

TOYOTA ULTIMATE UTILITY VEHICLE

UUV stops in Phoenix on 110-day 16,500-mile tour: SEMA-bound

Toyota swung by our office in late August to give us a sneak peek of their one-of-a-kind Ultimate Utility Vehicle (UUV), en route to its official reveal at SEMA and definitely taking the long way. The trailer-borne UUV, which is quite driveable but not street legal, is making stops intertwined with the Toyota Ever-Better Expedition, an internal project for team member engagement and product testing. They are touring North America (including some miles in Canada and Mexico), stopping everywhere from New York City to Daytona to Death Valley and points between.

Nine vehicles will cover 16,500 miles over a 110-day period. Toyota team members from Toyota in Japan and the US—140 engineers, product planners and others—take turns on the road, a chance to get out from behind the desk to test and evaluate every detail of a wide range of production 2015 Toyota vehicles: Camry, Corolla, Prius, RAV4, Land

Cruiser 200, Highlander, Tundra and Sienna. There are stops at manufacturing plants and some regional offices, reinforcing the company's relocation from Los Angeles to Plano, Texas. This day, they would be visiting the Arizona Proving Ground west of Surprise.

These are all 2015 models, as the event started earlier this year—in Australia, in fact—and will span the globe before it's all done. (A Land Cruiser 200 is participating in all of it.)

The test cars can be spotted by their white paint and simple circular Toyota Ever-Better Expedition logos, as they drive on every sort of road typical customers use every day.

The UUV is trailered without markings. At various points along the way, the test cars are put on display at dealerships and other events, often with the UUV also on display.

The UUV is an extreme duty beast, combination show car and engineering study, built off the chassis of a Tacoma pickup and the

body of a Sienna, among a great many other things, much of it of course custom. You may not even realize it's a Sienna at first sight—it is most definitely not your mama's minivan.

The interior is a purpose-built test lab, sort of a cross between a NASCAR racer and Doc Brown's time travel lab, with unfinished surfaces, raw edges and perhaps a bit of duct tape. The UUV will be shown at the Toyota annual dealers' meeting in Las Vegas in September, then ultimately will be revealed at the big SEMA Show in November, by which point it will have a nice show interior.

The 16,500-mile Expedition is ultimately all about the team and the products. As Nick Ammazalorso, Marketing Communications Manager for Toyota USA says, "When the team benefits, the customer benefits."

For more information on the tour and on the Toyota Ultimate Utility Vehicle, visit the project site: www.toyotaeverbetter.com. ■

