy access to a child. The second row is available in 40/20/40 bench configuration or with two captain's chairs and walk-through center passage. Available 60/40-split third-row seats accommodate passengers as tall as 6 feet 2 inches. This folds flat into the floor, providing easy cargo access without the inconvenience of removing a heavy rear seat. An optional Power-fold™ third-row seat folds flat with the touch of a button. An available power liftgate has the lift mechanism to the side, out of the driver's rear view. Climate control utilizes a new scroll compressor and larger air ducts and vents for improved airflow, to warm the cabin and defrost windows in two-thirds the time of the previous model.

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Improved road-cruising quietness

Normal conversation works from the front all the way to the third row, thanks to improved sound-deadening materials, thicker side glass and an acoustical windshield. Improved body, engine and transmission mounts isolate the cabin. Wind tunnel-tuned outside mirrors reduce noise. Even Expedition's tires have been specifically tuned to reduce road noise.

New navigation, MP3, satellite radio

A new DVD-based navigation system covers the US, including Alaska and Hawaii, with an improved 6.5-inch color touch screen, voice activation and spoken details in three languages. Standard is an audio input jack for iPod. An available 340-watt AM/FM audio system is MP3 capable with in-dash six-CD changer, six premium speakers and subwoofer. SIRIUS satellite radio and a DVD system with 8-inch flush-mounted flat-panel display and remote-control infrared headphones are optional.

All-new chassis and suspension

Engineered to F-Series truck standards, Expedition's chassis uses revised front geometry and increased box section thickness to provide a 10 percent improvement in torsional rigidity and bending stiffness. The chassis features all-new front suspension, front frame section and modular front-end construction for ease of assembly and improved quality. All-new independent rear suspension has a five-link design for better control of fore/aft and lateral load forces. Monotube shocks on all four corners allow for more precise tuning and a better ride. A new variable boost steering pump uses aluminum components and reduces steering efforts by 15 percent for easy maneuverability at slow speeds with firm, responsive feel at highway speeds.

Larger front and rear brake calipers and thicker rotors improve durability and increase stopping capability. A new dual-bore master cylinder gives a better brake pedal feel and more control over the brake curve, increasing stopping confidence.

5.4L V-8 and fuel-efficient 6-speed

Expedition is powered by Ford's tough truck-proven 5.4-liter Triton™ V-8. With single overhead cams, three valves per cylinder and variable cam timing, the 5.4-liter engine delivers a balance of refinement and muscle. Rated at 300 hp and 365 lb-ft of torque, Expedition can tow up to 9,200 pounds. The engine is paired with a new standard 6-speed automatic transmission with manual shift capability and wide 6.04:1 gear ratio and two overdrive gears for improved performance and fuel economy.

Safety: AdvanceTrac® with RSC®

Expedition offers seat-mounted front side air bags and three-row Safety Canopy™ rollover detection system with extended-duration side curtain air bags down to the beltline for increased coverage. The system also features roll-fold deployment for enhanced protection. AdvanceTrac® with RSC® (Roll Stability Control) also is standard on both Expedition and Expedition EL. Ford's system utilizes a gyroscopic roll rate sensor to accurately measure yaw and roll angles. If the sensor detects a significant roll angle, it applies countermeasures—such as brakes to one or more wheels or reduced engine power—to help maintain control. Ford has 82 patents and 197 pending patents on this system.

Dual-stage front air bags deploy with varying power based on crash severity, the driver's seat position and safety-belt usage. Ford uses environmentally responsible heated-gas hydrogen inflators for the passenger air bag. A stroking steering column is designed to compress as much as three to four inches to help absorb energy in a frontal crash. Door trim works with the available seat-mounted side air bags to enhance occupant safety in a side impact.

The 2000 Expedition was the first full-size SUV to earn five-star front safety NCAP ratings for the driver and passenger from the NHTSA, a recognition it has maintained every year since. Expedition meets all known future crash standards. The new frame meets vehicle-to-vehicle impact standards two years ahead of the required time.

While others have been bringing smaller SUVs to market, Ford has been very hard at work on the new Expedition. If you really need an SUV, you may find you really need the new Ford Expedition. ■

